## **Canadian Military History**

Volume 18 | Issue 1 Article 9

4-26-2012

## Canadian Military History Gateway: Department of National Defence

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### Recommended Citation

Reynolds, Ken (2009) "Canadian Military History Gateway: Department of National Defence," *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 18: Iss. 1, Article 9.

Available at: http://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh/vol18/iss1/9

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# Canadian Military History, Volume 18, Number 1, Winter 2009, pp.79-80

# Canadian Military History Gateway Department of National Defence

## Ken Reynolds

This note is the next instalment in a series of short pieces on Internet resources and tools available to researchers, writers and readers of Canadian military history.

The Department of National Defence (DND) website <www. forces.gc.ca> is home to a huge assortment of interesting resources for readers of Canadian military history. The Canadian Military History Gateway (CMHG) <www.cmhg-phmc.gc.ca> is one of the many subsites that the department operates. (Despite my reference solely to the English-language version of this

project, it also exists *en* français as the Passerelle pour l'histoire militaire canadienne at the same address).

The CMHG is a type of website known in the Internet world as a (web) portal. These are websites that act as points of access to specific types or themes of web-based information. In this case, the subject is Canadian military history. The goal of the CMHG is to "provide the public with free access to the collective military history resources of Canadian museums, libraries, archives and other heritage organizations through a single, dynamic and intuitive gateway."

Although maintained by the Department of National Defence, the CMHG is actually the product of input from several federal government departments and government agencies, including DND, the Department of Canadian Heritage, Veterans Affairs Canada, Library and Archives Canada, the

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Parks Canada, the National Film Board of Canada, and the Canadian War Museum. Additional partners may join as recently did The Military Museums Library and Archives (part of the University of Calgary Library and Cultural Resources).

The main page for the CMHG is, at first, somewhat daunting. With some exploration, however, it

opens up a wide range of possibilities for the researcher. This is an interactive, tech-heavy website, mostly directed at an Internet-savy audience, especially students (but, by no means, exclusively).

At the top of the main page is the "Timeline" covering the years 1000-2000 and recommending the visitor "explore the timeline of Canada's military history." This is one way to investigate the CMHG's content, in this case chronologically. Clicking on one of the century markers on the timeline takes the

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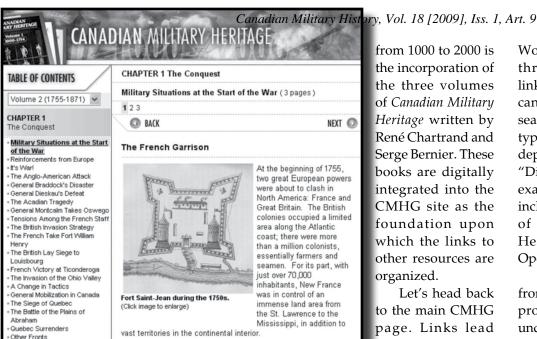
90th Anniversary of

WHAT'S **NEW** 

the End of the First World War

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HISTORY BROWSER



visitor to a sliding scale where a specific year can then be chosen. Holding the mouse over a given year shows how many resources are available for that year. The results for 1961, for example, are broken down into categories of "Soldiers, Warriors and Leaders," "Wars, Battles and Conflicts," "Armed Forces," "Strategy and Tactics," "Weapons, Equipment and Fortifications," "Politics and Societies." Each of these sub-lists can be further refined, if so desired. The search results are a list of resources from the various contributing departments and agencies, each clickable to a new browser window on the contributor's website. Think of the CMHG as a virtual library, and the search results as the index card. Resources include textual narratives, audio and video clips, images, interactive games and more. In the 1961 example, the weapons category returns 73 results, including material from the CBC on the Cold War, from the Canadian War Museum on military engineers and from DND on various air force squadrons in service that year and the military aircraft then being flown.

Not surprisingly, the resources available for the more recent decades are far more abundant that those for the 14th c entury, for example. What does permit the CMHG to stretch from 1000 to 2000 is the incorporation of the three volumes of Canadian Military Heritage written by René Chartrand and Serge Bernier. These books are digitally integrated into the CMHG site as the foundation upon which the links to other resources are organized.

Let's head back to the main CMHG page. Links lead to specific tools

and resources, including the three volumes of Canadian Military Heritage

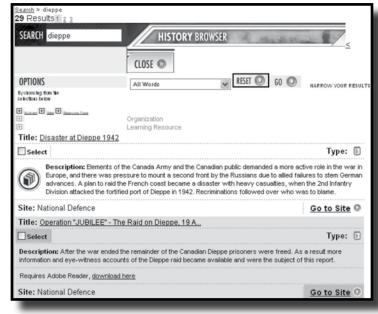
in their entirety. "Doing Research?" leads to Library and Archives Canada's webpage on "Research Tools." "Learning Resources" leads numerous tools for teachers, as the website notes: "an array of grade specific and curriculum based learning resources, educational aids and lesson plans." The CMHG is, at its core, an educational

resource. "Glossary" is a lexicon of military terms. "History Browser" permits the visitor to search by all of the categories, specifically listed for clarity and ease of use. "My Gateway" is a useful tool that allows the visitor "to save links to military history resources of interest. This means you can conduct research on a subject area or for a particular project, and store the results of your search for re-use." And, well, "What's New" is exactly that.

The CMHG's main page also features a very useful search function.

Words or phrases can be searched throughout all of the resources linked to the portal or various filters can be placed to further refine the search, such as specific subjects, the type of resource, or the contributing department or agency. Searching for "Dieppe" at National Defence, for example, will bring up 28 results, including the (downloadable) series of wartime Canadian Military Headquarters reports written on Operation JUBILEE.

With more than 7,000 links from the CMHG to resources on the project's partner websites, there is undoubtedly something for everyone. Yes, each of the partner websites is available in and of themselves, independent of the Canadian Military



History Gateway. However, the CMHG provides a place to search through a wide swath of material in a single, coherent fashion in what might otherwise be a very overwhelming process.

Ken Reynolds is an historian with the Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence. His duties as the Assistant Canadian Forces Heritage Officer involve research and writing in a wide variety of areas in Canada's military heritage.