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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 sub-sites 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-savvy 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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CHAPTER 1 The Conquest

Military Situations at the Start of the War (3 pages)

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The French Garrison

Fort Saint-Jean during the 1750s.
(Click image to enlarge)

At the beginning of 1755, two great European powers were about to clash in North America: France and Great Britain. The British colonies occupied a limited area along the Atlantic coast; there were more than a million colonists, essentially farmers and seamen. For its part, with just over 70,000 inhabitants, New France was in control of an immense land area from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi, in addition to vast territories in the continental interior.

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 than those for the 14th century, 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 to 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

Search > dieppe
29 Results 1 2 3

SEARCH dieppe HISTORY BROWSER

CLOSE

OPTIONS

By clicking from the table below

All Words RESET GO NARROW YOUR RESULTS

Organization Learning Resource

Title: Disaster at Dieppe 1942

Select Type: [icon]

Description: Elements of the Canada Army and the Canadian public demanded a more active role in the war in Europe, and there was pressure to mount a second front by the Russians due to allied failures to stem German advances. A plan to raid the French coast became a disaster with heavy casualties, when the 2nd Infantry Division attacked the fortified port of Dieppe in 1942. Recriminations followed over who was to blame.

Site: National Defence Go to Site [icon]

Title: Operation "JUBILEE" - The Raid on Dieppe, 19 A...

Select Type: [icon]

Description: After the war ended the remainder of the Canadian Dieppe prisoners were freed. As a result more information and eye-witness accounts of the Dieppe raid became available and were the subject of this report.

Requires Adobe Reader, [download here](#)

Site: National Defence Go to Site [icon]

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.