

Dieppe trip shows challenges soldiers faced

I am writing to share my recent personal experiences in Dieppe, France for the 80th anniversary of the Dieppe Raid. As a current serving member of the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment, I was deeply honoured to be selected by my commanding officer to represent my unit in Dieppe. Having never been to France, this experience will definitely be a lifelong achievement that I will cherish for many years to come.

I would like to share one of my most memorable moments of the trip. On entering the city of Dieppe, I was welcomed by the refreshing sea breeze of the coastline and I thought to myself what a beautiful city.

When we made our way

to the beaches of Dieppe, it was only then I came to the realization that this beautiful beach also had a dark and bloody past.

The beach had large stones that would easily tire out any experienced soldier after walking on it for a few minutes. There was also an enormous cliff face overlooking the beach that was perfect for machine-gun fire.

It was at that moment I came to realize my forefathers had no chance of success on that beach on Aug. 19, 1942.

To honour and reflect on the challenges they experienced on that beach, our contingent — led by Pat Coughlin — conducted a mini beach landing of our own. The sea waves in the

early morning, as well as the wet beach stone made for an exceptionally difficult climb that I will never forget.

I recall both myself and Pat looking at each other in disbelief. It was like the perfect combination of the worst walking surfaces imaginable.

I will never forget the challenges the beach presented to the forefathers of the Essex and Kent Scottish.

I am grateful to the Scottish Borders Foundation in their efforts to raise funds for this trip. Without their fundraising campaign, we would have not been able to send soldiers to Dieppe this year.

Thanks to their donations our soldiers were able to experience a memorable moment in our unit's history.

Our visit was thoroughly appreciated by the citizens of France and I hope we can raise funds for future trips.

Maj. Mitchell Colomba, officer commanding Alpha Company, at the Essex and Kent Scottish 31 Canadian Brigade Group, Canadian Armed Forces