

1942

BRAVERY SHOWN IN DIEPPE FIGHT NOT FORGOTTEN

Unselfishness and Devotion to Duty By Canadians, Including Hamiltonians, Revealed in Official List

One Distinguished Order Won Along With Two D.C.M.'s, Two M.C.'s, Five M.M.'s—Name 12 in Dispatches

Dieppe has been described as a "wonderful but awful day in the history of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry." The heavy toll of dead, missing, prisoner and wounded attests the fact that every minute of the muggy, mid-August morning was marked by fierce action. But out of the din and smoke and agony have come tales of devotion to duty, unselfishness and gallantry. The conspicuous courage of Canadians—and of Hamiltonians particularly—has not gone unrewarded. To-day—which is a wonderful day in the history of the R.H.L.I. — twenty-two members of this proud old battalion received decorations or citations for their exploits at Dieppe. Here is what members of Hamilton's oldest fighting unit earned in the fateful hours they spent on the beaches and on the streets of the little French town—one Distinguished Service Order; two Distinguished Conduct Medals; two Military Crosses; five Military Medals and three officers and nine men "mentioned in dispatches."

Major Whitaker, D.S.O.

In a list of awards from Ottawa to-day, Major W. Denis "Denny" Whitaker was cited for conspicuous courage in the Dieppe assault and awarded the D.S.O. For heroism, this decoration ranks only after the Victoria and George Crosses.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal, which ranks with the D.S.O., but which was struck to be awarded to men in the ranks, went to Company-Sergt.-Major Jack Stewart of this city, and Pte. Thomas Graham, of Guelph. Both of these soldiers were wounded.

The coveted Military Cross was awarded Capt. John Blake Gartshore and Lieut. John Gibbons Counsell. Both officers were severely wounded at Dieppe.

The five R.H.L.I. men who won the Military Medal were: C.S.M. William Dean, whose wife and parents reside on Jackson street west; Lance-Cpl. George Alfred McDermott; Pte. Cecil H. Dyke, Port Colborne; Pte. Thomas McQuade and Pte. William Vergette, Welland.

Major F. S. Wilkinson, now second in command of the battalion, was mentioned in dispatches. Also mentioned in dispatches were Capt. William "Clem" Dick, Caledonia; Lieut. Jack B. Halladay, this city, and nine men in the ranks.

Sets Record For Hamilton

It was the largest number of decorations ever awarded Hamilton men at one time. Valorous as was the record of the Mad Fourth

149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
CANADA
ARMY
DIEPPE
RAID
DECORATIONS
HAMILTON

044-002-016

Battalion in France — which was organized from the old 13th, parent regiment of the R.H.L.I.—on no occasion previously did so many coveted awards come to Hamilton soldiers at the one time.

Citation Disclosed

Major W. Denis Whitaker — known during his football years to players, friends and thousands of spectators as "Denny"—is a graduate of Royal Military college at Kingston.

Following is the citation which describes briefly the manner in which he distinguished himself and brought honour and glory to the historic old R.H.L.I.:

"Captain (now Major) Whitaker commanded the protective platoon of battalion headquarters, Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, during the operation at Dieppe, August 19, 1942. The task of this party was to clear the building around St. Remy church and there establish battalion headquarters.

"Captain Whitaker landed with the first wave, directed the cutting of both rows of wire on the beach and organized the necessary covering fire for B company's advance on the Casino. He himself then proceeded to the Casino with his party where, after clearing the building and organizing a defence against counter-attack, he led a large party of all elements of the battalion towards the town. Later he directed the withdrawal of a great portion of the battalion from the town and Casino to the beach and supervised their re-embarkation.

"Captain Whitaker's conduct throughout the action was outstanding. He was at all times cool and collected and displayed great courage and initiative in the command of his troops. Captain Whitaker was an inspiration to all ranks of the battalion."

Was Tiger Quarter

The eagerness and the tact which he displayed on the gridiron became the courage and initiative for which he was cited in war. He came to Hamilton after graduation from R.M.C. and was employed in this city. During the seasons 1939 and 1940 he was "first string" quarter of the Hamilton Tigers, and was as popular as he was efficient at this position.

In a feature story from overseas shortly after the Dieppe assault, Ross Munro, Canadian Press war correspondent, referred to bayonet charges which Major Whitaker led in the town. In a letter received here from one of the men taking part in the raid, the violence of the action in which Major Whitaker took part was described. The writer reported that Major Whitaker had removed his pips just under the wall before the town of Dieppe to conceal his identity from German snipers. Then, taking a rifle, he led his men into the casino and finally into the streets of the town.

Major Whitaker's name appeared in several stories from overseas last year when he had the honour to convey His Majesty King George VI about an inspection field in a Bren gun carrier. Mrs. Juanita Whitaker, his wife, resides at 5 Montclair avenue, Toronto.

Guelph Man Hero

Pte. Thomas William Graham, whose mother resides at 69 Wyndham street, Guelph, is one of two members of the R.H.L.I. to earn the coveted Distinguished Conduct Medal. One of the conspicuous heroes at Dieppe, according to a letter which was written by Major Denis Whitaker, two Hamilton men probably owe their lives to his quick and courageous action. Cpl. John Brabbs and Cpl. Frank Young were removed by him from a wire entanglement where they were facing heavy enemy fire.

Private Graham suffered lacerations of the knee at Dieppe. He was an expert boxer, having won a gold medal since going overseas as a light-heavyweight. His father, the late T. W. Graham, who was on the high seas when the last war broke out, was on a ship commanded as a transport and he served with distinction. He later joined a Highland unit and served for ten months in France. His death five years ago was attributed to war service. He was one of two men in Guelph who had the Mercantile Marine Medal.

C.S.M. Stewart Decorated

Company Sergeant-Major Jack Stewart, one of the original members of the R.H.L.I. active battalion, was the other soldier to win the Distinguished Conduct Medal. His sister, Mrs. G. K. Stewart, is listed as next-of-kin. She resides at 175 George street. C.S.M. Stewart was among the wounded at Dieppe. He was one of three R.H.L.I. members who helped the unit win the Second Division cross-country races in England early this year.

Capt. Gartshore

Among the wounded brought back across the channel from flaming Dieppe was Capt. John Gartshore, 28-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. John Gartshore, of Ancaster. Recently he was elevated to the rank of captain from that of lieutenant. To-day he is listed among officers awarded the Military Cross.

Captain Gartshore was one of the first officers of the R.H.L.I. to leave this district, proceeding overseas in the first draft, his father told the Spectator yesterday. He received his commission in May, 1940.

Educated in Ridley college and the Ontario Agricultural college, Captain Gartshore was an assistant in the economics department of the latter institution before joining the R.H.L.I.

Following is his citation: "During the operation at Dieppe, August 19, 1942, Lieut. Gartshore commanded No. 13 platoon, C Company, Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. He was in the first wave to land on the beaches, upon reaching which he not only directed the blowing of the first line of wire, but also blew the second line of wire after personally carrying up the Bangalore torpedo.

"During the laying of the torpedo, he was severely wounded in the right arm, but, nevertheless, carried on and led his platoon to the Casino. During the evacuation, he assisted wounded personnel into the boats under very heavy fire.

"Lieut. Gartshore displayed great leadership, determination and

power of command throughout the action. Not only was he an inspiration to his men but by his efforts he brought to the boats at least three casualties who would otherwise have been left on the beaches."

Lieut. Counsell

Lieut. John G. Counsell, son of Mrs. J. L. Counsell, of Toronto, and the late John L. Counsell, K.C., of this city, and who suffered a serious spinal wound in the Dieppe assault, was awarded the military cross. Lieut. Llewellyn Counsell, his cousin, was killed in the attack.

His uncle, Charles Counsell, Ancaster, disclosed that a recent letter revealed that Capt. John Gartshore, of this city, himself severely wounded, aided Lieut. John Counsell in reaching an invasion barge in which he was taken back to England. He is now in hospital in England.

Lieut. John Counsell was an executive of the Canada Life Assurance company at Montreal prior to his enlistment. He came to this city to join the R.H.L.I. soon after it had been mobilized and to serve with other young officer-friends.

Following is Lieutenant Counsell's citation: "During the Dieppe action, August 19, 1942, Lieutenant Counsell was assistant to Major McLeod, the officer in charge of beach organization. After landing on the beach in front of the town he observed that the tanks were having difficulty in climbing the shale, and despite the very heavy artillery and machine-gun fire which was sweeping the beach he directed and assisted in the placing of palings to assist the tanks in getting forward.

"Lieutenant Counsell displayed great coolness and courage throughout. After being severely wounded he continued to set an example which inspired all the other members of his party."

Five members of the R.H.L.I. earned the military medal. One was a permanent resident of this city, two resided here at the time of their enlistment, and two lived in the immediate district.

Lance-Cpl. McDermott

Lance-Cpl. George Alfred McDermott, whose next-of-kin is listed as his sister, Mrs. Teresa Fairbanks, 103 Dundurn street north, was awarded the military medal. He had lived here all his life and attended, among other schools, St. Mary's. He was reported "suffering from exposure" in Dieppe casualty lists.

C.S.M. William Dean

Company Sergeant-Major William Joseph Dean, whose home is in Cunsmock, Scotland, was employed by the Pigott Construction company here at the time of his enlistment. During the last Great War he served as a sergeant of the guard before Windsor Castle. He is among those awarded the military medal.

Pte. C. H. Dyke

Pte. Cecil H. Dyke, of Port Colborne, who was previously reported killed in the Dieppe action, is in hospital suffering from gunshot wounds in his right leg. He was another to win the military medal.

Private Dyke was one of the many Port Colborne men who came to Hamilton at the outbreak of war to join the famous Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, one of the first regiments to offer Canadians in this area an opportunity of serving.

A remarkable ability to twist his features into startling contortions earned for this soldier the name of "the man with the rubber face."

Pte. Thomas McQuade

Pte. Thomas McQuade, who won the military medal, comes from Glasgow, Scotland, but resided at 58 Jackson street west, this city, at the time of his enlistment. He was a sailor and plied this trade before enlistment.

Pte. Vergette

A Port Colborne man was among those to win the military medal. He is Pte. William Vergette, 172 Charlotte street, that town. He was one of the original members of the active battalion, R.H.L.I.

Three officers and nine men of the battalion received the decoration "mentioned in dispatches" as a result of their gallantry at Dieppe. The three officers so honoured had been wounded in the action. Some of the men were casualties also.

Major Wilkinson Mentioned

Major Fred St. Clair Wilkinson, second in command of the R.H.L.I. and who was wounded at Dieppe, received the distinction of being mentioned in dispatches. Major Wilkinson's wife resides at 29 Spruceside avenue.

At the time of his enlistment for active service Major Wilkinson was employed by Wilkinson Kompass, Ltd., here.

Capt. Dick Mentioned

Also mentioned in dispatches were Capt. William "Clem" Dick, of Caledonia, and Lieut. Jack B. Halladay, this city. Both had been wounded. Capt. Dick's wife resides at 1526 Mount Pleasant road, Toronto.

Lieut. Jack Halladay

Lieut. Halladay is the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Burton Halladay, 216 Jackson street west. His brother, Lloyd, at 91 Leinster avenue south, is listed as next-of-kin.

Soldiers Are Mentioned

Following are the names of the R.H.L.I. soldiers listed as having been mentioned in dispatches, with next-of-kin as supplied by army headquarters:

Pte. Gordon W. A. Booker, Mrs. Violet Booker, mother, 90 Haddon avenue south.

Lance-Cpl. Brian Vincent Lisson, Mrs. Betty Maude Lisson, wife, 78 Tuxedo avenue.

Cpl. Edward D. Boles, Mrs. Malcolm Bruce, sister, 708 Manning avenue, Toronto.

Pte. Richard Pettifer, Mrs. Clara Pettifer, mother, 100 First street, Welland.

Staff-Sgt. Douglas A. Shenstone, Mrs. Charlotte A. Shenstone, wife, 212 Hess street north.

Pte. Jack H. Shuart, Mrs. Elsie Shuart, mother, 116 Market street.

Cpl. George A. Stewart, Mrs. Pearl M. Stewart, wife, 163 Robinson street.

Sgt. Stuart Houlding Whitaker, Thomas Whitaker, father, 213 Nelson street, Brantford, Ont.

Cpl. Frank Rodd Young, Mrs. May Eliza Young, mother, Oshawa, Ont.

149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
CANADA
ARMY
DIEPPE
RAID
DECORATIONS
HAMILTON

30