



Brighton, ON

## When Every Body Counts: the story of Albert Madder

Rejected after three weeks basic training due to medical reasons, Albert Madder thought his WWII service was over. Then when the Nazis took

Poland, Denmark and Norway, overran the Low Lands and defeated France, the British needed help to stop the steam-rolling Hitler machine. Churchill couldn't spare British troops to garrison Iceland; he needed to shore up the U.K.'s coastal defences. Most of all he needed trained soldiers. German invasion appeared imminent.

On June 10, 1940, Canada's Royal Regiment boarded the *Empress of Australia* in Halifax as part of the "Z Force" defence of Iceland. Toronto's once rejected Albert Madder was on board. In the times ahead every body counted. Iceland was a strategic submarine and air base. It could NOT become home to the *Luftwaffe* or the Nazi's wolf pack scurrying under the waters of the North Atlantic. Iceland's capture would cut off the U.K.'s lifelines.

Albert was ferried into Reykjavik Harbour and marched through silent streets. The Royals set up canvas tents near the airfield British engineers were enlarging. Within days, the British sailed back to war preparations in the U.K. Metal Nissan huts arrived just in time to replace the canvas; it had snowed in August! But Albert did not overwinter in Iceland. Canadian forces were consolidating in Britain. Most of "Z Force" sailed October 25, 1940.

The Royals arrived in time to assist with the "Coastal Crust" a strategic defence plan developed by General Sir Edmund Ironside. Ironside's British Home Defence had by then shored up Britain's vulnerable south and eastern beaches. The Royal Regiment worked on a wider defensive scheme. They helped create a series of linear "stop lines" made up of anti-tank obstacles, roadblocks, pillboxes, trenches and barbed wire. In short order, 28,000 concrete pillboxes were built. If the Germans made it past the beach heads, the stop lines were meant to slow the type of *Blitzkrieg* that had rolled through Europe.

When the Royal Regiment was not working on stop lines and such, they drilled and participated in war exercises. They spent December 29, 1940 to January 20, 1941 at the Rodean School near Brighton. It was there that Colonel G.H. Basher saw the man he wanted as his batman.

Only senior officers had batmen. They acted as messengers, drivers and body guards; they also looked after luggage, uniforms and personal needs. Officers chose batmen for their native intelligence. They needed practical, sensible men who kept their fingers on the pulse of the rank-and-file. Albert Madder, was the man Basher wanted.

Albert attended to Colonel Basher through increasingly larger military exercises. "Exercise Waterloo" in June 1941 was the largest up to that point. The First Canadian Corps counter-attacked an imagined German sea and air landing. "Exercise Bumper" from September 29–October 3rd was larger still, involving 250,000 men. The exercises readied men for a potential German invasion of the U.K. and for the Dieppe Raid.



*Albert and Doris Madder  
September 27, 1941*

Albert just made it to "Exercise Bumper" by the skin of his teeth. He'd gotten married in Sutton two days before on September 27, 1941. Throughout the remaining battle drills for the Royal Regiment Albert remained with Col Basher. The Royal Regiment stepped up preparation for Operation Jubilee—the

ill-fated Dieppe Raid. Albert lost many comrades on that raid. Only 5% of the Royals who landed on Blue Beach August 19, 1942 survived.

As the Royal Regiment slowly rebuilt in 1942–43 Albert served as an M.P. in Sutton. M.P.s at that time patrolled wherever people met. Fears of spies and rumours of saboteurs ran rampant everywhere. Increasingly, however, Alfred found M.P. duties difficult. The spinal meningitis he'd suffered as a child plagued him. Medically discharged in 1944 he shipped back to Canada.

For four years, in spite of medical difficulties, Private Albert Madder had ably served his country.

