



# Dieppe remembered

Artist Bertrand Carrière's haunting photo exhibit paints a portrait of Dieppe's austere landscape and a doomed mission

BY PAUL GESSELL

Canada mourns when one soldier is killed in Afghanistan. So, imagine the shock and grief from sea to sea back in August 1942, when 913 Canadian soldiers were killed on the same day on the beaches of Dieppe in France.

Hundreds more Canadians were wounded Aug. 19, 1942, and almost 2,000 taken prisoner during the battle the

Canadian War Museum has named "the bloodiest day in Canadian military history."

The museum has just installed a photo exhibition of the desolate, haunted coastline in the Dieppe area as it looks today. The images are from the camera of Bertrand Carrière, the Ottawa-born, Montreal-based photographer who has been involved in other art projects involving Dieppe.

Carrière's two dozen photos show the impenetrable cliffs that greeted the 5,000 Canadians as they landed in Dieppe early that morning. Those same cliffs doomed the mission and resulted in the high casualty rate.

The works in *Dieppe: Landscape Photography* also show the Germans' crumbling fortifications as they look now, the pebbled beaches once stained with blood and the terrain looking un-

mercifully grim and ominous.

The gloominess is part of a photographer's tricks. Carrière obviously picked the weather and the seasons that would best convey the mood he sought.

But how else could it be? This is a spot that must, forever, be funereal to a patriotic Canadian. Sunny skies and blooming flowers would be inappropriate.

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DIEPPE: LANDSCAPES AND INSTALLATIONS

This image from Bertrand Carrière's book features the faces of 913 contemporary soldiers, many from CFB Valcartier in Quebec. He then implanted these photos on the beach at Dieppe.

# Dieppe: Images show enormity of loss

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The photographs at the war museum are included in a 2006 book by Carrière called *Dieppe: Landscapes and Installations*. The book also contains photographs of an art installation called *Jubilee on the beaches of Dieppe*.

For *Jubilee*, Carrière photographed 913 contemporary soldiers, many from CFB Valcartier in Quebec, and then implanted these photos on the beach at Dieppe. The images of these 913 faces on the beach make one realize the enormity of the loss Canada suffered that day.

Jubilee was the code name for the ill-fated military operation on the beach of the area of France known locally as Pays de Caux, a reference to the chalky cliffs.

"A distinctive geological area, swept by violent winds off the sea, the land in this part of the Pays de Caux still rises up like an impenetrable fortress," Carrière wrote in his book.

"Its beauty seems harsh and arid. Guardian of a painful past. History seems to stand still here. Ruins of this part of the Atlantic Wall dot the coast and reveal fully the austerity of the site. On one side is the endless sea, a line. On the other, a wall of stone that blocks everything. The cliffs of white chalk of the Pays de



This photograph by Bertrand Carrière was taken at Varengeville-sur-mer, near Dieppe, and is part of the exhibition at the Canadian War Museum.

Caux gently erode and fall away, like memory.

"The caves, like gaping holes are everywhere, open grottos, forgotten hiding places. These relics are souvenirs of an occupied land, final battlegrounds of times long ago. Yet the spectres of the past still seem to haunt these ruins. Moreover, the forces of nature have had a strong

impact on this strange legacy."

*Dieppe: Landscape Photography* continues at the Canadian War Museum until Oct. 26. (Follow the signs for Regeneration Hall and you will find the corridor containing the photographs.) For information, call 819-776-8600 or visit [www.warmuseum.ca](http://www.warmuseum.ca).