



Royal Niagara Military Institute

22 Timber Lane
St Catharines, ON
L2N 7R7

February 2018

Editor Art Tilley

e-mail: atilley@cogeco.ca

FEBRUARY SPEAKER

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Captain Daniel R. Rodrique, February 21 speaker

The speaker for our February 21st General Meeting will be CIC Captain Daniel R. Rodrique. Capt Rodrique has served in the RCAF, as well as The Windsor Regiment. He will speak to us about his award winning series, "The Veterans". These stories about our veterans, are told by the participants themselves, which gives this history an immediacy it wouldn't otherwise have.

At the present time the series stands at 90 episodes in English and another 20 in French. It covers events from WWI to the war in Afghanistan and includes some of Canada's best known military, political, and media personalities.

Daniel has also worked on a number of other initiatives. These included the Governor General's, Hill 70 Memorial Project, RMC's Leonard Birchall Leadership Award production and the Royal Canadian Mechanical Electrical Engineers 75th Anniversary video production. He also documented a group of Canadian Cadets' participation at the 70th anniversary of the D-Day Landings at Juno Beach in France.

Due to his unstinting commitment to the Canadian military, he has been recognized with several awards. These include: the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation, the Diamond Jubilee, and the Governor General's Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers. In 2015 he was inducted into the Niagara Falls Arts and Culture Wall of Fame.

CALENDAR 2018

DATE	TIME(S)	2018
Wed Feb 21	1930	General Meeting – Speaker, Capt Daniel Rodrique
Sun Mar 4	1900	Executive Meeting
Wed Mar 21	1930	General Meeting & Brock lecture/Bring a friend Night
Fri Mar 23	1830 for 1900	Annual Spouses/Guests Dinner
Mon Apr 2	1900	Executive meeting
Wed Apr 18	1930	General Meeting
Sat Apr 21		103 Anniversary of the Battle of St Julien's
May 1 – May 7		Western New York MOAA, Armed Forces Week
Sun May 6		Battle of the Atlantic
Mon May 7		Executive Meeting
Sat May 12	1830 for 1900	50 th Anniversary and Spouses Dinner
Wed May 16	1930	Annual General Meeting
Mon June 4	1230	Decoration Day Service, Victoria Lawn Cemetery
Mon June 4		Executive Meeting
Sun June 24		Joint Function with MOAA – Venue TBA

A QUOTE TO REMEMBER



Sir Winston Churchill: We sleep safely at night because rough men stand ready to visit violence on those who would harm us.

KIT SHOP

RNMI Coin - \$30.00	RNMI Tie- \$25.00	RNMI Name Tag - \$15.00 – Special
RNMI Crest - \$20.00	-----	RNMI Lapel Pin - \$7.00
Please see Mr. Jim Doherty to purchase.		

ROYAL NIAGARA MILITARY INSTITUTE WEBSITE

The Royal Niagara Military Institute has been updated. February 9, 2018. It can be found at :

www.rnmi.net

OPERATION CHASTISE

The Dam Buster Raid

This May marks the 75th anniversary of the RAF raid on the German dams.

Before the Second World War the British Air Ministry had identified Germany's heavily industrialized Ruhr Valley and especially its dams, as important strategic targets: in addition to providing hydro-electric power and water for steel-making, they also supplied drinking water and water for the canal transport system. The dams were well protected by heavy torpedo nets.

To overcome this obstacle, a drum-shaped bomb spinning backwards at over 500 rpm, and dropped at a sufficiently low altitude at the correct speed and release point, would skip for a significant distance over the surface of the water in a series of bounces before reaching the dam wall. Its residual spin would run the bomb down the side of the dam toward its underwater base. Using a hydrostatic fuse, an accurate drop would bypass the dam's defenses and then enable the bomb to explode against the dam some distance below the surface of the water.



The attack with specially modified Lancaster bombers took place on the night of May 16 – 17, 1943

The bombers flew low, at about 100 ft (30 m) altitude, to avoid radar detection. Flight Sergeant George Chalmers, the radio operator on one of the Lancaster's looked out was astonished to see that his pilot was flying towards the target along a forest's firebreak below treetop level.

First casualties

The first casualties were suffered soon after reaching the Dutch coast. Formation No. 2 did not fare well: one aircraft lost its radio to flak and had to turn back. Another aircraft flew too low and struck the sea, losing its bomb in the water; it recovered and returned to base. Two aircraft crossed the coast around the island of Texel. The first was shot down by flak shortly afterwards, crashing into the Waddenzee a second aircraft hit electricity pylons and crashed near Haldern. The bomb was thrown clear of the crash and remained intact and was later examined by the Germans. The first formation lost a bomber near the German hamlet of Marbeck when a Lancaster flew into high voltage electrical cables crashed into a field.

Attack on the Möhne Dam

Formation No. 1 arrived over the Möhne lake and Gibson's aircraft ("G for George") made the first run, followed by Hopgood ("M for Mother"). Hopgood's aircraft was hit by flak as it made its low-level run and was caught in the blast of

its own bomb, crashing shortly afterwards when a wing disintegrated. Three crew members successfully abandoned the aircraft, but only two survived. Subsequently, Gibson flew his aircraft across the dam to draw the flak away from Martin's run. Martin ("P for Popsie") bombed third; his aircraft was damaged, but made a successful attack. Next, Young ("A for Apple") made a successful run, and after him Maltby ("J for Johnny"), when finally the dam was breached. Gibson, with Young accompanying, led Shannon, Maudslay and Knight to the Eder.

Attack on the Eder Dam

The Eder Valley was covered by heavy fog but not defended. The tricky topography of the surrounding hills made the approach difficult and the first aircraft, Shannon's, made six runs before taking a break. Maudslay ("Z for Zebra") then attempted a run but the bomb struck the top of the dam and the aircraft was severely damaged in the blast. Shannon made another run and successfully dropped his bomb. The final bomb of the formation, from Knight's aircraft ("N for Nan"), breached the dam.

Attacks on the Sorpe and Ennepe Dams

The Sorpe dam was the one least likely to be breached. It was a huge earthen dam, unlike the two concrete-and-steel gravity dams that were attacked successfully. Due to various problems, only three Lancasters reached the Sorpe Dam: Joe McCarthy (in "T for Tommy", a delayed aircraft from the second wave) and later Brown ("F for Freddie") and Anderson ("Y for York"), both from the third formation. This attack differed from the previous ones in two ways: the 'Upkeep' bomb was not spun, and due to the topography of the valley the approach was made along the length of the dam, not at right angles over the reservoir.

McCarthy's plane was on its own when it arrived over the Sorpe Dam at 00:15 hours, and realized the approach was even more difficult than expected: the flight path led over a church steeple in the village of Langscheid, located on the hillcrest overlooking the dam. With only seconds to go before the bomber had to pull up, to avoid hitting the hillside at the other end of the dam, the bomb aimer George Johnson had no time to correct the bomb's height and heading. McCarthy made nine attempted bombing runs before Johnson was satisfied. The 'Upkeep' bomb was dropped on the tenth run. The bomb exploded but when he turned his Lancaster to assess the damage, it turned out that only a section of the crest of the dam had been blown off; the main body of the dam remained.

Three of the reserve aircraft had been directed to the Sorpe Dam. Lew Burpee ("S for Sugar") never arrived, and it was later determined that the plane had been shot down while skirting the Gilze-Rijen airfield. Brown ("F for Freddie") reached the Sorpe Dam: in the increasingly dense fog, the bomb was dropped hastily and also failed to breach the dam. Anderson ("Y for York") never arrived having been delayed by damage to his rear turret and dense fog which made his attempts to find the target impossible. The remaining two bombers were then sent to secondary targets, with Ottley ("C for Charlie") being shot down *en route* to the Lister Dam. Townsend ("O for Orange") eventually dropped his bomb at the Ennepe Dam without harming it.^[4]

Results

The flooding from the breached dams affected a wide area inundating many factories and damaging or destroying power stations, road and rail bridges, and other facilities. The loss of power and water for the Ruhr, crucial to many manufacturing processes, was also significant. Among a large number of towns temporarily deprived of water were Hamm, Hagen, Bochum and Dortmund. The Germans had to draft in tens of thousands of workers to repair the damaged dams and other facilities, including at least 7000 workers removed from building the Atlantic Wall defences against Allied invasion with direct positive results a year later during the D-Day invasion. Both ammunition and coal production fell after the attack, just at the point that the Germans mounted their last significant offensive on the Eastern Front. The raid also had political consequences. Prime Minister Winston Churchill was visiting America at the time, and news of the attack's success was telephoned through to him. He was able to make considerable capital from the attack and specifically referred to it in an address to the American Congress. American and British newspapers also made much of the attack with it appearing on the front page of British papers and the New York Times. The Germans also constructed elaborate defences at all the dams in the Ruhr and elsewhere, diverting considerable military and construction resources in the process. These included anti-aircraft batteries covering every dam – prior to the raid only the Mohne had any guns protecting it. The dams were also protected by mine barrages, ramps to deflect Upkeep mines, and wire net curtains strung in front to down low flying aircraft. Although the human cost of the raid was high, and unsustainable on a regular basis, it should be remembered that it represented less than a 1000th of Bomber Command's total losses, and the results of the attack, politically, economically and militarily undoubtedly made it worthwhile.

