

## **LITTLE KNOWN FACTS**

### **‘C’ FORCE, THE CANADIAN ARMY BRIGADE**

### **SOUTH-EAST PACIFIC, WORLD WAR II**

- The Battle for Hong Kong began on December 8, 1941, just a few short hours after Pearl Harbour. The Japanese Imperial Army simultaneously attacked Pearl Harbour, Guam, Philippines, Malaysia, and Dutch East Indies.
- The ‘C’ Force troops were the first Canadian Army troops to go into battle in World War II.
- The first casualties for the Canadian Army during World War II were from ‘C’ Force. Corporal RJ Routledge and Signaller JLF Fairley of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals were wounded on December 8, 1941. Corporal Routledge was from Brandon, Manitoba, and Signaller Fairley was from Port Alberni, British Columbia.
- The first Canadian soldier to be killed in action in World War II was from ‘C’ Force. Private John Gray of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, aged 21, from Langruth, Manitoba, was killed on December 13, 1941.
- The first Canadian to receive the Victoria Cross in World War II was from ‘C’ Force. Warrant Officer Second Class (Company Sergeant Major) John Osborn of The Winnipeg Grenadiers was awarded the Victoria Cross on December 19, 1941.
- Gander, the mascot to the Royal Rifles, was a Newfoundland dog that received the Dickin Medal (the Victoria Cross equivalent for animals) posthumously for acts of bravery. On December 19, 1941, during a Japanese attack, Gander picked up a grenade that landed next to his men and ran away. He was killed when the grenade exploded, but he saved the lives of his men. Gander is the only Canadian animal that has been distinguished for such an act.
- The prisoners of war from ‘C’ Force were slave labourers for the enemy. They lived in poor conditions and worked in dangerous situations such as in mines, shipyards, and other war-related industries.
- The death rate in Japanese POW camps was approximately 25%, compared to less than 2% for German POW camps. This difference was attributed to the lack of sufficient food, clothing, medical aid, and suitable living conditions.
- The ‘C’ Force prisoners of war were imprisoned for 3 years and 10 months – longer than any other Canadian POW’s. They were the last prisoners of war to be released from captivity at the end of the war.
- Two members of Canadian Nursing Sisters who served with the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, Lieutenants May Waters and Kay Christie, were the only female members of the armed forces to be POWs. They were imprisoned from August 1942 to December 1943. Lieutenant May Waters returned to Hong Kong in September 1945 on the Canadian Hospital Ship Letitia that was assisting with the repatriation of the Prisoners of War.

### Number of Soldiers in Each Regiment

Regiment	Totals
Brigade	4
Canadian Auxiliary Services	2
Canadian Chaplains Service	3
Canadian Dental Corps	7
Canadian Postal Corps	3
Canadian Provost Corps	8
Corps of Military Staff Clerks	5
Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps	7
Royal Canadian Army Pay Corps	7
Royal Canadian Army Service Corps	17
Royal Canadian Corps of Signals	33
Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps	10
Royal Rifles of Canada	961*
The Winnipeg Grenadiers	911
<b>Total</b>	<b>1978</b>

**Note:**

\* - the number includes Gander, the mascot

### Death Toll for Canadian Soldiers

Mode of Death		Totals
<b>Going to Hong Kong</b>		
Died on Route to Hong Kong	1	1
<b>Deaths attributed to the Battle</b>		
Killed in Action	47	
Missing in Action	226	
Died of Wounds	15	288

# As Prisoners of War

Died while prisoner of War

267

267

# Returning Home

Died on Route to Canada

2

2

Total

558

## Decorations and Number of Each Awarded

Victoria Cross	1
Distinguished Service Order	2
Officer of the Order of the British Empire	1
Member of the Order of the British Empire	6
Military Cross	7
Royal Red Cross Order, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Class	2
Distinguished Conduct Medal	4
Military Medal	13
British Empire Medal	3
Dickin Medal	1
Mention in Dispatches	56
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>96</b>

## Distribution of Soldiers from Various Parts of Canada by Regiment

Regiment	BC	AB	SK	MB/NW ON	W ON	C ON	E ON	W QC	E QC	NB	NS/PEI	NL	Totals
Brigade Headquarters		1				2	1						4
Auxiliary Services			1								1		2
Canadian Chaplin Services	1					1			1				3
Canadian Dental Corps	1			5					1				7

Canadian Postal Corps							3						3
Canadian Provost Corps									8				8
Corps of Military Staff Clerks	2				1		1		1				5
Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps	1			2		3		1					7
Royal Canadian Army Pay Corps	1			2	1		2		1				7
Royal Canadian Army Service Corps		1		1	2	8			3		2		17
Royal Canadian Corps of Signals	22	1		3		2	1		4				33
Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps	2					3	4		1				10
Royal Rifles of Canada		2	1		19	88	61	7	703	35	44	1	961
The Winnipeg Grenadiers	5	3	65	838									911
<b>Totals</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1978</b>

**NOTES**

BC	British Columbia	AB	Alberta	
SK	Saskatchewan			
MB/NW ON	Manitoba / NW Ontario	W ON	Western Ontario	C
ON	Central Ontario			
E ON	Eastern Ontario	W QC	Western Quebec	E
QC	Eastern Quebec			
NB	New Brunswick	NS/PEI	Nova Scotia/ Prince Edward Island	
NL	Newfoundland			