

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier University



Author sheds light on untold story of WWII POW medical care

Story of Canada's first attempt at elite commando unit also in latest Canadian Military History

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Contact: Mike Bechthold, Managing Editor, Canadian Arilitary History (519) 884-0710, ext. 4594
or Michael Strickland, Manager, Media Relations & Information (519) 884-0710, ext. 3070

WATERLOO - A Canadian medical historian says that the more than 550 Canadians who were wounded at Dieppe and then captured by German forces couldn't have entered captivity at a better time. In the winter issue of Canadian Military History, released today, Charles Roland tells the untold story of their hospitalization and rehabilitation by examining in detail the state of medical care in POW camps and hospitals.

Roland looks at the treatment of wounded soldiers during, immediately following and well after the battle of Dieppe, concluding that the injured soldiers from Canada received better medical attention than those of many other national groups. While treatment was chaotic and often "rough and ready" in the immediate aftermath of the raid, conditions in POW hospitals had significantly stabilized by 1942 thanks to the efforts of POW medical officers and orderlies. "Many veterans have painful memories of their immediate medical care, especially the severely wounded," says Roland, who recently retired as the Jason A. Hannah Chair for the History of Medicine at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. "The Germans created a setting ... where good medical care could exist, but their involvement was rarely more direct. With infrequent exception, POWs looked after POWs, and they did a remarkable job."

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While the care and transport of POWs by German soldiers was sometimes "truly barbarous," Roland credits the resourcefulness and improvisation of POW medical personnel for the superior treatment and higher survival rate of Canadian troops in captivity.

Guest edited by Jonathan Vance, a professor of history at the University of Western Ontario, this issue of *Canadian Military History* also includes:

- The complete 'paper trail' of telegrams, notices, official letters, sympathy cards and private messages following the death of acting flight lieutenant George Joseph Chequer during an air attack on Berlin in 1944. The material, supplied by the Canadian War Museum, demonstrates the variety and volume of correspondence that notified and then attempted to console the bereaved families of those lost during World War II.
- An account of the important and inspirational role of Canadian bagpipers in battle during the First World War. Author Tim Stewart looks at the Scottish piper tradition and tells the story of Jimmy Richardson, the only Canadian piper to be awarded the Victoria Cross.
- A chronicle of Viking Force, Canada's first attempt at creating an elite commando unit in the Second World War. Never given the opportunity to fulfill its role as a hard-hitting, specially-trained strike force, the short-lived group still played an important but largely unacknowledged role in the battle at Dieppe.
- An assessment of equipment in Canada's infantry from 1939 to 1982 written by Laurier graduate student Andrew Iarocci. The report focuses on the growing professionalism of Canadian soldiers and on the gradual transition from British to American influences as reflected in infantry equipment.

Canadian Military History is published quarterly by the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario. The Centre, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian War Museum fund the journal jointly. Each issue has a circulation of over 1300 copies.

To get a review copy of *Canadian Military History*, members of the media can contact Mike Bechthold at mbechtho@wlu.ca or 519-884-0710 ext. 4594.