

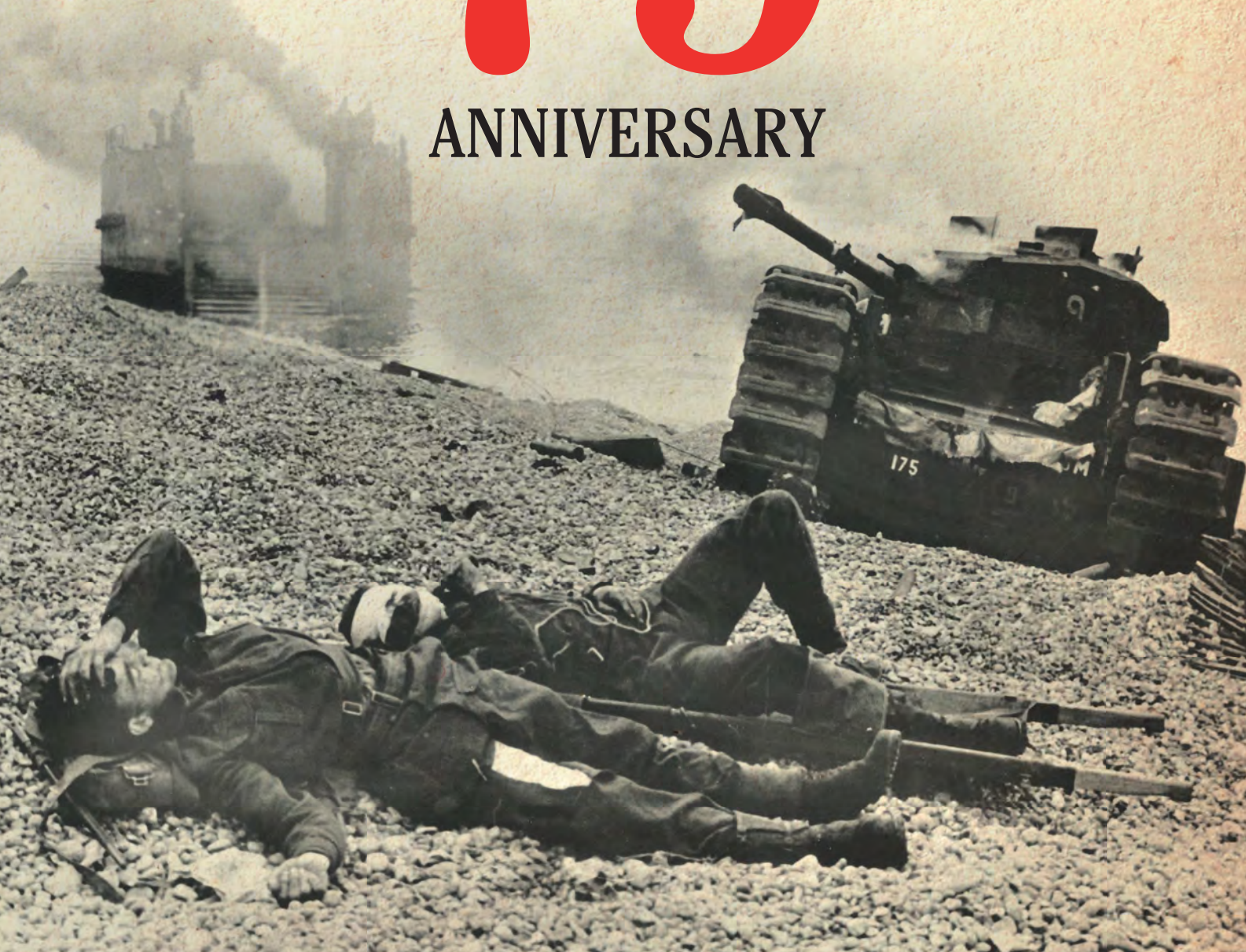


To mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dieppe Raid, we take a detailed look at what was arguably the most infamous raid of the Second World War and examine all three elements of this combined operation; land, sea and air.

# THE DIEPPE RAID:

# 75<sup>TH</sup>

## ANNIVERSARY





# DIEPPE

## THE REASON WHY



**In August 1942, a combined operation was mounted against Hitler's Fortress Europe. Its scope was limited, its aims ill-defined. So why did Churchill agree to the raid on Dieppe, which led to such embarrassing failure?**

**ABOVE**  
*Troops undergo a final training exercise prior to the Dieppe Raid. (HMP/LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA)*

**T**he early months of 1942 were difficult ones for Winston Churchill. Stalin was demanding action in Western Europe to lessen the pressure of the 280 German divisions that were bearing down upon Stalingrad. Roosevelt was insisting that US soldiers must start fighting the Germans in Europe, and Mackenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister, desperately needed Canadian troops to become involved in the war to keep his politically divided nation together. The problem for Churchill was that a second front in Europe, at this time, which his allies demanded, was premature and impracticable.

The pressure upon Churchill grew in intensity as the months passed. Russia, the Prime Minister was told, was losing 10,000 men a day on the Eastern Front, whilst Britain, the Soviet Ambassador mocked, was dragging its heels 'until the last button has been sown on the tunic of the last soldier'.

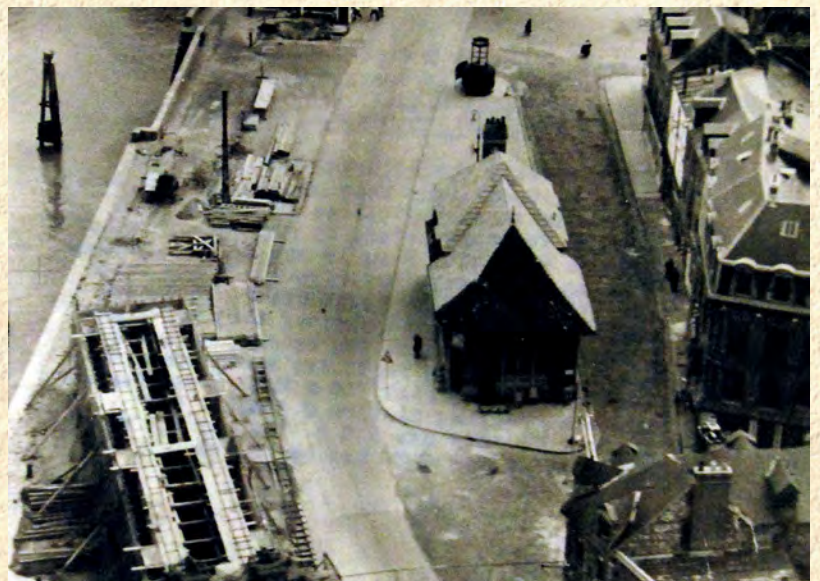
The British press, led by Lord Beaverbrook's Daily Express, also

clamoured for Britain to help the Russians, and public gatherings across the UK demanded offensive action. When Beaverbrook delivered a speech to the Bureau of Advertising of the American Newspaper Publishers in April, he urged the United States to join Britain in striking out in support of the

Soviets. 'Strike out violently,' he insisted, 'strike even recklessly! ... A second front in Western Europe would provide an opportunity to bring the war to an end here and now'.<sup>1</sup>

The US leaders were equally anxious to concentrate all available resources upon Europe. In March, Harry Hopkins,

**RIGHT**  
*A low-level aerial reconnaissance photograph of the Dieppe waterfront taken by an aircraft of Army Co-operation Command a few days before the raid, Operation Jubilee, which took place on 19 August 1942. Note the sentry standing on the bridge; near him is a small boy. (HMP/NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE US NAVY)*







bomb Dieppe in advance of the raid and no less than sixty squadrons of fighter planes to provide aerial support for the flotilla of boats and for the troops during the raid itself.

Britain had been conducting small-scale raids across the Channel to keep the Germans off-balance but Rutter was designed to take such assaults to another level – that of the ‘super-raid’. Dieppe would also prove to be a suitably tough test for the assaulting troops. The Dieppe area, the Ministry of Information explained, ‘is made up of high cliffs, mostly un-scalable, broken here and there by narrow clefts or by the mouths of rivers. At the foot of the cliffs lie stony

**LEFT**

Bombs dropped by a USAAF Flying Fortress are pictured falling on the aerodrome at Abbeville/Drucat. The attack, made on 19 August 1942, was part of the Allied operation against Dieppe. (HMP/NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE US NAVY)

Roosevelt’s closest political advisor, wrote to the President with these words: ‘I doubt if any single thing is any more important as getting some sort of front this summer against Germany.’<sup>2</sup> Roosevelt agreed that the Allies would soon have to start ‘slugging it out’ with the Germans.

## OPERATION RUTTER

Churchill simply had to do something to help the Soviets, but without incurring heavy losses that could jeopardise the longer-term aims of a sustainable re-occupation of Europe. So, a scheme was devised by the newly-formed Combined Operations Headquarters to capture a German-held French port, in the hope that this would shock Hitler into diverting troops from Russia to strengthen the defences of his so-called Festung Europa. The raid would have to be undertaken against a port as there was universal agreement that any re-invasion of Europe would have to include the early capture of a harbour to

allow supplies and reinforcements to be landed quickly

The port selected for the raid was Dieppe, the planning for which, code-named Operation Rutter, began in April 1942. Presented to the Chiefs of Staff on 13 May, the plan, put forward by Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined Operations, read as follows:

‘A force of infantry, airborne troops and A.F.V.s will land in the area of Dieppe to seize the town and vicinity. The area will be held during daylight while the tasks are carried out. The force will then re-embark. The operation will be supported by fighter aircraft and bomber action.’

In addition to six battalions of infantry, with engineer support, there was to be a regiment of tanks, paratroopers to land ahead of the main assault to seize the flanking coastal batteries, 150 high-level bombers and four squadrons of low-level bombers to



**LEFT**

On 27 October 1941, Captain Louis Mountbatten, who had commanded the 5<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Flotilla and had been captain of the aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious*, replaced Roger Keyes as Chief of Combined Operations and promoted to the rank of Commodore. (HMP/THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

and inhospitable beaches ... To land at low water on these beaches is very difficult and dangerous because of the rocks in the sea’s bed and the angle of the shore itself, which makes the task of beaching a landing craft and taking it away a matter of the greatest skill and judgment. The clefts behind the beaches are not numerous and those which exist are, for the most part, narrow and very easily defended. Men moving up them to the attack are at the mercy of defenders in position at their top, who can destroy the attackers with the greatest ease as they clamber laboriously upwards.’<sup>3</sup>

Yet despite the difficulties the attackers would encounter, the massive air support, in both a preliminary bombardment of the enemy defences and the fighter cover during the raid, made the scheme entirely practicable and very likely to succeed, with minimal loss of life to the ground forces.

The invasion flotilla assembled in the Solent at the beginning of July and, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the month, the men of the Second Infantry Division, a contingent of United States Rangers and the >>

**LEFT**

Two further pictures taken during the training exercises held in the lead-up to the Dieppe Raid. (HMP/LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA)







**ABOVE**  
One of the US Rangers involved at Dieppe, Sgt. Franklin M. Koons, shaking hands with Lord Mountbatten, Chief of Combined Operations, after the latter had decorated Koons with the Military Medal for his involvement. The investiture took place in Morocco in the presence of President Roosevelt. At the time of the raid, Koons was a Corporal in 'D' Coy, 1<sup>st</sup> Bat, Rangers. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

**BELOW**  
Canadian dead on the Dieppe shoreline after the raid.

THE ENIGMA FACTOR



Obtaining useful intelligence was among the objectives, and much has been made of the desire to obtain a four rotor Enigma cipher machine - but this is more a reflection of the contemporary fascination with secret intelligence rather than the reality of 1942. Indeed, the capture of Enigma was an objective, but one among many - including a raid on the radar at Pourville. The raid was therefore not cover for a 'snatch', and the decision to form the Intelligence Assault Units, tasked specifically to gather intelligence material, was not taken until after Jubilee had been ordered.

confirmed, now that they had seen the invasion flotilla, the raid would have to be re-mounted as soon as the tides and the weather conditions were suitable.

The operation was quickly reinstated, this time under the code-name Jubilee. The troops taking part in the raid would be the same ones as before (apart from the substitution of the paratroopers by two British Commandos to knock out the flanking coastal batteries).

However, the public debate concerning a second front had not gone unnoticed across the Channel. In the months leading up to Operation Rutter, the Germans had made significant improvements to their coastal defences and large numbers of reinforcements had been drafted-in, some even being transferred from the Russian Front, to protect the French ports. On 20 July, the Joint Intelligence Sub-committee had informed the Chiefs of Staff that 'all ports are especially strongly defended. Defence of the coast will pivot on ports which will probably be converted into quasi-fortresses with all-round defence.'<sup>4</sup>

From the transcripts of German communications, intercepted and translated at the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park,

Churchill was aware that Panzer units and crack SS Divisions had been moved to the coastal zone. In particular, the 10<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division – a battle-hardened formation at full strength in both men and machines – had been moved to Amiens, less than forty miles from Dieppe. The Panzer division's forward detachment was just fourteen kilometres (or less than an hour's drive) south of Dieppe! Just to make matters worse the 302<sup>nd</sup> Division, which held Dieppe, was reinforced in July and again in August. The preliminary aerial bombardment was also cancelled for fear of inflicting heavy casualties on the civilian population.

Nevertheless, Churchill was committed to mounting the raid, regardless of the consequences. As with Rutter the main force would sail from the Solent with other ships from Littlehampton and Newhaven joining the flotilla at sea. As it transpired, conditions were ideal for the night of 18/19 August. At last the raid was on.

By chance, Churchill had been in Moscow just a few days earlier. There he told Stalin of the plan to attack Dieppe. It would be on a large-scale, the Prime Minister explained, 'in order to seek information and to test the German resistance'. To further impress the Soviet leader, and in view of how many men the Soviets had claimed were being killed on the Eastern Front, Churchill then said to Stalin, 'We might lose as many as 10,000 men on this operation, which would be no more than a reconnaissance.'<sup>5</sup> Though Winston had enormously inflated the scale of the operation, it was, at that time, Britain's largest amphibious operation of the war in Europe.

A total of 237 ships, boats and landing craft left Britain's south coast at the end of a warm and sunny summer's day in mid-August. The great armada, protected by its destroyers, sailed for France, its fate unknown. ☉

NOTES:

1. T. Driberg, *Beaverbrook: A Study in Power & Frustration* (London 1956), pp.285-6.
2. J.M.A. Guyer & J.R.M. Butler, *Grand Strategy. Vol.III June 1941-August 1942* (London 1964), p.574.
3. H.M.S.O. *Combined Operations 1940-1942* (London 1943), p.106.
4. TNA, CAB 79/22 COS (42) 211<sup>th</sup> Meeting.
5. TNA, CAB 120/65, Meeting with M. Stalin, arrangements, meetings and papers; TNA PREM 3/76N12, Records of Cairo and Moscow conferences.





**OPERATION JUBILEE: ORDER OF BATTLE**



**LAND FORCES**

**(Maj-Gen. John Hamilton Roberts):**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division  
4<sup>th</sup> Brigade**

- Essex Scottish Regiment
- Royal Hamilton Light Infantry
- Royal Regiment of Canada

**5<sup>th</sup> Brigade**

- The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada (three platoons)
- The Calgary Highlanders (mortar platoon)

**6<sup>th</sup> Brigade**

- Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal
- Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada
- South Saskatchewan Regiment
- Lorne Scots (No.6 Defence Platoon)

**Support Units**

- 14<sup>th</sup> Army Tank Regiment (The Calgary Regiment)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, RCA
- 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment, RCA
- Toronto Scottish Regiment

**Commando Units**

- 3 Commando
- 4 Commando

- 10 Inter-Allied Commando
- A Commando Royal Marines
- 30 Commando
- 40 Commando
- 1<sup>st</sup> US Ranger Battalion Detachment

**NAVAL FORCES**

**(Captain John Hughes-Hallett):**

**Fire Support**

8 Hunt-class destroyers:

- Albrighton
- Berkeley
- Bleasdale
- Brocklesby
- Calpe
- Fernie
- Garth
- ORP Slazak

Dragonfly-class river gunboat:

- HMS Locust

**9<sup>th</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla**

**13<sup>th</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla**

**Landing Force**

- Duke of Wellington
- Glengyle
- Invicta
- Prince Charles

- Prince Leopold
- Princess Beatrix
- Princess Astrid
- Prince Albert
- Queen Emma

**Royal Navy Coastal Forces**

- 12 Motor Gun Boats
- 4 Steam Gun Boats
- 20 Motor Launches

**AIR FORCES**

**(Air Vice Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory):**

**11 Group RAF (Fighter Command)**

- 46 Spitfire Squadrons
- 8 Hurricane Squadrons
- 4 Mustang Squadrons
- 3 Typhoon Squadrons
- Additional Blenheim Squadrons

**2 Group RAF (Bomber Command)**

- 7 Boston & Blenheim Squadrons

**8 Air Force (USAAF), 97 Bombardment Group**

- 4 B-17 Bomb Squadrons

**8 Air Force (USAAF), 31 Fighter Group**

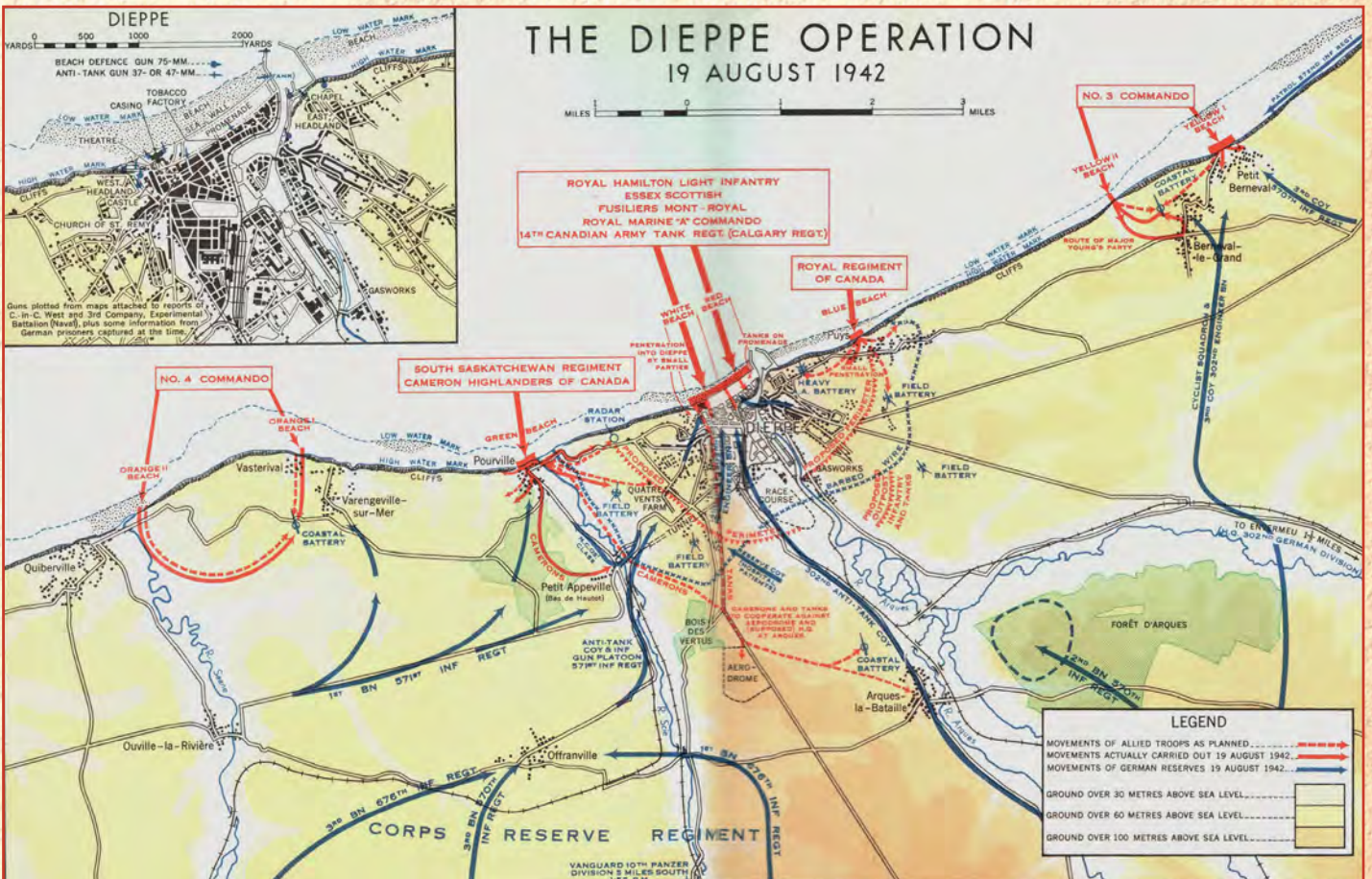
- 4 Spitfire Squadrons

**LEFT**

The basic Order of Battle for Operation Jubilee, including the respective land, sea and air commanders.

**BELOW**

The plan of attack, as compiled on this map by the General Staff of the Historical Section, Army Survey Establishment, Royal Canadian Engineers.





# TANKS AT DIEPPE

## THE CALGARY REGIMENT



The ace up the sleeve of the Dieppe raiders would surely be the tanks of 14<sup>th</sup> Canadian Army Tank Regiment (The Calgary Regiment). However, as Mark W. Tonner, CD (retd.) explains, the tankers were unable to breach the defences.

**ABOVE**  
'Buttercup', one of five tanks fitted with a BTL. After laying its chespalings, and breaching the seawall, the BTL was jettisoned. Later, Buttercup returned to the beach, taking up the position depicted. (ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED)

**O**n 10 August, 1942, The Calgary Regiment received orders to take part in a Combined Operations demonstration, which led the Regiment to immediately start waterproofing their Churchill tanks. Three days later, the Regiment received instructions from HQ, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, for three exercises codenamed *Ford I*, *Ford II*, and *Ford III*, which were to last for a month from 15 August. What the regiment didn't know, was that *Ford I* was the movement of units involved in Operation *Jubilee* to ports of embarkation.

Operation *Jubilee* saw the Calgary Regiment land on the main beach in support of the infantry of 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, and extracts from The Calgary Regiment's war diary build a fascinating narrative. Since few troopers returned from the beaches, it was largely based on plans, radio logs, and observations made by those who didn't get ashore:-

*"The general tank plan was that all tanks would land on the main beach at Dieppe in successive waves. "C" Squadron would assist the Essex Scottish in establishing the bridgehead and taking care of the armed trawlers in the harbour. They would then cross to the high ground at the east side of the River D'Arques to dominate the*

*approaches to the east. "B" Squadron was to assist the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry in establishing the right flank of the bridgehead. They would then push inland and take the aerodrome at St. Aubin with The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada. "A" Squadron was in reserve and would land later. Once the beachhead was secure, the headquarters of the German 302 Infantry Division at Arques la Bataille would be captured by the Camerons, aided by either "A" or "B" Squadron depending on the tactical situation.*

*Despite the heavy bombardment from the sea by naval forces, and from the air by Hurricane bombers, the enemy's concealed positions in front of the town itself were*





not destroyed. They were still able to bring intense fire to bear on any point on the main beach from the moment it was assaulted. The first wave of the Calgary Regiment's tanks got ashore successfully, and some assaulted the town. Others, however, were not successful in negotiating the sea wall and did not get off the beach. A number were immobilized. Nevertheless, their crews continued to fight their guns, engaging enemy positions with good effect.

Roads leading into the town were solidly blocked and, in order that the tanks might successfully penetrate into the town, it was essential that these be cleared. The engineers were carrying large quantities of selected explosives for this purpose. Unfortunately, however, the heavy fire that the enemy was still able to bring to bear on the beach caused heavy casualties amongst the sappers. Despite great courage and determination, they were unable to clear the road blocks. This made it extremely difficult for the tanks to get into the town at all. Consequently, the majority of the tanks fought the whole of the engagement from the beach and promenade."

### INTENSE FIRE

With only limited naval and air support, the raiders began to bog down. Unfortunately, the situation didn't improve and the tanks struggled:-

"The Landing Craft Tank (LCT) carrying regimental HQ went onto the beach in the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave, under cover of smoke. The leading tank, commanded by the Adjutant, Captain A.G. Stanton, got off the craft but bogged down in the loose shale of the beach, and blocked the remaining tanks from getting off. Captain Stanton's tank later managed to advance and fought hard for several hours, until the crew was forced to abandon it when the tank caught fire. The LCT, unable to land the rest of its tanks, withdrew and lay offshore for about an hour and a half.



About this time, the Colonel ordered Major A. Glenn, Officer Commanding "C" Squadron, to take command of all the tanks on shore. The LCT then went in again, this time without the aid of a smokescreen. As it approached the shore with its door partly lowered, the chains supporting the door were blown away, and the door dropped under the LCT preventing it from getting any closer to the shore. The Colonel's tank at once drove off the ship, tearing a louvre extension, and sank into six feet of water and stalled. The crew abandoned the tank and the Colonel was seen to get into an "R" boat. Almost immediately this boat was set ablaze, and the Colonel was last seen swimming in the water.

Captain B.G. Purdy, who was commanding No.8 Troop of "B" Squadron that was specially equipped with

flamethrowers, attempted to land as planned... However, for some unknown reason, his tank went off in very deep water and had to be abandoned immediately. All the tanks that got ashore fought very hard, until they were either put out of action or ran out of ammunition. At about 1225 hours, Major Glenn ordered all personnel to the beach. They were to be ready to abandon the tanks when the boats came in.

The fire on the beach at this time had grown very fierce, and casualties in the withdrawing troops were heavy. Only two members of the tank crews who landed managed to get away, and the remainder, were either killed or taken prisoner. No.11, 12, & 14 Troops of "C" Squadron, and the whole of "A" Squadron remained afloat during the operation, laying offshore awaiting orders to go in. About 1300 >>

### ABOVE

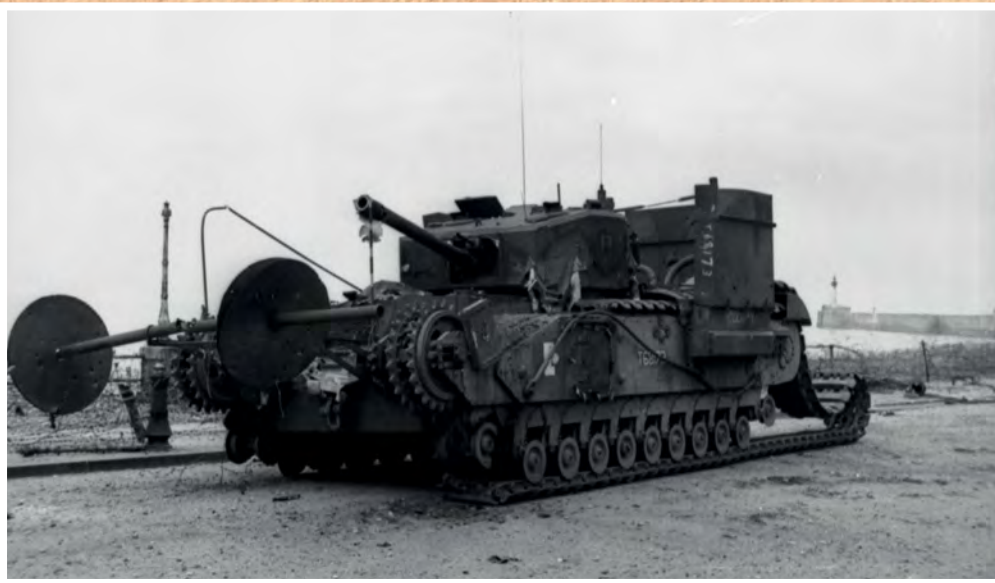
T31878R 'Company', a reworked Mk I. She was struck on the left horn, immobilising her. Also visible is the left-hand side air intake louvre with the rectangular duct in place. This was one of three ducts placed over the side air intakes and the rear outlet for wading.

### BELOW

In this photo, the gradient of the beach can be seen, as can the chert. From R to L: T68559R 'Calgary', T68760R 'Brenda', T68701R 'Bloody' and T68561R 'Blossom'.







**ABOVE**  
T68173 'Cougar', a Mk III with a partly jettisoned BTL.

**ABOVE RIGHT**  
One of the vehicles transferred to the Calgary's, the Oke-fitted 'Tintagel', which would serve as 'Boar'.

**BELOW**  
Two abandoned Mk IIs, one fitted with the Oke device, and a Dingo scout car.

hrs, the order was given to sail back to England."

In all, 33 landing craft were lost, and much of the tank force was unable to land. The following is extracted from Canadian Military HQ Report No.83, 19 September 1942, entitled: "Preliminary Report on Operation 'Jubilee', 19 August 1942". Based on interviews from a wider group of personnel, it presents a more general view:-

*"On the beaches fronting Dieppe itself, the attack was made on the right by the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel R.R. Labatt, and on the*

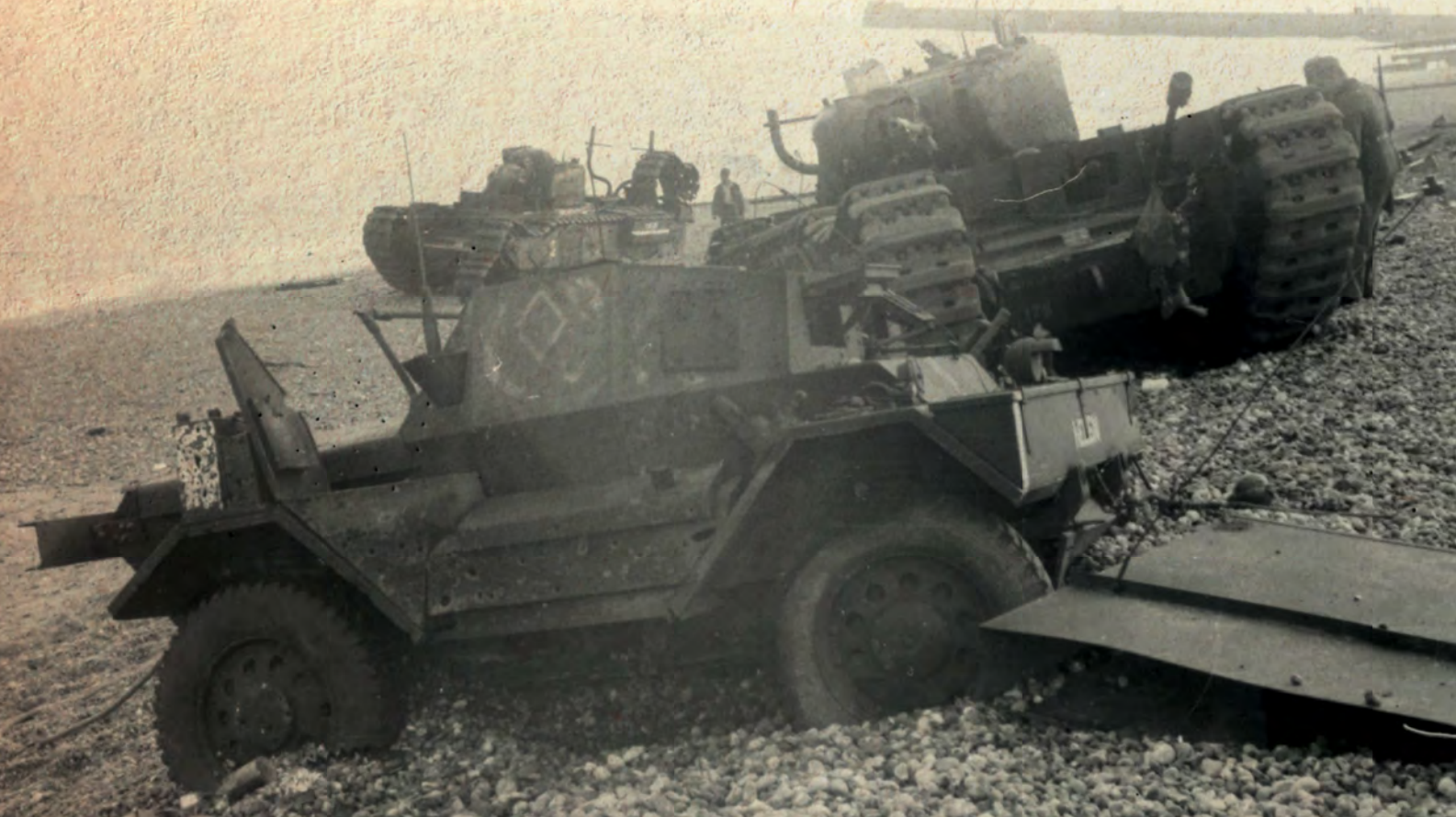
*left by the Essex Scottish, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel F.K. Jaspersen. These units were closely followed by the first wave of tanks of the 14<sup>th</sup> Canadian Army Tank Battalion (Calgary Regiment) commanded Lieutenant-Colonel J.G. Andrews. Although the Dieppe defences had been heavily engaged before the assault by naval bombardment and waves of Hurricane bombers, the troops came under heavy fire from concealed posts in the two headlands to the west and east of the beaches. Also, artillery sited under cover of the first line of buildings was able to fire directly into the assault craft as they landed. The first wave*



*of tanks came under direct fire as soon as they came out of the landing craft, and while some got on to the boulevard in front of the town and penetrated further, others did not get off the beach."*

The heavier than expected fire countered measures prepared to assist The Calgary Regiment's tanks, severely hampering movements of what may have otherwise been an effective armoured punch supporting the raiders:

*"The intense fire to which the landing craft were subjected interfered with the engineers' program of assault demolitions. In certain cases, the demolition stores could not be*







before they could use the apparatus. They were landed by Tank Landing Craft 3 (No.159). T31862 (*Bull*) was the troop commander's (Captain B.G. Purdy) tank and was launched prematurely, drowning in 10 feet of water approximately 100yds offshore at the junction of Red and White Beaches. T32049 (*Boar*), Sergeant J. Sullivan, in making a heavy landing from Tank Landing Craft 3, knocked her fuel reservoir off, but managed to cross the beach and get onto the promenade in the area of the Casino. She remained mobile throughout the morning before being ordered back to cover the withdrawal. Once back on the shoreline, she was immobilised and acted as a pillbox. T68875 (*Beetle*), commanded by

Lieutenant G.L. Drysdale, also landing heavy, broke a track pin on her right track and remained immobilised on the shoreline, at the eastern end of Red Beach, acting as a pillbox. Although the Oke flamethrower was rudimentary, their presence at Dieppe was the first time a British-designed tank-mounted flamethrower took part in an operation.

### SHINGLE

The main beach was entirely composed of chert rocks, one to six inches in diameter, and tidal action left most of these rocks resting at an angle of 15 to 20 degrees and vehicles would not be able to dig down for traction. If a tracked or wheeled vehicle tried to climb this slope, it would immediately >>

### BELOW

T68875 '*Beetle*', a Mk II (*Special*) which lost a track to the chert. She acted as a pillbox on Red Beach. *Beetle* was one of three Mk II (*Special*) tanks equipped with the Oke flame-thrower. The muzzle of the flame projector is just visible in the photo.

landed, and in some they were destroyed before they could be used. In others, engineer personnel became casualties. The seawall, in consequence, was not breached to the extent that had been planned... Despite the fact that a number of these [tanks] were soon immobilized by damage, their crews continued to fight their guns with the greatest courage, engaging the batteries which were firing on the landing craft and, on the evidence of witnesses, contributing to the safe withdrawal of some of the latter.

At 9:30, about four and a half hours after the initial landings, the enemy brought into action a number of mobile batteries, mortars, and additional infantry. It was clear that not only was the complete capture of the planned objectives now impossible, but that it had become necessary to make immediate plans for withdrawal. The decision was accordingly made to withdraw at 11 o'clock. This necessitated abandoning the tanks that had been landed, in order to re-embark personnel. At the same time, the craft carrying the remaining tanks and troops who had not been landed were ordered to return to England."

### SPECIALISED VEHICLES

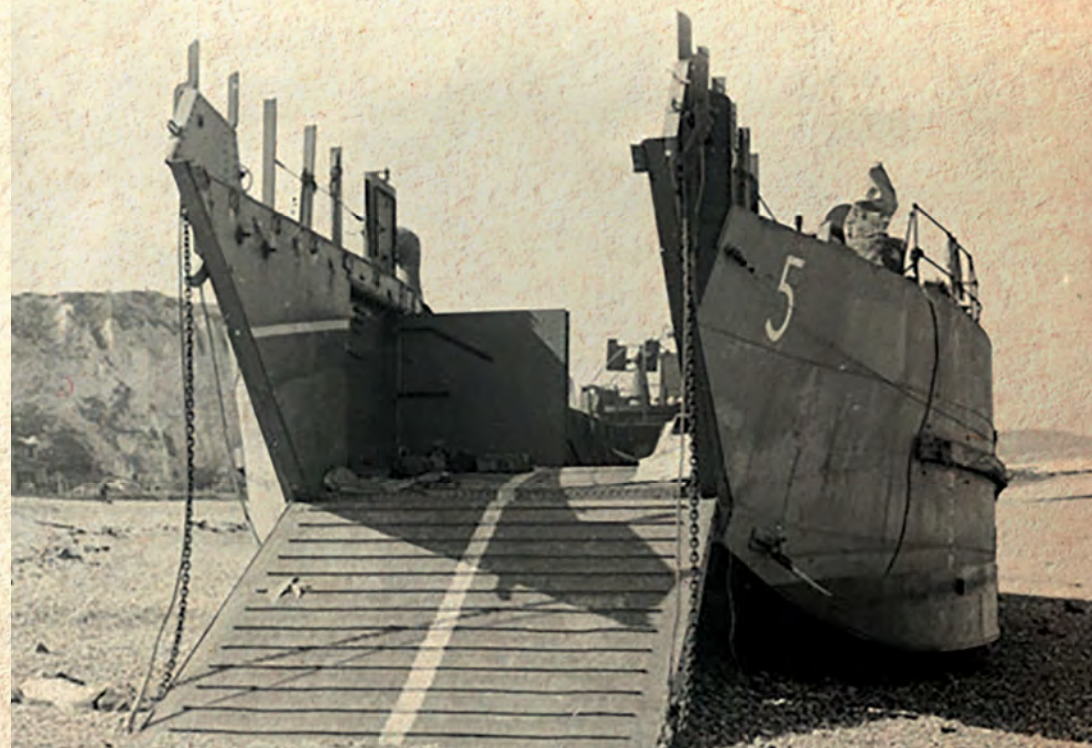
While the armour was unsuccessful, two rudimentary devices used by the regiment led to the development of more advanced versions. Such devices, mounted on the Churchill, are familiar as the 'Funnies' of 79<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division. The forerunner devices employed by The Calgary Regiment were the Oke flamethrower, mounted in three of the regiment's Churchill Mark II (Specials) and a carpet laying apparatus for forming a trackway attached to the front of five of the regiment's tanks and referred to as a "Beach Track Laying Device."

All three of the Mk II (Special) tanks were rendered ineffective

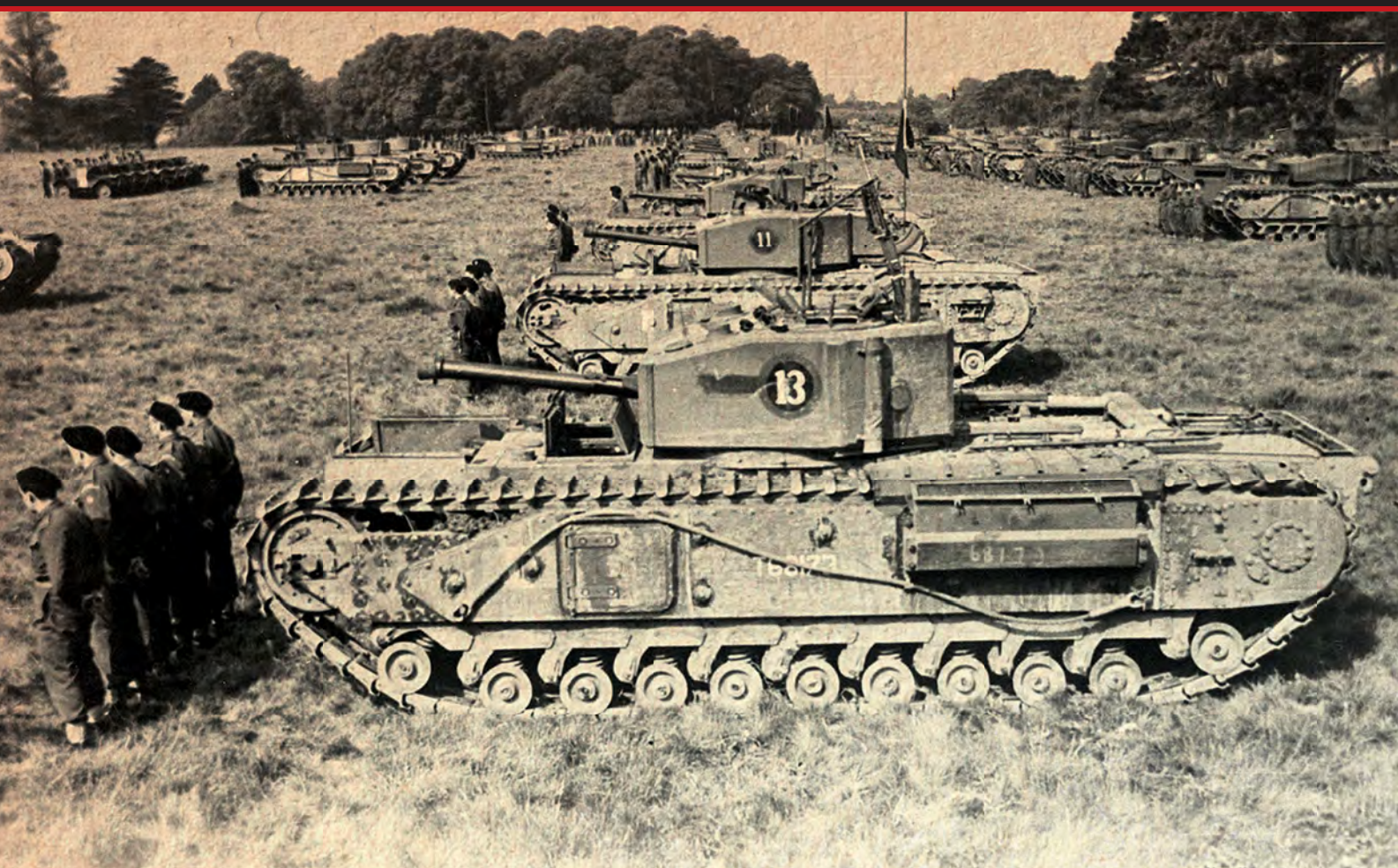


### BOTTOM

LCT-5 (No. 121), which carried the three Mk III Churchills of 9 Troop "B" Sqn. Having come ashore in front of the Casino and disembarked her tanks, she was hit by mortar and artillery fire that all but wiped out her crew, leaving her blazing and beached.







**ABOVE**  
Some of the tanks of The Calgary Regiment ready for inspection. (THE TANK MUSEUM)

**RIGHT**  
T68701R 'Bloody', a reworked Churchill Mk III. She towed the Daimler Scout Car 'Hunter' ashore, the cable still attached. A Universal Carrier can be seen in the lower left-hand corner of the photo.



one for each track, suspended about 24in in front of each track on a spindle. The apparatus was mounted low enough to allow the commander a clear field of vision and a clear field of fire for turret armaments. Each 'roll' had a 14-gauge metal disc shield, 3ft in diameter, to prevent fouling on the brackets and spindle. Each roll was 3ft wide and 25 to 30ft in length when unfurled, with weighted ends that on release fell to the ground with the tracks themselves automatically deploying them as the tank advanced.

For the landing at Dieppe, the plan was that the tanks would land on the main beach in successive waves. Accordingly, the first tank in each Tank Landing Craft of TLC Flight 1 (Red Beach) and TLC Flight 1A (White Beach) would be fitted with the beach track laying device. This meant five of the first six tanks of The Calgary Regiment would be fitted with the device. It was not possible for the sixth tank to be fitted, as it was already modified with a flamethrower.

### TOTAL LOSS

All tanks fitted with the beach track laying device were lost. T31124R (*Chief*), a Churchill Mk I, carried in Tank Landing Craft 1 (No.145) and commanded by the Officer

dig-in. In tracked vehicles, the strain of rocks caught between drive sprockets and tracks caused pins holding the track links together to break, immobilising the tank.

To alleviate this problem, it was planned to have four man teams of Royal Canadian Engineers, in each of the six Tank Landing Craft scheduled to land in the first wave, who would run out ahead and roll out chespaling tracks. Chespaling was flexible roll chestnut fencing which it was thought would enable vehicles to get off the beach.

Because of the weight, and taking into account the probability of high casualties amongst laying teams, it was decided an alternative method of deploying chespaling was required. Major B. Sucharov, Royal Canadian Engineers (commanding the engineers Beach Assault Party), was assigned to develop a device to enable tanks to cross the beach and get over the seawall onto the promenade.

Major Sucharov came up with a beach track laying device using chespaling with apparatus that carried two rolls,





Commanding "C" Squadron, Major A. Glenn, prematurely laid its chespaling, and having jettisoned the beach track laying device, remained on the beach. For a time, Glenn kept his tank in a position from which he could observe the promenade and both flanks of the beach, when not obscured by smoke. After moving down the beach to the area in front of the casino, *Chief* returned to take a position near the beached Tank Landing Craft 3 (No.159), and turned broadside to protect the men sheltering behind the beached craft.

T68173 (*Cougar*), a Churchill Mk III, carried in Tank Landing Craft 2 (No.

**LEFT**

Another view of 'Company' being inspected by the Wehrmacht. Once disabled, her hull-mounted 3in howitzer did not have the elevation to fire over the ridge. Only her 2Pdr and coaxial 7.92mm BESA could be used.



landing because it had been damaged. *Burns* advanced across the beach, but found its path obstructed by an anti-tank ditch along the esplanade wall. Attempting to avoid it, the tank's right track was broken by enemy fire, the momentum of the surviving left track pulling the tank into the ditch. *Burns* was immobilised, pointing down, and unable to fire.

Another Mk III, T31655 (*Buttercup*), carried in Tank Landing Craft 5 (No.121), as part of No.9 Troop, "B" Squadron. This was the Troop Sergeant's tank, commanded by Sgt J.D. Morrison. This tank successfully laid its chespaling and, having crossed the beach, wire, and seawall, jettisoned its device and engaged enemy targets on the west headland and in the seafront buildings to the west of the casino. Later, it returned to the beach taking up a position on the water's edge. It could not be destroyed by its crew prior to their withdrawal due to the number of wounded infantry who had sought shelter behind it. A third Mk III Churchill, T68557R (*Bob*), landed by >>

**LEFT**

T68881 'Ringer', a Churchill Mk II of RHQ, The Calgary Regiment. She lost a track but fought until running out of ammunition. What appears as white tape across the rear hull is in fact the rear apron of the waterproofing basic sealing kit for a Churchill tank.

**BELOW**

T31135R 'Burns', another reworked Churchill Mk I. After crossing the beach, the tank was obstructed by an anti-tank ditch dug along the esplanade wall. A hit to the right track caused *Burns* to be pulled into this ditch by the forward momentum of her left track, leaving her immobilised and unable to use her armaments.

127), No.13 Troop, "C" Squadron was the Troop Leader's tank, commanded by Lieutenant T.R. Cornett. *Cougar* successfully crossed the beach having laid its chespaling and crossed the seawall onto the promenade, having only jettisoned part of its beach track laying device. After turning to the west, it was immediately hit by a 75mm round, jamming its turret. After this,

it was only able to engage the tobacco factory with its main armament. Eventually, having broken one track and losing the other to enemy fire, it was destroyed by its crew prior to their retiring to the beach. CO "B" Squadron, Major C.E. Page's tank, T31135R (*Burns*), a Churchill Mk I landed by Tank Landing Craft 4 (No.126), removed its device prior to





**IMAGE**

T31137R 'Bolster', a Mk I and the third tank to land from LCT-4. She had her right track broken by the chert but still exhausted her ammunition.



and three by other causes. Only one tank remained mobile.

In all, the regiment lost four Churchill Mk Is, four Churchill Mk IIs, three Churchill Mk II (Special) tanks, and 18 Churchill Mk IIIs. This left the regiment with a remaining strength of two Churchill Mk Is, 11 Mk IIs, and 19 Mk IIIs; a total of 32 tanks. Of the 32 officers and 385 other ranks of regiment who embarked for Operation Jubilee, two officers and ten other ranks were killed and 15 officers and 146 other ranks taken prisoner, of whom two officers and 125 other ranks were wounded. Only two members of the regiment were evacuated, along with the 15 officers and 229 other ranks who remained offshore until ordered back to England. These were all from "A" Squadron, and 11, 12, and 14 Troops of "C" Squadron, along with other elements of the regiment. ☉

**RIGHT**

T68880 'Blondie', a Mk III. She towed a Daimler Scout Car, 'Hare', seen in shot. Blondie was disabled on Red Beach but still expended all her ammunition.

Tank Landing Craft 6 (No.163) and the Troop Leader's tank for No.6 Troop "B" Squadron, was commanded by Lt J.H. Dunlop. This tank also removed its device prior to landing. It landed and successfully crossed the seawall, where it engaged enemy targets with the 6pdr until eventually returning to the beach, where it took up a position to cover the withdrawal of the infantry.

Of the 30 tanks that attempted to land, two were drowned and 27 made it ashore, the remaining tank returned to Britain having been unable to land. Of those ashore, 15 crossed the seawall and, of these, ten returned to the beach where four were immobilised by rocks breaking their tracks. None of the remaining tanks were able to leave the beach. Eleven had their tracks broken, four by the chert, four by enemy fire,



**BELOW**

The fallen line Dieppe's beaches. (BUNDESARCHIV)







**LEFT**  
The Daimler Scout Car, 'Hunter', abandoned on the beach.  
(BUNDESARCHIV)

Allocation of Churchill tanks of The Calgary Regiment (Tank), CAC, to Landing Craft, Tank, that landed at Dieppe.

LCT Flight:	LCT Number:	Census Number (Tank):	Type:	Name (Tank):	Sub Unit:
LCT Flight 1	LCT-1 (No.145)	T31124R T31878R T68559R	Mk I w/BTLD* Mk I Mk III	Chief Company Calgary	'C' Sqn HQ
LCT Flight 1	LCT-2 (No.127)	T68173 T68171 T68696	Mk III w/BTLD Mk III Mk III	Cougar Cheetah Cat	13 Trp 'B' Sqn
LCT Flight 1	LCT-3 (No.159)	T31862 T32049 T68875	Mk II (Special) Mk II (Special) Mk II (Special)	Bull Boar Beetle	8 Trp 'B' Sqn
LCT Flight 1A	LCT-4 (No.126)	T31135R T68352 T31137R	Mk I w/BTLD Mk II Mk I	Burns Backer Bolster	'B' Sqn HQ
LCT Flight 1A	LCT-5 (No.121)	T31655 T68561R T68759R	Mk III w/BTLD Mk III Mk III	Buttercup Blossom Bluebell	9 Trp 'B' Sqn
LCT Flight 1A	LCT-6 (No.163)	T68557R T68560R T68558R	Mk III w/BTLD Mk III Mk III	Bob Bert Bill	6 Trp 'B' Sqn
LCT Flight 2	LCT-7 (No.124)	T68177R T68175 T68701R	Mk III Mk III Mk III	Beefy Bellicose Bloody	10 Trp 'B' Sqn
LCT Flight 2	LCT-8 (No.125)	T68881 T31923R T31925R**	Mk II Mk II Mk II	Ringer Regiment Rounder	RHQ
LCT Flight 2	LCT-9 (No.166)	T68760R T68176R T68880	Mk III Mk III Mk III	Brenda Betty Blondie	7 Trp 'B' Sqn
LCT Flight 2	LCT-10 (No.165)	T68702R T68870 T68704R	Mk III Mk II Mk III	Caustic Canny Confident	15 Trp 'C' Sqn

\*Beach Tack Laying Device.

\*\* T31925R Rounder of RHQ did not land and returned to the UK.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Clive M. Law (Service Publications, Ottawa, Canada), and Ms. Meghan Lang-Ferguson for assistance in the preparation of this article.

This article is dedicated to the memory of the author's writing mentor and long-time friend, Clive M. Law, who passed away peacefully on 10 June 2017.

#### Further Reading:

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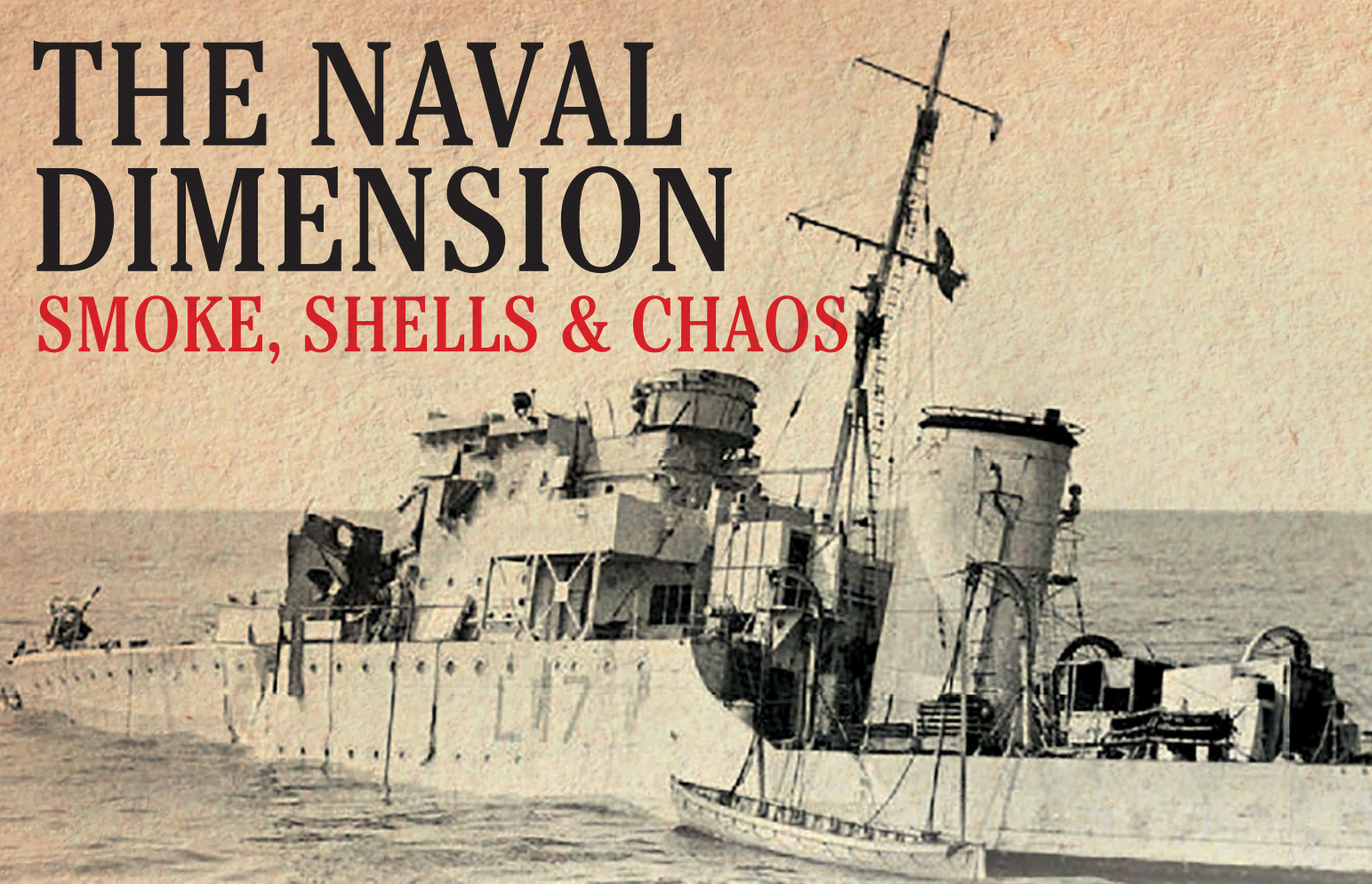
Tonner, Mark W., *The Churchill Tank in Canadian Service* (Canada Weapons of War Series), (ISBN 978-1-894581-67-7), July 2010, Service Publications, PO Box 33071, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K2C 3Y9 <http://www.servicepub.com/>

Tonner, Mark W., *Tank-based Devices used by the Calgary Regiment at Dieppe, on 19 August 1942, November 2013, MilArt-Articles on Canadian Militaria* (Service Publications, PO Box 33071, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K2C 3Y9) <http://servicepub.wordpress.com/2013/11/10/tank-based-devices-used-by-the-calgary-regiment-at-dieppe-on-19-august-1942/>



# THE NAVAL DIMENSION

## SMOKE, SHELLS & CHAOS



**Professor of Naval History, Eric Grove, unpicks the chaos of the landings at Dieppe, and the dramatic and costly evacuation of the remnants of the valiant assault force.**

**ABOVE**  
HMS Berkeley ahead of scuttling.  
(ALL IMAGES VIA AUTHOR UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED)

**BELOW**  
The ORP Ślązak returns home following Dieppe.

**T**he assault force, on paper, looked potent. Some 240 ships in all, not including small landing craft. It contained eight Hunt-class destroyers - two acting as command ships. Two minesweeper flotillas were also involved, with nine Landing Ship, Infantry (LSI) (carrying 75 landing craft), seven

groups of 78 American-built Landing Craft, Personnel (Large) (LCP(L)), two flotillas of 24 Landing Craft, Tank (LCT), and six 'Landing Craft, Flak' (LCF), converted LCTs with their ramp welded shut and a deck fitted. First used at Dieppe, they were typically armed with eight 20mm Oerlikon cannon and four 2Pdr 'pom-poms'. There was an additional escort of 12 motor gunboats (MGBs), four steam gunboats (SGBs) and 20 motor launches (ML). A Royal Marine Commando, including a unit tasked with capturing code material, was to be landed in Dieppe harbour by the heavily-armed river gunboat *Locust* and Free French submarine hunters. Most of these assets formed Group 13 led by the sloop *Arlesford* but *Locust* sailed with the main force to provide extra gunfire support.

However, there was a big capability gap. The 'Hunts' were armed with

4in guns, only able to give limited support. The Royal Navy was unwilling to risk larger ships off a hostile coast in the absence of air superiority. The planner of the raid, Lord Mountbatten, repeatedly petitioned for heavier support, but such requests were left wanting. Losses so far had advised caution, but it should have been evident to the risk-averse Admiralty the request was necessary. An alternative was heavy air attack but this was ruled out on a reluctance to cause French casualties. It would have been better to have cancelled Jubilee, but it had too much momentum. Given the level of fighter support planned a capital ship or monitor should certainly have been risked.

The first requirement was to sweep a passage through the German minefield laid to protect coastal shipping. Two flotillas were tasked with this. First was the 9<sup>th</sup>, with all four diesel Bangor-class vessels; *Blackpool*, *Bridlington*, *Bridport* and *Bangor*, and the reciprocating-engine versions of the same class;







*Sidmouth, Bude* and *Rhyl* in addition to the turbine-powered Bangor variant, *Tenby*. The second was the 13<sup>th</sup>, again, all with Bangor-class vessels; the reciprocating-engined *Blyth, Eastbourne, Stormoway* and *Felixstowe*, and the turbine-powered *Clacton, Ilfracombe, Polruan* and *Rothesay*. These flotillas successfully swept two channels.

### DANGEROUS SHORTCUT

The assault shipping was divided into 13 groups. They sailed from Portsmouth, Southampton, Newhaven and Shoreham late on 18 August. The confusion which had been a feature of rehearsals soon reoccurred. Shortly after midnight, the requisitioned ferry-turned-LSI HMS *Queen Emma*, entered the wrong channel, leading the LSIs of Groups 1, 2 and 3, *Prince Albert, Princess Beatrix, Invicta*, and *Princess Astrid*, down the eastern lane, overtaking the destroyer *Fernie*, which was leading the landing craft of Groups 5 and 8. This was in spite of the signals and orders



LEFT

*Bardia Raid, Greece, Crete, Syria* and *Malta Convoy* veteran, HMS *Glengyle*. The Infantry Landing Ship (Large) was disguised as a tanker ahead of Dieppe.

from HMS *Calpe*, the destroyer carrying the naval commander, Captain Hughes-Hallett, which had taken station ahead of the force traversing the western lane, which *Queen Emma* was supposed to be amongst. The large landing ship HMS *Glengyle* led Group 4 correctly through the western passage with *Calpe* on point and escorted by *Brocklesby* and the Polish

ORP *Slazak* to her lowering position 10 miles off Dieppe. *Locust* could not keep up and took a dangerous shortcut over the minefield with ML291, protected only by their shallow draft.

The landing ships carrying out the planned flanking attacks, launched at positions several miles east and west of Dieppe, were the first into action. Group 1 with HMS *Prince Albert* was to lower six LCA and an LCS with No.4 Army Commando, led by Lt-Col Lord Lovat, tasked to land at Orange Beach and destroy the 5.9in battery southwest of Dieppe. Group 2, with *Princess Beatrix* and *Invicta*, carried the South Saskatchewan Regiment in 12 landing craft and an LCS. They were bound for Green Beach at Pourville. On the other side of Dieppe, Group 3, were to land the Royal Regiment of Canada at Puys, in 10 LCA, a LCM, and with a LCS in support.

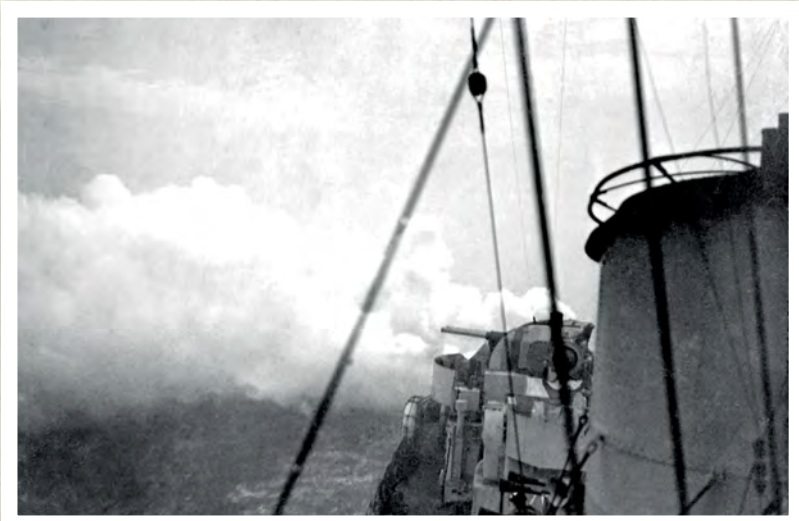
Finally, Group 4, with the large LSI *Glengyle* and the smaller *Prince Charles* and *Prince Leopold*, hoisted out the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry and the Essex Scottish, to assault Red and >>

LEFT

HMS *Albrighton* leaving Dieppe, guns blazing, behind a smokescreen. (COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL NAVY)

BELOW

Elements of the Dieppe raiding force, taken from HMS *Albrighton*. (COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL NAVY)





**RIGHT**  
ML230 with small landing craft.

White Beaches - Dieppe itself. They were carried in 26 LCA, two LCM and supported by three LCS. Groups 1, 2 and 3 had their craft in the water by 0300 and Group 4 by 0320. All seemed well, as the Naval Staff History recorded: 'There had been some inevitable deviations from the programme, but they had been neither numerous nor important.' Then, a firefright erupted on the eastern flank.

**THROWN INTO DISARRAY**

The firefright involved Group 5, 23 LCP(L) carrying No.3 Army Commando (tasked with attacking batteries northeast of Dieppe) and led by Commander Wyburd in SGB 5. There was also an escort, ML 346 and LCF 1. It ran into a German convoy of eight ships, some towing barges, escorted by two submarine chasers, one (UJ 1411) ahead, the other (UJ 1404) astern. Armed trawlers were also on each beam, each with a single 88mm gun, 20mm cannon and assorted small arms.

The convoy had been spotted by British radar and two messages were sent to Hughes-Hallett, but neither were received by *Calpe* or the destroyers on the eastern flank. *Fernie* picked up a warning but assumed the other ships had and did not forward it. Therefore, the first sign of trouble was the explosion of an 88mm starshell at 0347. The trawlers concentrated on SGB 5, which was soon disabled, her boilers and communications knocked out. However, her guns inflicted damage on the German ships. The LCF joined in, giving a firepower



advantage with her guns. UJ1404 sank and UJ1411 was damaged along with a trawler, but the British group was thrown into disarray. Wyburd and the Commando's chief, Durnford Slater, decided to abandon the operation and took to an LCS to report this to the land commander, Major-General Roberts, embarked on *Calpe*.

Lieutenant A. D. Fear RNVR, in ML 346, which had contributed to the action with her 3Pdr gun and 20mm cannon, had different ideas. He rounded up five LCP(L), containing about 100 men, and headed to Yellow Beach 1. LCP(L)15, Sub-Lieutenant Henry Buckee, pressed on for Yellow Beach 2. He landed Major Peter Young's 20

**RIGHT**  
Wounded British soldiers climbing aboard a destroyer during the evacuations from Dieppe.  
(THE CANADIAN PRESS/PA ARCHIVE)

**BELOW**  
Exhausted British and Canadian troops assembled at the quayside in Newhaven.  
(PA ARCHIVE)



commandos, they attacked the targeted battery from the west. Fear's boats came in on the other side and made an opposed landing. ML346 supported this manoeuvre, driving off a German trawler and forcing the tanker *Franz* to be abandoned; she floated ashore and grounded. ML346 then returned to support the commandos.

A sixth LCP(L) now added its troops. The 6.7in gun battery fired, erratically, against the small amphibious group rather than firing at the main force. Two LCP(L), 42 and 81, were sunk. Then a Very Light was fired from the beach and, believing this to be the evacuation signal, the four surviving LCP(L) came in expecting to evacuate the commandos. However, the men did not appear and all LCP 157 could do was evacuate the RN Beachmaster, and his party, trapped under heavy fire. She then drifted onto the rocks and LCP(L) 85 rescued those aboard. LCP(L) 1,





which tried to assist, went aground also but was able to re-float and escape. ML 230 covered the survivors to the 'Boat Pool' offshore. Only one commando escaped, swimming to an ML positioned offshore.

While seemingly abandoned, captured, or annihilated, Young's party was, however, not only successful in diverting the target battery's attention, but in being successfully evacuated despite the chaos. Buckee and LCP(L)15, covered by ML346, successfully got the party aboard and returned to Newhaven. The guns of the battery were not back in action until 0900, long after the main landings had been carried out.

### ALL WAS NOT WELL

On the opposite flank, No.4 Commando were landed on schedule by HMS *Prince Albert's* landing craft, covered by its LCS, MGB 312, and SGB 9. The commandos had considerable success neutralising

this battery, only two guns coming back into action and not until after 0900. The Commando was re-embarked and was in Newhaven by 1745. As Hughes-Hallett wrote, the assault had been 'carried out strictly according to plan.' Sadly, all was not well elsewhere.

On Blue Beach, there had been significant delay and it was light by the time landing craft approached the shore. Despite the best efforts of LCS 8 and 25, the defences could not be subdued. Most of the Canadians became casualties and a LCA trying to approach the beach was sunk. A message was sent to evacuate survivors but only two vessels picked it up and LCA 209, overloaded by the retreating soldiers, sank with almost everyone on board. A few LCP(L) sent to evacuate the Yellow Beach commandos appeared off Blue Beach and rescued nine Canadians clinging to an upturned boat. HMS *Garth*, attempting to support the attack with gunfire, signalled Calpe that evacuation was necessary. Lt Cmdr Goulding, the Group Commander, boarded ML 291 and gathered together landing craft. His attempt, and a following one by *Princess*

*Astrid's* LCA were driven off. Those left ashore could only surrender.

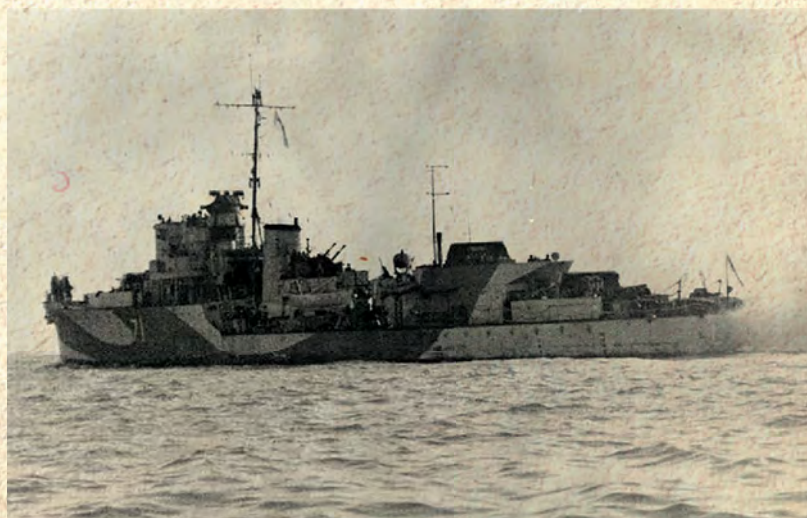
On Green Beach (Pourville), things were better - if only a little. While remaining mostly undetected and unopposed, there was confusion about the precise landing point and LCS 9 was sunk trying to land the group senior officer, Lt Cmdr Prior. He eventually got ashore, but LCA 170 was unable to land the naval Beachmaster (who was wounded) and his party and withdrew. Group 6 did land the reinforcing Queens Cameron Highlanders at 0550, although their CO was killed immediately. Having landed in the wrong place, the bulk of the South Saskatchewan Regiment, landed to support the Commando, struggled to cross a defended bridge and stalled until the VC-earning actions of their commander, Lt-Col. Charles Merritt VC. (see page 89)

### TANK SUPPORT

The landings on Red and White beaches had developed into a shambles. On Red Beach, the Essex Scottish landed in 16 LCA launched by *Prince Charles* and *Prince Leopold*. On White Beach, the >>

**ABOVE**  
Wrecked landing craft and British and Canadian dead and wounded on Dieppe beaches.

(BUNDESARCHIV)



**LEFT**  
The destroyer HMS *Calpe* laying a smokescreen with chlorosulfuric acid or titanium tetrachloride sprayers on her stern.





**ABOVE**  
Allied troops prepare for their landing at Dieppe. (PA ARCHIVE)

**RIGHT**  
LCMs, loaded with Universal Carriers and troops, LCMs alongside HMS Albrighton. (COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL NAVY)

**BELOW**  
A wounded Canadian is disembarked from the Polish destroyer ORP *Ślązak* at Portsmouth on return from Dieppe.

Royal Hamilton Light Infantry came ashore in *Glengyle's* twelve LCA and two LCM. Fire support was given by four destroyers, three LCS, and *Locust*. The troops landed at 0523 with little opposition, but then were pinned down by fire. Tank support would have been useful, but Group 8, led by Admiral Beatty's son in ML 343, was 10 minutes late because of navigational problems. As they came in, they were covered by the 2Pdr and 20mm guns of LCF 2 and 6, but the Germans were able to concentrate heavy weapons on their tank landing craft.

LCT 145 beached successfully and landed her three Churchills but was sunk as she withdrew, as was LCT 126. LCT 127 was hit and most of her crew became casualties, but she was able to

land her tanks and get away. LCT 159 was hit and although she landed her tanks could not get off the beach. A similar fate befell LCT 121. Meanwhile, LCT 163 made no less than three attempts to land before, using the wreck of 145 as cover, she was able to do so

The LCT of Group 9 arrived half an hour later. LCT 124 landed her tanks and withdrew, LCT 125 was ordered off after landing one tank. She tried again and although all her crew became casualties she managed to land a second Churchill before her second-in-command got her away and she was taken in tow by *Arlesford*. LCT 165 had her steering gear damaged but still landed her tanks and withdrew. In all, 28 out of 30 Churchill tanks attempted to be landed were put ashore.

LCF 2, with a more powerful armament than her sisters, moved in to give what support she could but was sunk, much of her 60 crew of marines

casino, and, unable to see through the smoke, sent his reserve into Red Beach, the Fusiliers Mont Royal. The result was further casualties and loss of three craft from Group 7. The Commandos were sent into White Beach, to cover the right flank of the Canadian advance. Witnessing the futility, the CO, Lt-Colonel Phillips, ordered the craft away. He was killed, but most of his unit survived. Nearby ships signalled Calpe that all was indeed lost.

### VANQUISH

There was no alternative. The code word 'Vanquish' was sent at 0950. There was confusion as to when the evacuation would start, but it was delayed to allow for an air-delivered smokescreen. *Brocklesby* shelled the headland at Pourville and another destroyer the eastern headland. Landing craft were instructed to return to their original beaches to lift troops, but only



and sailors lost. The situation ashore was hopeless, and the ten following LCT, Groups 10 and 11, were ordered to return without landing. They left, accompanied by *Garth*, running short of ammunition, and *Arlesford*, with LCT 125 in tow.

*Locust* now moved to lead the attack on the harbour, but was hit and it was decided to abandon that landing, ending any attempt to land an Enigma 'snatch' force. The gunboat continued to bombard German positions. It was then decided to transfer the Royal Marines from her group to five LCA and two LCM held in the 'Boat Pool'. They would act as reserve for White Beach.

In reality, the only option was withdrawal but Major-General Roberts was misled by reports of success at the

LCA and LCM were to be used as the fire was too heavy for LCP(L) and LCTs.

Seven of *Prince Leopold's* LCA and her LCS should have arrived at Red Beach but arrived at Green Beach instead. One left to go to her intended destination but two more LCA arrived. The destroyers *Albrighton* and *Bleasdale* provided cover. The Naval Staff History recorded: 'there was a rush to board the craft and many casualties occurred during the re-embarkation; ramps became jammed with dead and wounded and some of the craft were overloaded and shipped a lot of water.' LCA 215 was sunk; the others transferred their survivors to the destroyers.

At 1100, the scheduled time for withdrawal, four of *Invicta's* LCA went







**LEFT**  
A German medic  
treats a captured  
British soldier.  
(PA ARCHIVE)



anyone. More seriously, Commander McIntock, in charge of the 'Boat Pool', received a garbled message leading him to withdraw a large number of LCP(L). These were not intended to pluck troops from the beaches, but may have stood off and accepted troops from lighter craft. McIntock compounded the error by ordering other LCA to join him, increasing overcrowding in vessels participating in the withdrawal.

HMS *Brocklesby* closed to within 500yds of the shore to provide support, and was repeatedly hit. Her engines were briefly disabled, and she grounded but was able to re-float and, still firing, retired behind the smoke. At 1240 *Calpe*, with two LCA off her bows, approached the beach. She exchanged fire with guns ashore but found no troops awaiting. *Locust*, busy bombarding the eastern flank, was considered for further support but, as it was reported soldiers ashore were surrendering, this was abandoned.

The massive air battle, the largest for the RAF since the Battle of Britain, had started strongly, but ultimately had not gone the RAF's way. German strength in the air, on account of a summer of RAF strikes against the northern European coast, had increased. Although initially unhindered by the Luftwaffe, the taskforce became increasingly vulnerable to air attack as the operation progressed. HMS Berkeley had been bombarding White Beach, as she withdrew she was attacked by Do 217 bombers and Fw 190s, one of which scored two hits. Her back broken, she was abandoned - finished off with torpedo from *Albrighton*.

It was all a most dismal end to Jubilee, and the codeword for withdrawal, Vanquish, could not have been more prophetic. ☉

**BELOW**  
The scene of  
destruction left  
behind at Dieppe.

to Green Beach. LCA 317 was badly hit and abandoned, the overloaded LCA 251 sunk 200yds offshore. LCA 214, also overloaded, was towed to *Albrighton* and sank alongside her. LCA 202 sank alongside *Bleasdale* having transferred her troops and crew. There were a few more trips, supported by *Brocklesby*, *Locust* and SBG 9. LCA 250 and 315 returned to the beach at 1215 but found no-one.

The heavy smokescreen laid over Red and White Beaches was as much a problem as an asset, as it interfered with fire support. The taskforce lent what support it could, and HMS *Prince Charles'* flotilla sent eight LCA to Red Beach but six were sunk. Only two embarked troops.

Four of *Princess Astrid's* craft went to White Beach under heavy fire. One was sunk, but the others took off about 70 troops each - twice the normal load. One transferred its men to LCT 124, which was then hit and sank. LCA 314 went alongside another LCT and sank after transferring men to LCT 163. Six

craft from *Glengyle* and *Prince Charles* then approached White Beach. A small group of Canadians fighting around a beached LCT were evacuated, followed by a rush of other troops, which upset the trim of one LCA which subsequently sank. Two more craft were lost.

Prince *Leopold's* flotilla, already having carried out the evacuation at Green Beach, went in. The destroyers signalled them to withdraw but some touched down. Others rescued troops swimming in the water. The last craft to leave was LCA 186, which rescued swimmers off White Beach but was unable to approach the shore to save the few troops left there.

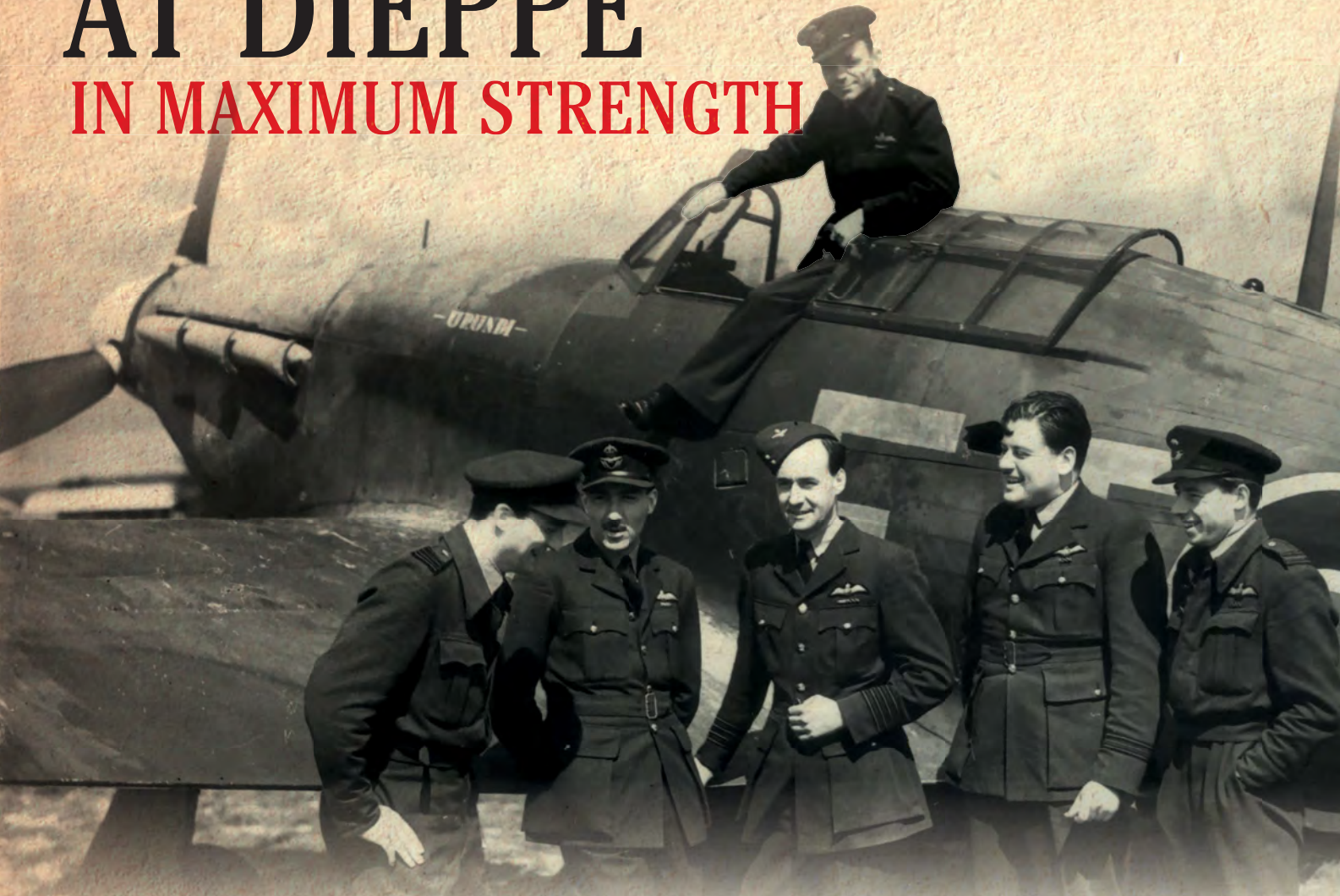
### VULNERABLE TO AIR ATTACK

The assets available for the evacuation were more limited than they might have been, because of the chronic confusion that characterised the whole operation. LCF 1, badly hit, perhaps understandably, misunderstood the withdrawal signal and led a number of LCA to Britain without lifting





# THE RAF AT DIEPPE IN MAXIMUM STRENGTH



Not only was the air component an essential offensive and defensive element of Operation Jubilee, but it also gave the RAF its long-awaited opportunity to have the major confrontation with the Luftwaffe it had wanted since the Germans had turned their attentions eastwards in 1941.

**ABOVE**  
RAF pilots gather  
around a 43  
Squadron Hurricane  
at Tangmere  
immediately after  
the Dieppe raid.

**B**y the end of that August day in 1942, the RAF and the Luftwaffe had engaged in what must be regarded as the greatest air battle of the war - if only in terms of the sorties flown and aircraft lost in combat, on both sides, in the space of just sixteen hours. However, and despite the tragic losses on the ground amongst the Canadian forces, the RAF were able to claim the day as a victory.

Clearly, the RAF's involvement was offensive as much as it was defensive on that day, but in order to better understand the role of the air force in

Operation Jubilee, then the following extract from a Combined Operations HQ order of 31 July 1942 best serves to illustrate what was expected of its pilots and aircrew :-

## AIR SUPPORT

Air action in direct support of the landings will be provided as follows:

(i) Two gun positions south of Jubilee which threaten the landings at Red and White beaches will be attacked by Hurricane bombers and day bombers. These positions will be attacked approximately five minutes before the landing craft are due to touch down.

(ii) If weather permits, aircraft will lay smoke on and bomb enemy gun positions on the headland to the east of Jubilee harbour during the final approach of the landing craft to Red and White beaches.

(iii) Close support fighters will attack the beaches (Red and White), the buildings overlooking these beaches and gun positions on the headland to the west of Jubilee as the landing craft finally approach and the first troops step ashore at Red and White beaches.

(iiii) A Spitfire squadron will attack the gun positions 4½ miles west of Jubilee in support of the attack on these positions





made by Commando troops previously landed at Orange beach.

Air Support will be provided as follows during the withdrawal:

(i) Fighter cover will be increased to maximum strength.

(ii) Bomber and Fighter squadrons will be maintained at 'Readiness' in maximum strength to engage targets and to cover the withdrawal.

Given the sheer scale of the RAF's part in the operation, the number of units involved, the number of sorties and of individual engagements, it would be impossible in this brief coverage to do any more than give this brief overview of the air component's role which should be viewed in conjunction with the Order of Battle (page 67). Instead, we look at the experiences and comments of just some of the pilots who served with the RAF and Allied air forces during Operation Jubilee.

Whilst the overwhelming number of sorties flown that day were flown by RAF Fighter Command, a great many sorties were flown by Bomber Command. Amongst these were the Douglas Boston aircraft of 226 Sqn flown by Plt Off Kenneth Warwood which had been engaged on smoke-laying operations. Very often, it is the fighter-boy's stories which are told and re-told, but Kenneth's remarkable tale from Dieppe is worth relating - in full and in his own words. It was his second sortie over Dieppe that day:

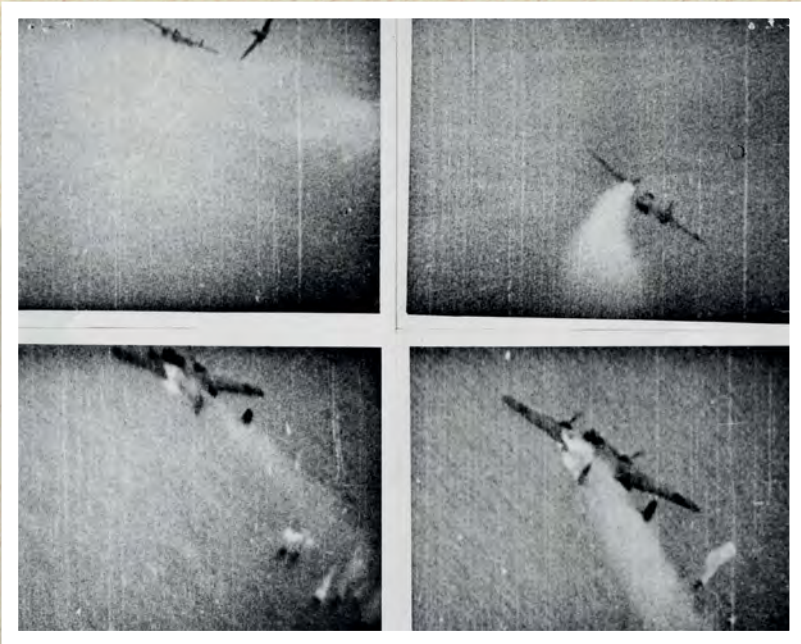
*'Our second operation was flown in Boston AL680 (MQ-L) in an aircraft fitted with smoke installation things to lay smokescreens. They looked like Calor gas cylinders. Four of us went back to Dieppe in the afternoon. We let go the smoke which came out of the bomb bays and then >>*

**LEFT**

A large number of Canadians also participated in the air, and Flt Sgt B M Zobell of 401 (Canadian) Sqn managed to limp home in Spitfire BS120 after being hit whilst attacking a Do 217. He was wounded by glass splinters in his left eye.

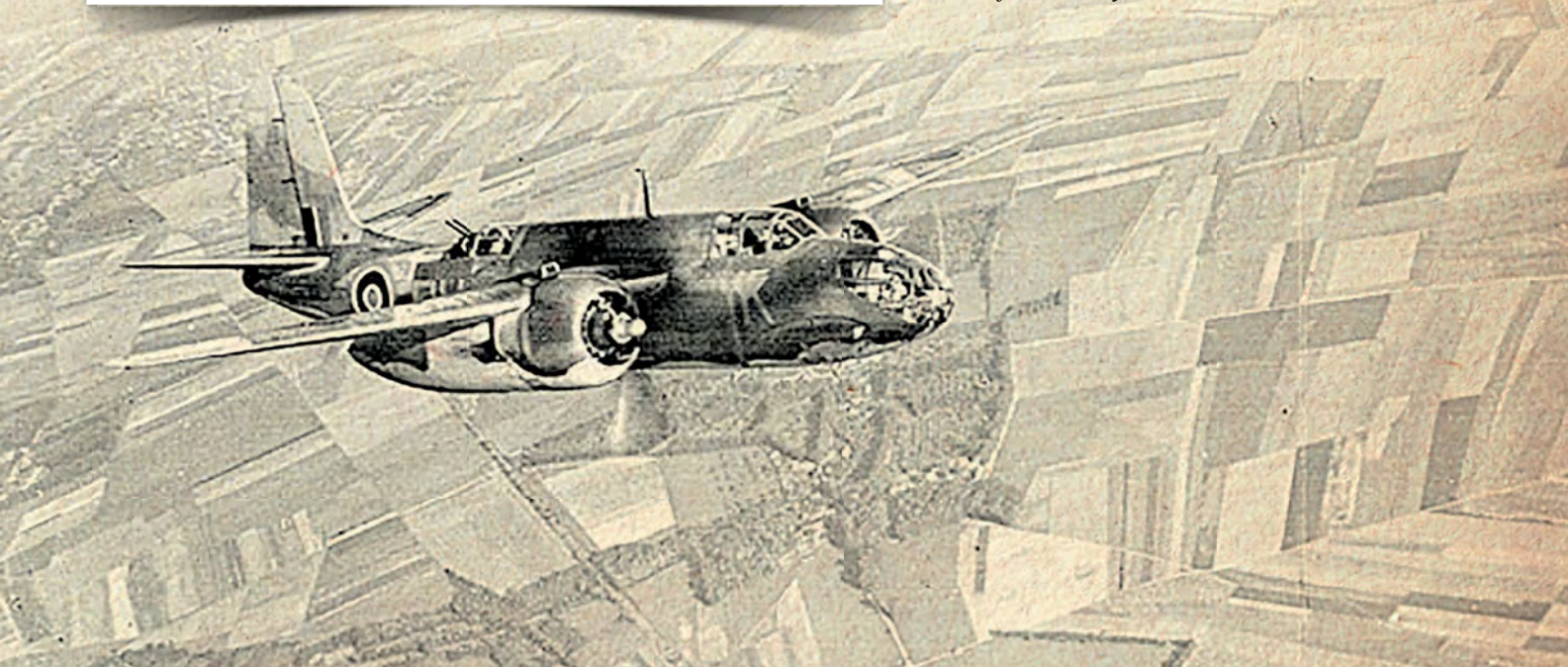
**LEFT**

Camera gun frames showing a Do 217 under attack over Dieppe. Amongst the squadrons engaging the Dorniers that day was 332 (Norwegian) Sqn.



**BELOW**

A Boston medium-bomber over Dieppe on 19 August 1942.





**RIGHT**

Flt Lt L E Disney of 165 Sqn with his Spitfire 'Elsie'. He claimed a half share of a damaged Do 217 and a damaged Ju 88.



**CENTER**

Flt Lt E W Campbell-Colquhoun, also of 165 Sqn, shared a Do 217 damaged over Dieppe.

happy about it. They took us to Fecamp and then by car to a FW 190 airfield which was an hour away on the road to Rouen. Then we went by van to Rouen, then Le Bourget. Here, there were a lot of us where we were interrogated by the Luftwaffe. A nice, older chap. He said he had just been in Guernsey and offered me some chocolate. He told me he had a factory in Wuppertal and another in Bradford – he wanted to know if Bradford had been badly bombed!

Sgt 'Johnny' Staubo, a Norwegian flying with the Spitfire-equipped 332 (Norwegian) Sqn was one of the many pilots who became POW that day:

*'I was flying as 'Yellow 4' and while we were flying in loose formation under the clouds, a FW 190 came out of the clouds right in front of me. I shot him down, and saw him crashing into the sea. This war later confirmed by Sgt Aarflot on his return to RAF Manston.*

*After a while, Wg Cdr Scott-Malden, who was leading our squadron, ordered us to re-group and go home. Just as we were diving we were jumped by some other FW 190s and I ended up in a dogfight. I was shot down in a head-on attack and was slightly wounded in my right hand. I then had to bail out and landed in a field off the coast and was immediately taken prisoner. Later, I was shot through my right lung when I tried to escape, but I ended up in Stalag Luft III.'*

Another pilot of the same squadron, Sgt Marius Erikson, had rather better luck than Staubo. Surviving encounters with the German fighters, he engaged a number of Dornier 217s which were

turned in towards land. We got hit in the port engine and it was just hanging off because of a direct hit from a shore battery. We then lost the canopy, and then the whole tail was shot off. We flopped into the water as were only at about ten feet. I had thrown my helmet off, and the next thing, I woke up. I had been thrown through the nose, which luckily had no Perspex due to the flak hit. I still had my 'K' type dinghy and seat and was thrown about 40 yards into the water. The seat had collapsed, but was still strapped to me – complete with the ammunition stowed under the seat!

The other two were in the dinghy (which was damaged) and they disconnected me from the seat. I was semi-conscious all the

time. They started baling, and I was telling them how to set course for home! I had light splinter damage to my right arm and had damaged my back – which still hurts today, especially in the evenings. But there is nothing that can be done. The other two were totally uninjured.

The aircraft sank very quickly and we were bobbing about for 14 hours. We had crashed at about 14.15 hours. We were picked up by an E Boat, together with Fg Off Emil Landsman (a Spitfire pilot from 306 sqn) and two engine-room men from the Newhaven ASR launch, at 04.00. He just sailed right up to us as if he knew we were there. The crew were very nice. They gave me clothes, and some rum, and were all quite

**BELOW**

A group of pilots from 43 Sqn take an unusual form of transport back from Dispersal at RAF Tangmere after the Dieppe raid.







being sent out to attack the raiding force of shipping and landing craft:

*'At about 1,500 to 2,000 feet, just off the coast, about 5 to 8 Dornier 217s came flying outwards towards our ships. One of them I got. It was a mad chase. Can also remember a Spitfire appearing in my sights (from underneath) and I was firing my guns. After all, we had for so long been wanting a chance like this – all of us. It was the first time we had seen the 217. It had some kind of dive brakes as far as I remember.'*

Perhaps summing it all up succinctly are the words of Flt Lt John Ellacombe of 253 Sqn:

*'I completed three tours of operations during the war, was shot down four times, served 34 years in the RAF, which included*

*many tough assignments, but I am sure that this was the most dramatic of them all.'*

It had, indeed, been a most dramatic day.

When the day drew a close, and the surviving pilots and aircrew of both sides retired wearily and thankfully to their beds, the RAF had flown some 3,000 sorties and the Luftwaffe nearly 1,000. Losses on the RAF side had seen around 100 of their own aircraft destroyed, and around 50 aircraft lost on the Luftwaffe side. In total, the RAF had lost 64 pilots and aircrew killed, 17 POW, 42 wounded and 5 injured.

The Luftwaffe fighter force (excluding bomber losses) had suffered 14 killed or missing and 7 wounded.

Air Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, who had more fighter squadrons available to him on the day than had Dowding during the Battle of Britain, sent the following signal to his fighter pilots:

*'So intense has been the battle that I have had to make far greater calls on all squadrons than I ever anticipated, or I would have imagined you could have undertaken. I thank you for your cheerfulness and keenness with which all sorties were carried out and congratulate you all most heartily upon the brilliant result of the days fighting.'* ☉

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With thanks to Chris Goss for his assistance in compiling our section on the RAF's participation at Dieppe in these special content pages.

#### Further Reading:

'The Greatest Aire Battle: Dieppe 19 August 1942' by Norman Franks. Published by Grub Street. ISBN 0-948817-58-5)

#### TOP LEFT

Plt Off H C Richardson was another of 165 Sqn's pilots in action that day, also claiming a half-score in a damaged Ju 88.

#### ABOVE

Plt Off H L Pederson, yet another pilot of 165 Sqn, claimed a 'shared' Do 217 but had his windscreen shattered by return fire.

#### LEFT

Fg Off D Warren and B Warren were twins who served on 165 Sqn and were in action over Dieppe. In true fashion, as twins, they shared a Ju 88 as 'damaged'.

#### LEFT

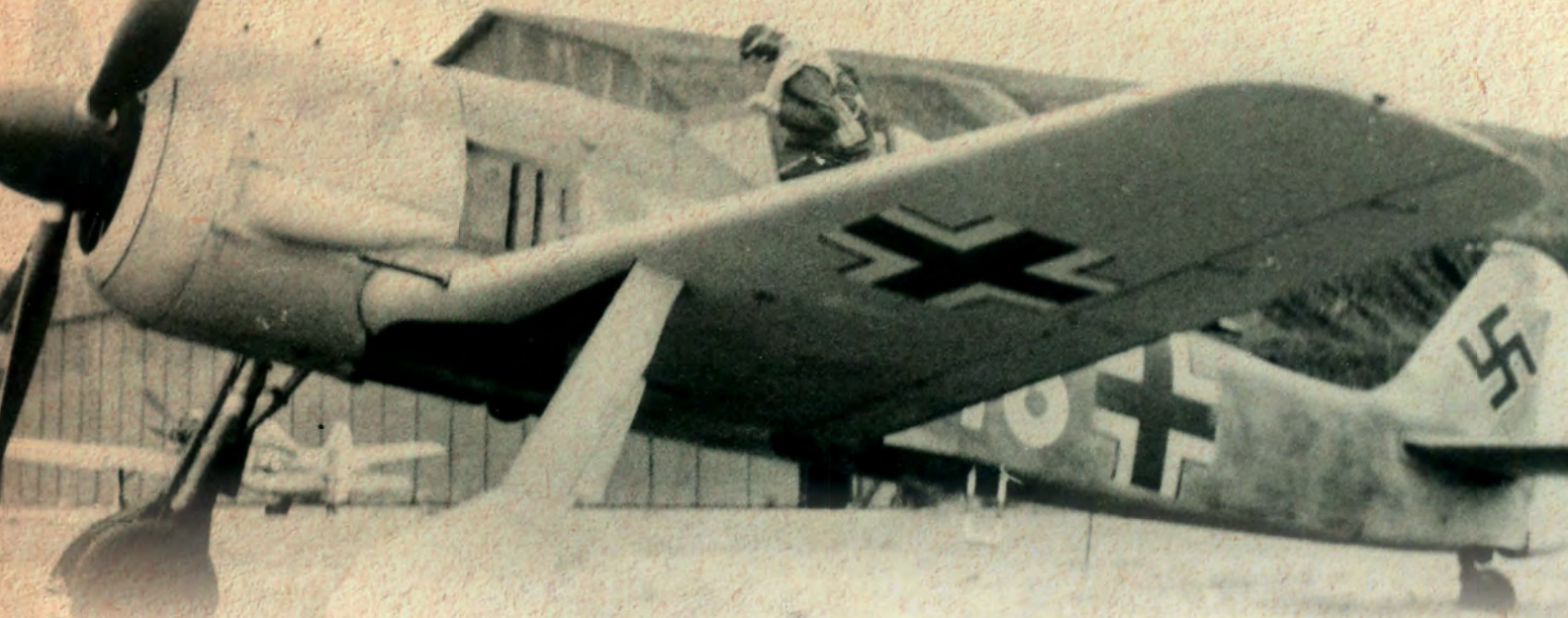
Sqn Ldr Hubert 'Jim' Hallows, led the successful 165 Sqn over Dieppe, with himself claiming one Do 217 destroyed and another damaged.





# FIGHTER–BOMBERS OVER DIEPPE

## FW 190'S FIRST BIG BATTLE



The Luftwaffe response to the Dieppe raid was robust, with the resolve of the defending German pilots not found wanting as Chris Goss describes.

**ABOVE**  
Uffz Werner Schammert of 10./JG 26 getting into his Fw 190 around the time of Dieppe. He would be taken POW on 10 October 1942.

**F**ighter-bomber pilot Lt Leopold 'Poldi' Wenger of 10./JG 2 and the other pilots of his unit were asleep at their billet near Caen when news of the Dieppe raid came through. Immediately, he and two other pilots were ordered to carry out an armed reconnaissance. However, what happened on take-off he had reason to remember well:

*"I had lousy luck and at the same time a lot of good luck. Whilst opening the throttle, the undercarriage collapsed and I slid along the grass on my 500kg bomb. It was not a very cheering experience, especially when you know about the explosive effect of the bomb or when you have been able to watch its effect during an attack. So, I missed the first mission. With a Me 108, I flew from Caen to Ste André to get a new 190 and then back to Caen again. Valuable time was lost, and I was afraid I would be too late and the whole fuss would be over!"*

The two other pilots managed to attack an unidentified warship, but one Fw 190 suffered flak damage whilst

damage to the other resulted in a forced-landing west of Dieppe. But 10./JG2's day was just beginning.

### 'THE EFFECT WAS DEVASTATING'

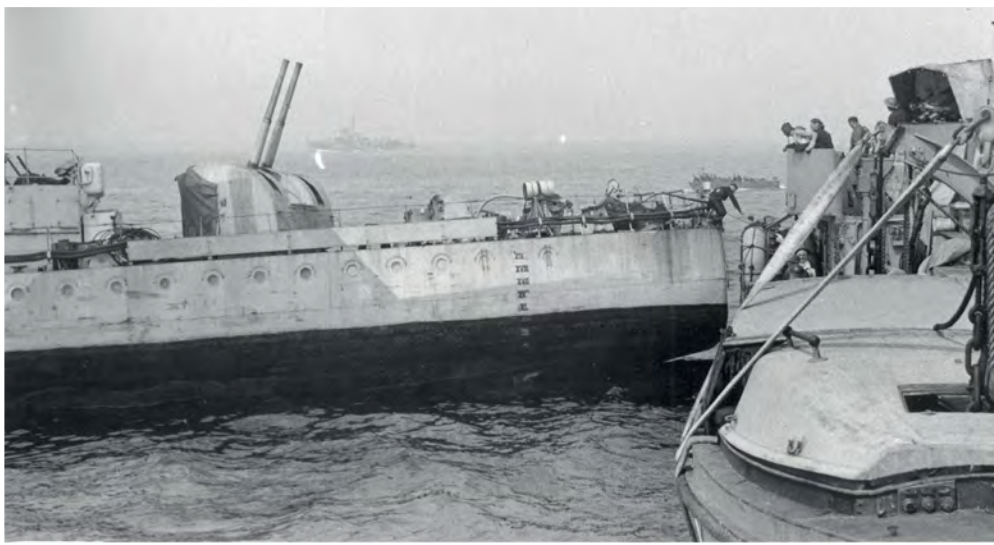
Shortly afterwards, the unit carried out another attack flown by Oblt Fritz Schröter, Lt Erhard Nippa and Lt Gerhard Limberg, and three hits were reported on another unknown ship. Then, at 1033 hours, Wenger with three NCO pilots took off, each armed with a 500kg bomb:

*"When we arrived over Dieppe, the fighting zone was shrouded in mist, dust and dense smoke. The fleet was completely hidden. Everywhere there were muzzle flashes and ashore you could see lots of fires from shot down aircraft and burnt out tanks. In the sea, many aircrew were floating in their rubber dinghies. At exactly midday, we began a low-level attack. At the same moment, a German bomber dived past us into the sea. We advanced in the mist and got to the cause of the smoke screen. All our guns were fired and bombs released at the*



*same time. A bomb went off under the stern of a destroyer, but then I was shot at by all kinds of flak and because of the fireworks, I couldn't watch any more. The three other 190s flying with me damaged a few more*





ships, and one shot down a Spitfire. Still flying at low level, we fired into the packed landing craft. The effect was devastating.”

10/JG2 returned virtually unscathed, but it was the next attack that was the most spectacular. It was witnessed by Gp Capt Harry ‘Broadie’ Broadhurst DSO DFC AFC who was Deputy Senior Air Staff Officer at HQ 11 Group. He flew four sorties that day and took off from Hornchurch at 1230 hours on his third mission, together with Wg Cdr Robin Powell, and recorded the following:

“The withdrawal was almost complete and with the exception of a few ships two or three miles off Dieppe, which included the destroyer Berkeley, the convoy was in full progress back towards the English coast.



After cruising around for a few minutes, Wg Cdr Powell separated from me and went down to sea level to see the situation from low altitude whilst I circled the Dieppe area gradually losing height down to 18,000 feet.

I noticed one or two attacks by Dornier 217s whose bombing appeared to be extremely inaccurate, many of them jettisoning their bombs as soon as they were attacked by Spitfires.

I noticed that the rear of the convoy, i.e. that part of it nearest to the French coast, was being subjected to the most severe attacks and latterly the majority being directed against the destroyer Berkeley which was apparently in difficulties. I called up Hornchurch Control and asked them to suggest to Group Operations that patrols be concentrated over that area, at the same time calling up the ship control and suggesting that he moved the bottom cover squadron to the immediate vicinity of the Berkeley. The ship controller was continuously reporting the presence of Dornier 217s, but I noticed there were several 190s about, some of them carrying bombs. Towards the end of my patrol I saw two Focke-Wulfs dive towards the Berkeley. I dived after them but could not intercept until after they had dropped their bombs, one of which appeared to score a direct hit on the stern of the Berkeley. I closed in to the rear of the Focke-Wulf as he pulled away from his dive and emptied most of my cannon and machine gun ammunition into him with good effect....”

Four FW 190s of 10./JG2 had taken off at 1250 hours led by Oblt Fritz Schröter. With him was Leopold Wenger, whose recollections were vivid:

“...the English were withdrawing everywhere, but the smoke screen did not help them much. I attacked a second destroyer and achieved a direct hit amidships with an SC500 bomb. During the attack, I was under heavy anti-aircraft fire from the destroyer but when the bomb went off, the guns stopped shooting. An explosion followed - simply disastrous. The whole ship was enveloped in a black cloud but then I was chased and attacked by many Spitfires and unfortunately could not watch the complete sinking. In the course of this, I had got a >>

#### ABOVE

Survivors being taken off HMS Berkeley.

## THE AERIAL VICTORS



Not surprisingly, both sides made significant air combat claims during the Dieppe operation, including these four fighter pilots of JG2:



ABOVE Ofw Kurt Goltzsch of 4./JG2 who claimed two victories at Dieppe.



ABOVE Oblt Egon Meyer of 7./JG2 who also claimed two victories at Dieppe.



#### LEFT

‘Poldi’ Wenger (left) and Fw Gerhard Limberg whilst converting onto the Fw 190 at le Bourget, June 1942.

ABOVE Oblt Siegfried Schnell of 9./JG2 claimed five victories at Dieppe.



ABOVE Oblt Erich Leie of 1./JG2 shot down a Spitfire over Dieppe before being shot down himself. Here, he returns, wounded, to his unit.



THE DAY THE TOMMIES CAME



This photograph captures a moment in history on 19 August, 1942, when news has just come through of the landings at Dieppe and the bomber aircrews of 2./KG77 are briefed and given their orders before setting off on their first sorties of the day.



landings and running the gauntlet of the Luftwaffe and German shore batteries. When it was decided there was no point in continuing the action, the order was given to withdraw. Berkeley, together with other ships, waited offshore for the last evacuees and was constantly under attack. The ship stopped momentarily to pick up from a landing craft a party of Canadian soldiers; many badly wounded and all suffering from shock and exhaustion. We made the walking wounded as comfortable as possible and handed round cigarettes. When this was accomplished, I grabbed a tea urn and made my way to the galley to make tea for them. Just as I got into the galley and turned on the tap of a large hot water tank a bomb struck the ship just forward of the bridge, breaking its back. The blast broke through the bulkhead and I was enveloped in boiling

pick up survivors. Unfortunately, all the Canadian soldiers in the forward mess deck and 15 of the ship's company were lost. Incidentally, we'd picked up a German airman earlier and after 'abandon ship' was sounded, someone recalled he was still locked away and a rating was sent to release him..."

In addition to the 15 crew who were killed, an unknown number of Canadian soldiers died, together with Wg Cdr Skinner.

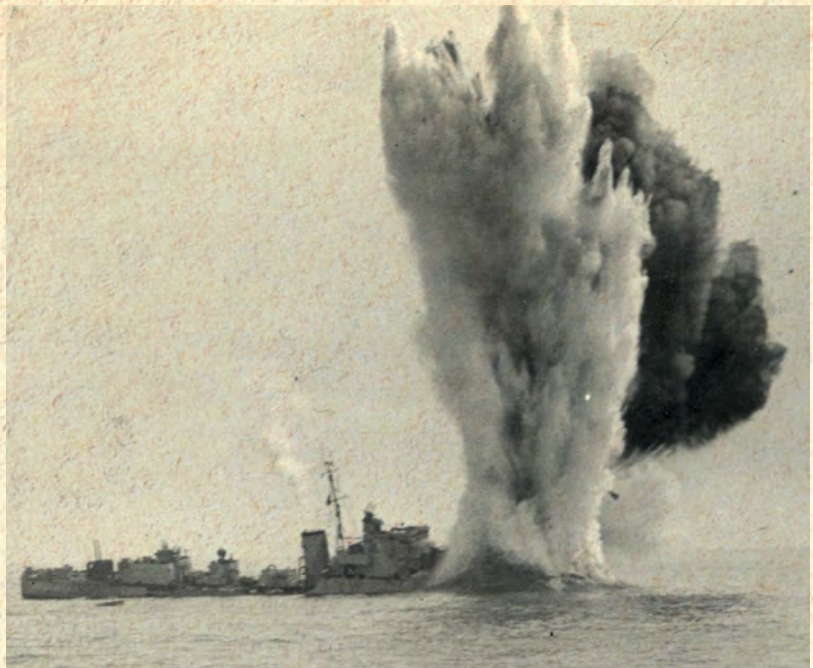
Mortally damaged, and with all survivors and bodies taken off, HMS Albrighton was instructed to sink the Berkeley and did so with two torpedoes. The second hit the forward magazine, and following an immense explosion at 1338 hours, just 20 minutes after the German attack, the Berkeley sank.

**RIGHT**  
HMS Berkeley is finished-off by a British torpedo off Dieppe, 19 August 1942, after being crippled by the fighter-bombers.

good thrashing from the flak with my wing engine, cowling, undercarriage and tail unit riddled with bullets. There were also two hits in the cockpit, but three had ricocheted off the head armour plate. Of course, the mission was worth it..."

RED HOT METAL

HMS Berkeley had been in almost constant action since the start of the raid, bombarding the town and surrounding cliffs and laying smoke screens. In addition to its normal ship's complement of 146, she was also carrying RAF, Army and USAAF observers and air controllers, the senior being Lt Col Loren Hillsinger USAAF and Wg Cdr Stanley Skinner. The following account by Supply Assistant Tom Hare vividly tells what happened: "...for something like six hours, Berkeley was constantly engaged in supporting the



DIEPPE CASUALTY IN SUSSEX



On 19 August, 1942, Luftwaffe aircraft were not shy in pursuing the raiding force back to England after the Dieppe landings. This was all that was left of a Junkers 88 of KuFGr.3/106 which was shot down by flak north of Chichester during the early evening with the loss of all four crew members. Two unexploded 250kg bombs were found in the wreckage.



water. The cooking range on the opposite side of the galley disintegrated, and I found myself on the deck amongst red hot metal. I eventually picked myself up in pain from scalds and burns and made my way to the upper deck.

The Berkeley was going at full speed when she was hit, and with the steering smashed she continued at high speed in a circle, heeling over so steeply that some of the crew were thrown off her decks.

Just as I reached the upper deck, the 'Abandon ship!' call was made and I made my way to the Carley Float which was my 'abandon ship' post but the float was entangled in the broken structure of the bridge where it had been attached. The bombing happened in the final moments of the evacuation, and my first thoughts were that there may not be any craft left to come to our rescue. Fortunately, Steam Gun Boat 8 witnessed the bombing and returned to

CHASING RETREATING SHIPS

By mid-afternoon, the battles around Dieppe were over. One further Jabo attack took place that day when 10./JG 2 sent five aircraft chasing the retreating ships. Again, Wenger, recalled:

"At 1608 hours, took off again on my third sortie against the fleeing fleet. Eventually we reached a force of big landing craft off Brighton. As a defensive measure, there were barrage balloons. We attacked at once and after receiving hits, two ships sank immediately. Unfortunately, my bomb went over the ship and exploded 10 metres besides it but I then shot at it and set fire to the superstructure to make up for it!

With that, the combat at Dieppe ended for us. Our Staffel had sent to the bottom two destroyers, two big landing craft, two escort ships and a Spitfire. It also damaged one destroyer, one cargo ship, one landing ship and two escort ships" ☉





# THE DIEPPE VCs

## GALLANTRY UNDER FIRE



While there were many instances of daring and courage during Operation Jubilee, three men in particular were rewarded for acts of outstanding valour during the raid.

### MAJOR PAT PORTEOUS

Operation *Jubilee* is remembered as a costly failure, but two of the units involved in the raid, and only two, succeeded in attaining their objectives. One of these was No.4 Commando, led by Major Lord Lovat.

Consisting of 252 men, No.4 Commando was tasked with destroying the powerful six-gun 'Hess' battery sited at Varengeville-sur-Mer to the west of Dieppe ahead of the main landings. If the battery's 150mm guns were not silenced, they could devastate the slow-moving flotilla packed with thousands of troops.

For the assault upon the battery, the Commando was split into two groups, with Captain Pat Porteous the liaison officer between the two groups.

The Commandos crept forward in the dark and destroyed barbed wire, telephone lines and some German defences, and succeeded in crossing a minefield. When daylight came they were confronted by thirty or more German assault troops, whom they killed, but others soon took their place and the Commandos began to take casualties.

During the initial assault on the battery, Porteous found himself with the smaller of the two detachments. He was shot at close range by a German, the bullet passing through his hand and his arm. Undaunted, Porteous, using the other hand, shot his assailant dead.

Next, Porteous saved the life of a sergeant by disarming his attacker

and despatching the German with his own bayonet. In the meantime, the larger detachment had been held up, with one of its officers being killed and its senior NCO, the troop sergeant, severely wounded. Almost immediately afterwards the only other officer of the detachment was also killed.

The attack had clearly reached a critical stage. The citation for Porteous' Victoria Cross described what happened next: 'Major Porteous, without hesitation and in the face of a withering fire, dashed across the open ground to take over the command of this detachment. Rallying them, he led them in a charge which carried the German position at the point of the bayonet, and was severely wounded for the second time. Though shot through the thigh he continued to the final objective where he eventually collapsed from loss of blood after the last of the guns had been destroyed.'

### LIEUTENANT COLONEL CECIL MERRITT

On the coast to the west of Dieppe was another coastal battery at Pourville. The destruction of this battery was handed to No.3 Commando. The two commando battalions were to land thirty minutes before the main assault and, at the same time, two Canadian battalions were to land to the immediate east and west of Dieppe to provide support for the attacks on the batteries and form a secure perimeter for the main force to land.

The battalion assigned to the east was the South Saskatchewan Regiment commanded by Lt Col Cecil Merritt. Its objectives were to seize Pourville and then the cliffs above the village. Unfortunately, as with much of Operation *Jubilee*, things began to go wrong shortly after the troops started to land. The bulk of the South Saskatchewan was landed on the wrong side of the River Scie and faced crossing a narrow bridge though Pourville to reach its objectives on the cliffs.

By that time, the Germans were under arms and began to target the bridge. As the men tried to rush over the river they were cut down by machine gun >>

### ABOVE

The beach at Dieppe after the raid.

### BELOW

A German prisoner, Unteroffizier Leo Marsiniak, is escorted ashore at Newhaven after the Dieppe Raid, Operation Jubilee, on 19 August 1942. He was captured by the men of No.4 Commando at the Hess Battery at Varengeville-sur-Mer.





**DIEPPE PSDA DICKIN MEDAL AWARDEE** 

Despite the rapid advance of communication technologies, the secret messages carried by hundreds of thousands of pigeons, heavily utilised for the duration of the conflict, greatly contributed to the Allied war effort. The trusty pigeon was carried in RAF bomber and reconnaissance aircraft, by frontline troops, and even used by SOE operatives working behind enemy lines.

Many pigeons were honoured for contributing to the rescue of downed aircrew or for carrying messages from embedded operatives, frequently completing 400 or 500 mile flights in around a day, despite injuries or extreme weather. One bird, Gustav, was decorated for delivering the first news from Normandy on D-Day. An American bird, GI Joe, covered 20 miles in 20 minutes, passing a message from US troops to the British 10<sup>th</sup> Army HQ, allowing them to prevent an airstrike certain to have hit a company of Allied soldiers. Undoubtedly, the messages, intelligence and microfilm carried by pigeons saved lives.

Accordingly, the PSDA Dickin Medal was awarded 32 times to pigeons, more than to any other animal, during the conflict. The award was also bestowed on NPS.41. NS.4230 'Beach Comber' in March 1944. This Canadian Army pigeon remains the only Canadian pigeon honoured this way, and one of only three Canadian animals to receive the award. Beach Comber carried a message from the troops in the first wave of the landings at Dieppe, dodging German marksmen and falconers tasked with bringing down this vital communications link. Beach Comber alerted commanders out to sea, unable to see the progress of the raid through smoke and early-morning fog, and therefore reliant on the birds, that the landing had started. Beach Comber's citation read: "For bringing the first news to this country of the landing at Dieppe, under hazardous conditions."



**CAPTAIN JOHN FOOTE**

It was another Canadian who was awarded the third Victoria Cross for his actions on 19 August 1942, Honorary Captain John Weir Foote, who was the Regimental Chaplain with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry.

After landing on the beach, Foote went to the Regimental Aid Post which had been set up on the beach to treat the wounded. With only enough cover in a depression to protect the men laying down, the medical personnel tending to the men were often the target of regular fire. However, over the next eight hours, Captain Foote regularly left the cover of the aid station to minister to the wounded.

He would inject morphine, give immediate first aid, and carry the wounded back to the aid station despite a heavy volume of fire. Those who

observed him remarked that he seemed almost oblivious to the bullets flying around him.

Whilst his actions were astonishingly brave during the fighting, it was as the troops were preparing to leave that he demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice his own freedom to help others which is most remarkable.

When it was time for the infantry to re-embark, John Foote refused to leave, preferring instead to remain on the beach to treat the wounded. When the last boat was set to leave the shore, Foote was given his final chance to embark but he chose to stay and comfort the men he had ministered to for three years, knowing full well the consequences.

Those consequences were imprisonment in a prisoner of war camp; an internment that lasted until 5 May 1945. ☉

**TOP RIGHT**  
Beach Comber with PSDA Secretary Dorothea St Hill Bourne and members of the PSDA Allied Forces Mascot Club. (COURTESY OF PSDA)

fire and mortars. Soon, the bridge was covered with dead and wounded. 'A daring lead was required,' ran *The London Gazette* of Friday 2 October 1942, 'waving his helmet, Lieutenant-Colonel Merritt rushed forward shouting "Come on over! There's nothing to worry about here."

He thus personally led the survivors of at least four parties in turn across the bridge. Quickly organising these, he led them forward and when held up by enemy pillboxes he again headed rushes which succeeded in clearing them. In one case, he himself destroyed the occupants of the post by throwing grenades into it.'

Merritt was everywhere, running under fire to instruct and encourage his men, with the result that most of the South Saskatchewan were able to safely return to the boats, though many of them were wounded. With a number of his men, Merritt formed a rearguard to cover the withdrawal of his battalion and that of the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade. This group, however, was cut off and, eventually, Merritt had to surrender. He was taken prisoner, becoming an inmate of the notorious Oflag IV-C – Colditz.

AWARD	Service Branch	Royal Navy	British Army & Royal Marines	Canadian Army	RAF, RCAF & RNZAF
Victoria Cross		-	1	2	-
Order of the British Empire		2	-	-	2
Bar to the Distinguished Service Order		1	-	1	-
Distinguished Service Order		7	2	12	2
Member of the British Empire		-	-	-	1
Distinguished Service Cross		36	-	-	-
Bar to the Military Cross		-	1	-	-
Military Cross		-	4	16	-
Bar to the Distinguished Flying Cross		-	-	-	3
Distinguished Flying Cross		-	-	-	10
CGM		1	-	-	-
Distinguished Service Medal		49	-	-	-
Military Medal		-	16	45	-
Distinguished Flying Medal		-	-	-	1
Mentions in Despatches		198	8	91	-

Sourced from: Hugh Halliday, "Dieppe: the Awards", in *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 4: Issue 2 (1995)