

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS
‘C’ FORCE, THE CANADIAN ARMY BRIGADE
SOUTH-EAST PACIFIC, WORLD WAR II

- The Battle for Hong Kong began on 8th December 1941, just a few short hours after Pearl Harbour. The Japanese Imperial Army simultaneously attacked Pearl Harbour, Guam, Philippines, Malaysia, and Dutch East Indies.
- First Canadian Army troops to go into battle in World War II. (The war with Japan began at 0550 hrs, Monday, 8th December 1941 local time; 1720 hrs, Sunday, 7th December 1941, Ottawa time).
- They were the last prisoners of war to be released from captivity.
- First casualties of the Canadian Army during World War II, Corporal RJ Routledge and Signaller JLF Fairley of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals were wounded on 8th December 1941. Corporal Routledge was from Brandon, Manitoba and Signaller Fairley was from Port Alberni, British Columbia.
- The first Canadian to be killed in action was Private John Gray, The Winnipeg Grenadiers, aged 21, from Langruth, Manitoba. He was killed on 13th December 1941.
- Warrant Officer Second Class (Company Sergeant Major) John Osborn of The Winnipeg Grenadiers was the first Canadian in World War II to receive the Victoria Cross.
- Gander, the mascot to the Royal Rifles was a Newfoundland dog that received the Dickens Medal (the Victoria Cross equivalent for animals) posthumously for bravery for grabbing a grenade and running away from his men – thus saving them when it exploded. This is the only known Canadian animal that has been distinguished for such an act.
- The soldiers were slave labourers to the enemy living in poor conditions and working in dangerous situations such as mines, shipyards and other war-related industrial sectors
- Death rates for ‘C’ Force Prisoners of War were approximately 25% compared to <2% for German Prisoners of War. This difference was attributed to the lack of sufficient food, clothing, medical aid and living conditions.
- They were Prisoners of War for 3 years and 10 months – longer than any other Canadian POW’s.
- The 2 Canadian Nursing Sisters, Lieutenants May Waters and Kay Christie, were the only female armed forces to be POWs.
- 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
Total	1978

Note:

* - the number includes Gander, the mascot

Toll on Canadian Soldiers

Mode of Death		Totals
Going to Hong Kong		
Died on Route to Hong Kong	1	1
Deaths attributed to the Battle		
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 nd Class	2
Distinguished Conduct Medal	4
Military Medal	13
British Empire Medal	3
Dickin Medal	1
Mention in Dispatches	56
Grand Total	96

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
Totals	35	8	67	851	23	107	73	8	723	35	47	1	1978

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