

# The KINGSMILL BRIDGE



Documentary  
Production

The  
Untold  
Story



## THE KEY TO BREAKING THE GUSTAV LINE

A Canadian invention that saved lives and changed the course of the Italian campaign.



*Alerted to the threat, the Germans spread the word that the Canadians have a new weapon, an instant bridge.*

The Gustav line had proved to be about as impregnable a barrier or fortress as military minds could devise. One bloody defeat after another gave them every right to believe so.

Beginning in mid January and continuing with unabated fury into the second week of May, the Americans, British, Indians and then the New Zealanders had a crack at turning the screws against the Germans.

Reminiscent in some ways to the style of fighting of WWI they succeeded only in suffering heavy casualties, with little or no ground taken. Not one of the battalions had enjoyed success. With the loss of momentum it took another five and a half months, and the sacrifice of many thousands to disease, wounds and death to bring the Allies to the moment of truth and the launching of Operation Diadem, the fourth and final battle for Rome.

***They could not afford to let this one go down to defeat.***

# OPERATION DIADEM AND A BRIDGE OVER THE GARI RIVER

The story of how the Allies turfed the masters of defense out of their positions



First hand accounts from men were there

**“It was...a hard campaign from the standpoint of discomfort, long grueling marches, the stench of burning grass and unburied dead, including soldiers, civilians and mules, and the incredible heat, with thirst, hunger and painful sunburn our constant scourges. Lack of sleep, caused by the continuous movement, and bowel trouble caused by contaminated fruit and water helped wear down some troops. Fortunately, the training in Britain had turned us into the right material from which to make hardy campaigners.”**

*Strome Galloway*

Day after day, week after week, month after month, in the bright light of day and in the black hours of night they fought, bled and died here on the mountain slopes and in the valley mud, the scrub and brush covered ravines, throwing themselves in utter futility against an incredibly brave and resourceful enemy with little to show for their efforts. First came the Yanks of 34th Infantry Division in early January, scrabbling their way up the rock-strewn slopes and across narrow terraces, seeking the slim protection of stone walls, fighting a brutal slugging match every foot of the way. They clawed their way upward, shooting and grenading their way to within a

couple of hundred yards of the monastery walls. Had there not been failure to reinforce this early success, it's conceivable that the Yanks might very well have pushed ahead and taken the monastery, which wasn't yet manned by the enemy. Thirty-fourth Division's superb effort could have shortened the campaign by months and saved countless lives and war materiel, but that opportunity for decisive and early victory slipped from our leader's grasp.

The German units holding the lines were an extraordinary tough lot, wise in the ways of war, rich in experience, and extremely well-led, a combination hard to overcome. The 5th Mountain

Division, the 94th, the 44th, the 71st and 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, along with the famous Herman Goering and the 15th Panzer Division, were no slouches when it came to the art of battle. Later, they were joined by the 1st Parachute Division. These top-notch units, plus others of only slightly lesser calibre, fought like lions. Every day, on picking up the Maple Leaf or the 8th Army News it was discouraging to read of setback after setback, of heavy casualties, of stalemate on the Cassino and Anzio Fronts. It got to be so disheartening they began to wonder if our armies would ever break through to Rome. It most certainly wasn't promising.



In those early moments, when the first salvos of shells and mortars plunged into the slopes amidst the German positions, the enemy paratroopers, grenadiers, fusiliers, mortarmen and sappers braced themselves for what they must have thought was just another one of the many short and sharp artillery stonks on their positions. Long ago they'd acknowledged the fact that the Allies were richly blessed with an overabundance of shells, and must have assumed that they were only getting rid of some of their surplus. But as the minutes and then hours passed and the shells came in at an undiminished rate, with an intensity

beyond anything ever known before (whether on the Eastern Front, at El Alamein or anywhere else), they knew this was something much more than a local attack. This was the big one.

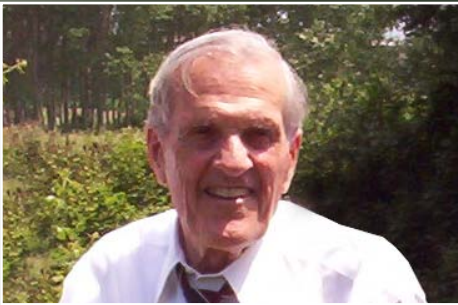
The barrage was the grand orchestral opening of the main event. Everything before had been merely skits. Every gun that could be brought to bear – from small mountain howitzers to twenty-five pounders, to 105's, 155's, and 7.2's, right on up to the monster 9.2's – had been crammed into every drumroll fury of these guns sent wave after wave of thunder rolling back from the mountain walls, and the echoes melded with the crash of new volleys, the curtains were

drawing back for the fourth and final act in the battle for Rome.

**“We stood there in our tent lines wondering what might be going on in the minds of all those infantrymen waiting in their slit trenches and sangars for the signal to move forward into the attack. It was easy to imagine how they felt, and we felt sorry for them. Most certainly we didn't envy them.”**

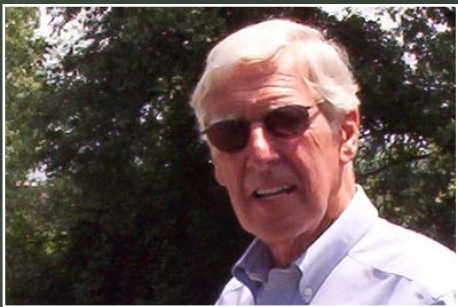
*Stan Scislowski*

# INTERVIEWS WITH THE MEN WHO MADE IT HAPPEN



**TONY KINGSMILL**

The LAD officer who created the “new weapon” and fearlessly deployed it under intense enemy fire.



**FRED RITCHIE**

Commanded the first troop of Calgary Regiment Tanks across the Kingsmill Bridge and straight through the German defenses.



**JOHN WHITTON**

Drove one of four tanks that came to the aid of the Indian Infantry and routed the German position.

**“We left our marshaling point at 11:00 PM, just as the eleven hundred gun artillery barrage commenced. The barrage continued throughout most of the night and was so loud you could not communicate with anybody even if you were screaming in their ear. By 11:30, the smoke was so dense you could not see more than three feet in front of you. My ears are still ringing from that night.”**

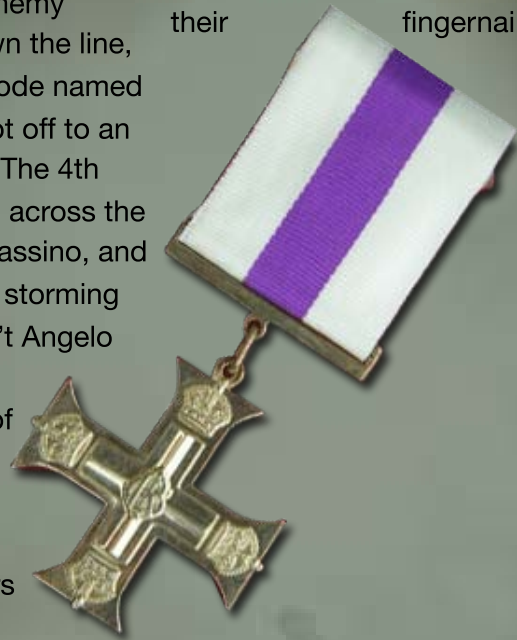
*Tony Kingsmill*

For all the steel and high explosive crashing down on the enemy positions all up and down the line, Operation Diadem (as code named by Winston Churchill) got off to an unpromising beginning. The 4th British Division’s assault across the Gari, two miles below Cassino, and the 8th Indian Division’s storming of the same river at San’t Angelo had every sign of failure about them. A number of the British boats capsized in the swift current, dumping their heavily laden passengers in the river to drown.

Only a bridgehead, the Kingsmill Bridge, had been secured by daybreak.

Although the Indian brigades suffered only a few casualties in their assault across the river, their problems began shortly after touch-down when German artillery and mortars, accompanied by machine guns, concentrated their fire on the crossing sites.

With most of the men still above ground, not having the chance to dig in, casualties mounted at an alarming rate. The situation deteriorated rapidly from that point on, but then stabilized as enough men had dug themselves in deep enough to offer cover. They hung on to their positions literally by their fingernails.



Produced in 1080p  
High Definition and 5.1  
Surround Sound

**“There never was a moment in which the men working there could relax. In fact, there wasn’t a square yard of ground on the godforsaken Cassino Front where a man might draw a few easy breaths.”**

*Stan Scislawski*

Original footage and high definition recreations tell this amazing story in vivid detail.

It’s generally known in Military circles that nothing is ever as bad or as good as it might seem in the early stages of any major attack. It’s also known that success very rarely comes quickly. Many seemingly small incidents often effect the outcome of a battle far beyond what one thinks possible. Often the action of a single brave individual in an isolated effort has been known to turn things around when the outcome appears hopeless.

THE  
GOD  
FOR  
SAKEN  
CASSINO  
FRONT  
-THE  
MIS  
SIO  
N  
KING  
DOM

Regimental histories are replete with glowing accounts of what lone individuals or small teams have accomplished in a particular engagement or major battle that helped turn the tide.

And so it was with the brilliant innovation by one small team of Canadian officers of the 1st Canadian Armored Brigade.

# KINGSMILL BRIDGE TURNED THE TIDE

Operation  
Diadem



The Kingsmill Bridge documentary reveals the untold story of how the Allies crossed the Gari River and broke the Gustav Line.

A story of courage, determination and innovation in the face of grave danger.

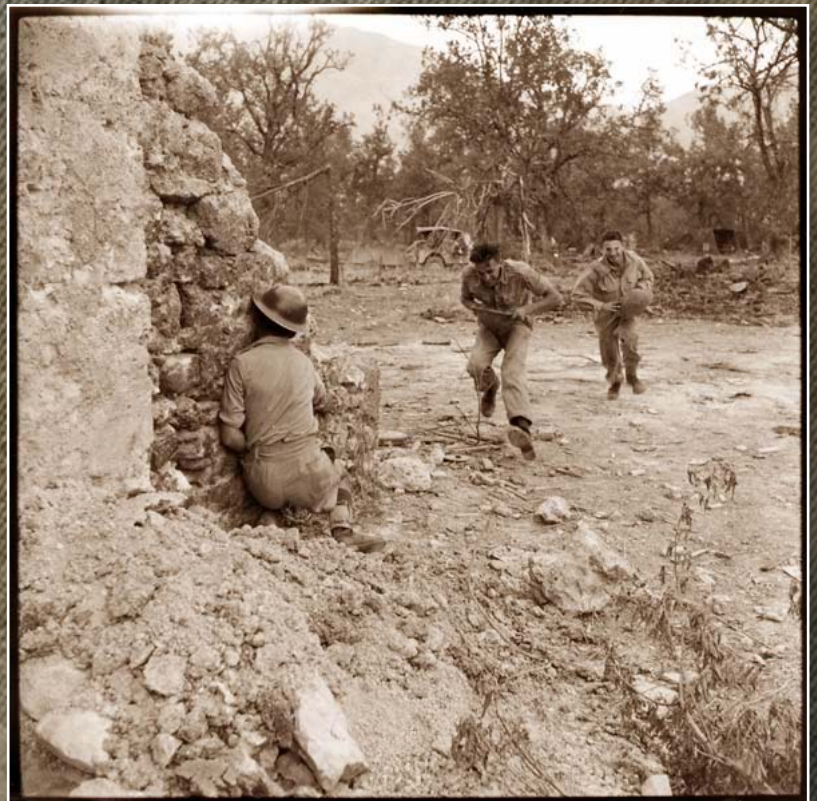
# LIFELIKE 3D ANIMATIONS

Brilliant 5.1  
surround sound makes  
you feel like you're  
really there.



By the time the sun rose above  
the high-peaked mountains to  
the east, it wasn't a bright  
picture that the four Corps  
Commanders of 5th and 8th  
Armies were looking at.

“Were it not for the Canadians,  
that bridge and their tanks, we  
were finished”.



Produced in 1080p  
High Definition and 5.1  
Surround Sound



HD

A 1 hour  
Documentary  
Production

SECRET

SHEET 160

695000 m E

1ST EDITION

93

94

The  
**KINGS MOUNTAIN BRIDGE**

**THE KEY TO BREAKING THE GUSTAV LINE**

A documentary about the pivotal events of May 11th, 1944 during Operation Diadem and a Canadian invention that saved lives and changed the course of the Italian campaign.

A Digital Heritage Production