



Ravenna War Cemetery

On December 1, the Canadian Corps had returned to action, just as the heavier fighting was beginning. In the first three weeks of the month, the Canadians would participate in the liberation of Ravenna (December 4), as well as four other towns, 30 villages, almost 1000 smaller communities, and three well-defended water lines within a nine-mile area.

North of Ravenna, the Allies were challenged by two main rivers - the Lamone and Senio - which would be left behind despite bitter counterattacks. For two regiments from the 1st Infantry Division - the Royal Canadian Regiment and the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment - attempts to set up a bridgehead at the Lamone claimed 164 casualties in 12 hours when the Germans counter-attacked December 5. However, infantry from the 5th Armoured Division, with support from low-flying aircraft, finally succeeded in establishing a bridgehead by mid-December. The Canadians would press on. They reached the Senio by year's end and this would be the farthest advance they would make in Italy as they subsequently settled into a defensive campaign.

Between Dec 2-22, the 1st Canadian Corps suffered 548 killed in a war characterized by rain, flooding, shortages of ammunition and reinforcements, and continued resistance and counter-attack by the Germans.* The end result was a winter break in the fighting, from January 1945 until April 1945 (except for the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade, which supported the Americans and British north of Florence into February), when the Spring offensive began. By then, the 1st Canadian Corps had transferred to northwest Europe.



Ravenna War Cemetery is located in the province of Ravenna, 12 kilometres west of the town bearing the same name. What began as a battlefield cemetery became permanent. It contains the graves of nearly 1,000 Commonwealth war dead, most of them - 438 - Canadian, including two who are unknown. They were primarily members of the 1st Infantry Division; five belonged to the U.K.. The cemetery also contains the graves of 33 members of the Jewish Infantry Brigade Group (which was formed in September 1944 by volunteers from Palestine), and a small number of First World War participants. The 49 members of the Royal 22e Régiment buried here make this the most significantly represented unit. Most of the Canadians lost their lives during the "advance across the rivers", as well as in the patrolling actions that followed in late 1944 and early 1945.

*From the official history, *The Canadian Army in the Second World War (Volume II, The Canadians in Italy*, by LCol G.W.L. Nicholson, Queen's Printer, Ottawa, 1956)