

REMEMBERING THE FALLEN

A tribute to the soldiers remembered
on the Rockwood Cenotaph.



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INTRODUCTION

Remembering the Fallen - A Tribute to the Soldiers on the Rockwood Cenotaph, is a project lead by Heritage Guelph/Eramosa. The names on the cenotaph include eleven men who died overseas in World War I and thirteen men in World War II. Collaborative research efforts have made this project possible with information received from community members and families of the fallen.

Rockwood Cenotaph

The Rockwood Cenotaph was unveiled on Thursday, the 28th of August 1919. According to a contemporary newspaper account in the 18th of September 1919 edition of the Mount Forest Representative,

“This is the first monument to be unveiled which has been erected by a municipality.”



Post WWI Unveiling of the Rockwood Cenotaph

The Cenotaph was subsequently modified to include the names of 13 more men from the Township who fought and died in World War II



Post WWII Unveiling of the Rockwood Cenotaph

cenotaph - noun:

Oxford English Dictionary

A monument to someone buried elsewhere, especially one commemorating people who died in a war.

Origin: early 17th century: from French *cénotaphe*, from late Latin *cenotaphium*, from Greek *kenos* ‘empty’ + *taphos* ‘tomb’

JOHN S. COKER, MM, MiD 18027 Sergeant

Born: 2 March 1885 in Eramosa Township, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Carpenter

Enlisted: 18 August 1914 in Edmonton, Alberta

Died: 3 May 1917 at the age of 32

Buried: Aubigny Communal Cemetery, at Pas de Calais, France

John S. Coker was born on 2 March 1885 to John and Hannah (nee Bolton) Coker of RR #3 Eramosa. He was the youngest of their four children (William b.1874, James Thomas b.1876 and Mary b.?).

His grandparents immigrated to Eramosa Township from Scotland before the birth of his father in 1860. John was raised in Eramosa Township and after his education, became a carpenter and had a reputation as an accomplished woodsman. He was a member of the local militia – the 30th Canadian Regiment (Wellington Rifles) for 5 years. Around 1912, John and a friend travelled west to the Peace River District of Alberta.



The **30th Regiment Wellington Rifles** evolved from the 1st Battalion Wellington Rifles. They were organized in 1857 from the local militia within Wellington County and were headquartered in Guelph. In 1866, because of the fear of the Fenian Raids (1866-1871) they were re-organized as an infantry unit (30th Regiment Wellington Rifles) and a separate artillery unit (Guelph Garrison Battery, later Wellington Field Battery). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many men joined their local militia. In addition to the camaraderie of weekly training, rank achieved within the militia tended to have a corresponding level of prestige within the local community.

The 30th Wellington Rifles were never mobilized as a unit for WWI. Instead, they performed recruiting duties locally. After training in Canada, their recruits were assigned to operational regiments for overseas service. Seventy years after they were separated, these two Wellington County regiments were merged back into a larger artillery battery that has continued through to today as the 11th Field, Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery.

While living in Alberta, John joined the 101st Regiment (Edmonton Fusiliers) on 18 August 1914. Ten days later, the Regiment arrived in Valcartier, Quebec for short and strenuous basic training. During this time, his attestation papers show that he volunteered for overseas service on 22 September. At Quebec City on 3 October, the regiment boarded the S.S. Zeeland for the crossing to England. After arriving on the 18th in Devonport (Plymouth) England, they were moved to Salisbury Plain for more intensive training during which they lived in tents through a cold and miserable winter. The regiment's name was changed to the 9th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force (9th Bn CEF) but was designated a reserve unit to train and provide replacement soldiers for those lost in battle at the front. At this time, Private Coker was transferred to the 3rd (Toronto) Battalion and in February 1915, he attended the Divisional Training School. He was subsequently promoted to Corporal and then on 11 June, he was promoted to Sergeant. He earned a reputation as an

accomplished marksman. By July 1915, the 3rd Bn had moved to the Walloon (French speaking) Region in Belgium. They were located at Piggeries near the town of Ploegsteert and approximately 2 kms north of the border with France. Ploegsteert Wood was the site of fierce WWI fighting. The Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing commemorates more than 11,000 missing and assumed killed in action Commonwealth soldiers who died in the area during that time.

By early 1917, Sergeant Coker's regiment was near Arras, in northern France. On 9 April, he was mentioned in the dispatches (MiD) of Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig for his gallant actions during the opening day of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The Canadian Corps succeeded in capturing Vimy Ridge on 12 April. Less than two weeks later and within less than 10 kms of Vimy, his bravery in action was again recognized and he was recommended for the Military Medal. Unfortunately, on 3 May 1917, at the age of 32 years and 4 months, Sergeant John Coker died of wounds that he received in action during what was known as the Fresnoy Engagement. After his death on 18 July 1917, he was awarded the Military Medal (MM) for gallantry for his earlier actions on 23/26 April.

The citation reads:

"This N.C.O. is recommended for conspicuous gallantry at ARLEUX on the afternoon of April 24, 1917, when his platoon was subjected to extremely heavy enemy bombardment. Sergeant Coker by his good judgment (sic) and personal supervision placed his platoon so that it suffered only four casualties."

"Again on 23/24 April 1917, this N.C.O. showed great dash and determination in leading a Battle patrol of twelve men into the enemy line, obtaining much valuable information as regards to the state of his defences and again on the night of 25/26 April he was of invaluable assistance to his Company Commander in siting and digging a new line of trench, 500 yards in advance of his own line. This was under heavy artillery and machine gun fire."

He was buried in the Aubigny Communal Cemetery, at Pas de Calais, France and his name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance, in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa. His Military Medal, 1914-1915 Star, Victory Medal and British War Medal were sent to his mother at RR #1 Eramosa.

The Military Medal

The Military Medal (MM) is awarded to Warrant Officers, non-commissioned officers and men for individual or associated acts of bravery on the recommendation of a Commander-in-Chief in the field. The regimental or equivalent number, rank, initials, surname and unit of the recipient appear in plain block capitals around the edge of the medal.



Battle of Vimy Ridge and the Vimy Memorial

The Battle of Vimy Ridge, France, April 1917, was the first time the Canadians fought as a Corps, under a Canadian General (Gen. Arthur Currie) and followed a Canadian battle plan. The Canadian force succeeded in taking Vimy Ridge, a task that had previously been unsuccessfully attempted by first the French Army and later the British Army. An extract from the official Canadian War Diary reads "The Battle of Vimy Ridge was a military engagement fought primarily as part of the Battle of Arras, in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region of France, during the First World War. The main combatants were the Canadian Corps of four divisions, against three divisions of the German Sixth Army. The battle, which took place from 9 to 12 April 1917, was part of the opening phase of the British-led Battle of Arras, a diversionary attack for the French Nivelle Offensive."

The VIMY MEMORIAL is located near Pas de Calais, France. It is Canada's most impressive tribute overseas to those Canadians who fought and gave their lives in the First World War. This majestic and inspiring Memorial overlooks the Douai Plain from the highest point of Vimy Ridge, about eight kilometres northeast of Arras on the N17 towards Lens. The Memorial is signposted from this road to the left, just before you enter the village of Vimy from the south. The memorial itself is some way inside the memorial park, but again it is well signposted. At the base of the memorial, these words appear in French and in English:

TO THE VALOUR OF THEIR COUNTRYMEN IN THE GREAT WAR AND IN MEMORY OF THEIR SIXTY THOUSAND DEAD THIS MONUMENT IS RAISED BY THE PEOPLE OF CANADA

Inscribed on the ramparts of the Vimy Memorial are the names of over 11,000 Canadian soldiers who were posted as 'missing, presumed dead' in France. A plaque at the entrance to the memorial states that the land for the battlefield park, 91.18 hectares in extent, was the free gift in perpetuity of the French nation to the people of Canada. Construction of the massive work began in 1925, and 11 years later, on 26 July 1936, the monument was unveiled by King Edward VIII.

The park surrounding the Vimy Memorial was created by horticultural experts. Canadian trees and shrubs were planted in great masses to resemble the woods and forests of Canada. Wooded parklands surround the grassy slopes of the approaches around the Vimy Memorial. Trenches and tunnels have been restored and preserved and the visitor can picture the magnitude of the task that faced the Canadian Corps on that distant dawn when history was made.

On 3 April 2003, the Government of Canada designated the 9th of April of each year as a national day of remembrance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.



THOMAS LENTON EDWARDS**850549 Private**

Born: 15 September 1899 in Halifax, Nova Scotia

Family moved to Carrol Street in Rockwood, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Farming

Enlisted: 27 April 1916 in St. Catharines, Ontario (Edwards lied about his age to enlist at the age of 16)

Died: 19 August 1917 at the age of 17

Buried: Body never found / No known grave

Thomas Edwards was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia on 15 September 1899 to William J. and Alice Maude (nee Murley) Edwards. He was the second oldest of their twelve children (William George b.1898, Edward b.1901, Fredrick b.1903, Flora b.1904, Constance b.1906, Geraldine b.1908, Alexander b.1910, Robert b.1911, Maude "Queenie" b.1914, James "Alf" Alfred b.1916, Llewellyn b.1919). His family subsequently moved to Carrol St. in Rockwood, Ontario when William started work at one of the local stone quarries. Thomas was working on the farm of John Lister, a short distance south of Rockwood, when on 27 April 1916 he volunteered in St. Catharines for overseas service at the age of 16 years and 7 months. The minimum age to enlist was 18 so he declared that he was two years older than his true age by stating that he was born on 15 September 1897 on his Attestation Papers (his true age was not discovered until later). Immediately after joining he was referred to the Dental Corps for treatment. When that was completed, he was assigned to the 176th Ontario Battalion. After a short period of basic training, he left Halifax on 8 July 1916 on board the S.S. Lapland and arrived in England on the 25th of July. In September 1916 it was discovered that he was underage and prohibited from proceeding to the Continent (France and Belgium) and sent to the 78th Battalion. He was still in England when five months later he was admitted to the Westcliffe Hospital after becoming ill. In May he returned to service and was transferred to the 5th Battalion and subsequently Company B of the 3rd Battalion in France.

On 19 August 1917, at the age of 17 years and 11 months, he was reported Killed in Action at Hill 70, the result of German mining activity. His body was never found and he has no known grave. His name is engraved on the Vimy Memorial near Pas de Calais, France and is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance, in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

Sadly, Private Thomas Lenton Edwards was the older brother of James Alfred Edwards, whose

Battle for HILL 70

The Battle for HILL 70, near Lens, France, took place during August 1917 and has sometimes been overlooked because it took place between the Canadian Corps' success at Vimy Ridge and the horrors of Passchendaele. The Germans held this prominent hill and had fortified it heavily. This gave them control over a wide area, including the Town of Lens. The German fortifications were so heavy they were considered impregnable. The Canadian attack started on the evening of 14 August and by 18 August, they had succeeded in gaining control of Hill 70. During these 4 days, they had successfully fought off 21 German counterattacks. The Canadian losses were 1,505 killed, 4,297 wounded and 41 prisoners. The German casualties were approximately 20,000 men plus 970 prisoners. The Canadian troops earned five Victoria Crosses during this 4 day period.

JAMES ALBERT GAMBLE

127203 Private

Born: 18 March 1897 in Tweed, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Musician (Harper)

Enlisted: 8 October 1915 in Rockwood, Ontario

Died: 16 September 1916 at the age of 19

Buried: No known burial site

James Albert Gamble was born in Tweed, Ontario on 18 March 1897 (although his attestation papers indicate 1847) to Peter and Maggie Gamble of Rockwood, Ontario (later Toronto). He was the oldest of their seven children (Bertie May b.1898, William b.1901, Norman b.1903, Rita b.1905, Harold b.1907 and Harry b.1911). James was 18 years and 7 months old when he volunteered for service on 8 October 1915, in Rockwood. Interestingly, the Magistrate who signed James' Attestation Paper was John Mutrie – the father of Major Robert Mutrie. His trade was listed as "Harper", which was a term generally used to describe a folk musician who played the harp.

Interestingly, both James Albert Gamble and John Wilfred Oakes volunteered on the same day, in the same recruitment office and their regimental numbers are consecutive.

Private Gamble was assigned to the 42nd Battalion of the Canadian Infantry (Quebec Regiment). Few details have been found about his military training between when he volunteered for overseas service until 16 of September 1916, when at the age of 19 years and 6 months, he was killed in action during the Battle of Flers-Courcelette.

Private James Albert Gamble has no known burial site but his name is engraved on the Vimy Ridge Memorial at Pas de Calais France and is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance, in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

The Battle of Flers-Courcelette, France, took place in September 1916. It was a battle within the much larger and longer Franco-British Somme Offensive which took place in the summer and fall of 1916. The battle for Flers-Courcelette started on 15 September and lasted one week. Its objective was to break through the German line by using massed artillery and infantry attacks. Once through, the plan was to use cavalry to overrun the Germans. It was the third and final general offensive mounted by the British Army during the Battle of the Somme (in which over 1 million men on both sides were killed). Unfortunately, by its conclusion on 22 September, the strategic objective of a breakthrough had not been achieved; however, tactical gains were made with the capture of the villages of Courcelette, Martinpuich and Flers. In some places, the front lines were advanced by over 2,500 yards (2,300 m) by the Allied attacks. The battle is significant for the first use of the tank in warfare. It also marked the debut of the Canadian and New Zealand Divisions on the Somme battlefield. On a nearby memorial, the Canadians are commemorated for their part in breaking the German lines from 3 September to 18 November 1916.

HENRY (“HARRY”) HAMPSON

126452 Private

Born: 14 March 1885 in Eden Mills, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Butcher

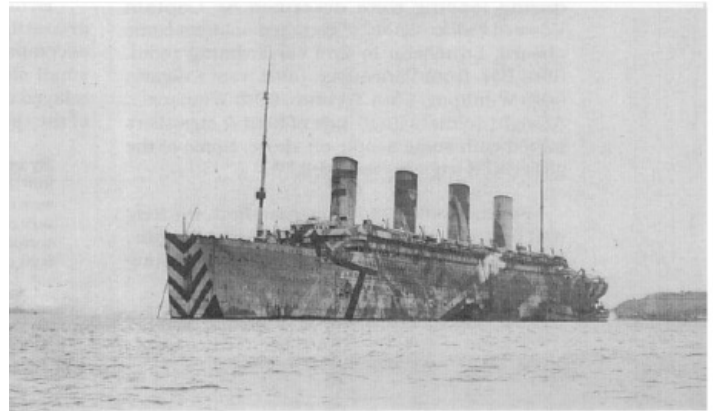
Enlisted: 13 September 1915 in Guelph, Ontario

Died: 16 September 1916 at the age of 31

Buried: Lost and never found. Memorial grave marker in Flanders, Belgium

Harry Hampson was born on 14 March 1885 to William and Hannah (nee Taylor) Hampson of Eden Mills, Ontario. He was the fourth of their five children (Clarissa Jane b.1879, George Thomas b.1880, Alice Maud b.1883 and Helen b.1891). After his schooling he became a butcher until, on 13 September 1915, at the age of 30 years and 5 months, he volunteered with the 71st Overseas Battalion in Guelph.

After training, Private Hampson was shipped to Halifax where he boarded HMT (Hired Military Transport) Olympic, nicknamed “Old Reliable” for her many war time voyages loaded with up to 6,000 troops – a much better record than her sister ship, the Titanic. During World War I, she carried a total of 132,000 troops to Europe from North America plus she carried 58,000 troops back to Canada. She departed from Halifax on 1 April 1916 and arrived in Liverpool, England on 11 April. Records state that during the voyage, there was an outbreak of rubella (German measles) and Private Hampson became infected. Shortly after arrival in Liverpool, England, he was admitted to Aldershot Isolation Hospital on 19 April and discharged three weeks later. He was then transferred to the 54th Infantry Battalion (C Division) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), 11th Infantry Brigade, 4th Division, in Bramshott. After additional training, he departed for France and arrived at Le Havre on 14 August 1916.



HMT Olympic - Wartime Configuration

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On 25 August, the newly formed 4th Canadian Division (of which the 54th Battalion was part) arrived on the line of what became known as the Battle of the Somme. The 4th Division remained in the Ypres Salient, as part of the international “Frank’s Force” to provide a diversion to the fighting in the south at Flers-Courcelette. The 54th Battalion was one of 6 Canadian units that carried out 7 raids on the night of 16th-17th September 1916, when Private Hampson was killed. The Official Canadian War Diary records that by the end of the raid, 4 Lieutenants and 21 other ranks were missing and 1 Lieutenant and 7 other ranks were reported killed in action. Over the next few days, searches for the missing continued without success. Private Hampson was one of the 21 who were lost and never found and presumed killed in action. His memorial grave marker is located in the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial in Flanders, Belgium. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance, in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

His mother, Hannah Hampson, received the Memorial Cross from the Canadian Government.

The Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial in Flanders, Belgium

This memorial bears the names of more than 54,400 men who were lost without trace during the defence of the Ypres Salient in the First World War.

Carved in stone above the central arch are the words:

TO THE ARMIES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE WHO STOOD HERE FROM 1914 TO 1918 AND
TO THOSE OF THEIR DEAD WHO HAVE NO KNOWN GRAVE.



Menin Gate Arch Memorial, Ypres Belgium

Over the two staircases leading from the main Hall is the inscription:

HERE ARE RECORDED NAMES OF OFFICERS AND MEN
WHO FELL IN YPRES SALIENT BUT TO WHOM
THE FORTUNE OF WAR DENIED THE KNOWN AND
HONOURED BURIAL GIVEN TO THEIR COMRADES IN DEATH.

ROBERT JOHN MUTRIE

Major

Born: 2 April 1883 in Eramosa Township, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Financial Agent

Enlisted: 9 December 1914 in Victoria, British Columbia

Died: 5 April 1916 at the age of 33

Buried: Poperinghe New Military Cemetery in Belgium

Robert John Mutrie was born on 2 April 1883 in Eramosa Township to Col. John and Margaret (nee Dow) Mutrie. He was their only child. His parents, grandparents and great grandparents all lived in Wellington County. His father served in the militia, and ultimately commanded the local regiment (30th Wellington Rifles). During WWI, Col. Mutrie was the Chief Recruiting Officer for the area. He was also the Postmaster for Rockwood and politically, served as an Eramosa Township Councillor, Deputy Reeve and Reeve, Wellington County Warden and ultimately, two terms as the Liberal MPP for the constituency.

In the early 19th century, Robert's great-grandparents, John Mutrie and Janet (Wilson) Mutrie, emigrated from Scotland with their young son William, and settled and farmed on 100 acres of land in Nichol Township. His grandparents, William Mutrie and his first wife Jane (Beattie) and his second wife Elizabeth (McDonald) farmed 200 acres along the 3rd Line from 1843 until William's death in 1870.

Robert John Mutrie completed his schooling and became a financial agent. Like his father, he joined the 30th Wellington Rifles. He married Alice Tolton of Guelph and they moved to British Columbia, where he joined the Canadian Mounted Rifles for 3 years and a further 4 years after it was amalgamated and re-named the 30th Regiment BC Horse (CMR). Because the 30th Horse was not mobilized for action when war was declared, Robert volunteered in Victoria, B.C. for overseas service with the newly formed 2nd Regiment Canadian Mounted Rifles on 9 December 1914 at the age of 31 years and 8 months. He was joined by many other volunteers from his former regiment. After enlisting, he was attached to 2 CMR (BC Horse) and, because of his experience, was promoted to 2nd In Charge of the Regiment. His unit sailed on 12 June 1915 from Halifax to England and, after a few months of additional training in England, arrived at Le Havre, France on 22 September. Around this time, his wife and four small children left B.C. and moved back to Guelph to live with her parents for the duration of the war.

Records of the No. 2 Canadian Field Ambulance main dressing station show Robert Mutrie died on 5 April 1916 of wounds sustained in action during the Battle of the St. Eloi Craters, near the Belgian towns



Poperinghe New Military Cemetery Photo

of Ploegsteert and Ypres. He was survived by his widow, Alice Elizabeth Mutrie, of 44 Bellevue Place, Guelph and his four children, the eldest being an 8 year old son. Mrs. Mutrie received the Memorial Cross from the Canadian Government. Later, one of his sons, Eric (1912-2003), became a well known physician in Guelph.

Major Robert J. Mutrie is buried at Poperinghe New Military Cemetery in Belgium and his name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance, in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

The Battle of the St. Eloi Craters

The Battle of the St. Eloi Craters was that first major engagement for the 2nd Canadian Division, shortly after their arrival from England. After two weeks of confused fighting, it ended in disaster with the loss of 1,373 men and a change of command.

Previously, British forces had blown a series of underground mines that were filled with a large amount of explosives to destroy the sector's German defences. This left massive, mud-filled craters for the attackers to occupy. When the Canadians relieved the British troops on the night of 3 April, they found few actual trenches in which to take cover, with most of them filled waist deep with water. The Germans could observe the Canadian positions and bombarded them continuously in preparation for a series of German counterattacks on 6 April that drove the Canadians out of the muddy craters. The battlefield conditions were so bad and confusing, the Canadian commanders were often uncertain as to the location of both the Canadian and German forces.

Eventually, with the aid of aerial photography, they were able to see the true Canadian and German positions. On 16 April, the battle ground to a halt with enemy forces holding most of the key points.

(JOHN) WILFRED OAKES

127204 Private

Born: 29 December 1897 in Oustic, 10 km north of Rockwood, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Weaver

Enlisted: 8 October 1915 in Rockwood, Ontario

Died: 12 August 1918 at the age of 20

Missing and considered Killed in Action

Wilfred Oakes was born in Oustic, 10 km north of Rockwood, to George and Mary Ann (nee Mellon) Oakes on 29 December 1897. He was the ninth of his father's eleven children. Three children with Mary Easton (James Watson b.1875, Annie Ellen b.1877 and William Albert b.1879) and eight children with his second wife, Mary Ann Mellon (Francis b.1882, George Ambrose b.1887, Charles Edwin b. 1890, Mary Kathleen b.1892, Margaret Irene b.1895, Owen Stanley b.1900 and Christian Lawrence b.1902). His grandparents were the original settlers of all of Lot 25, Concession 5 of Eramosa Township, from the 5th Line to the 6th Line. He was a weaver by trade before he volunteered for overseas service in Guelph on 8 October 1915.

Interestingly, both John Wilfred Oakes and James Albert Gamble volunteered on the same day, in the same recruitment office and their regimental numbers are consecutive.

His attestation papers state that he was 17 years and 10 months old when they were signed by Col. John Mutrie. He was originally assigned to the 71st Battalion, D Company. After completing his basic training, he departed from Halifax on 1 April 1916 aboard HMT Olympic and arrived in Liverpool, England on 11 April. Upon arrival in England, Private Oakes was transferred to the 53rd Battalion C Company, and subsequently transferred to the 11th Brigade Trench Mortar Battery on 28 May 1916. By the time he landed in France on 9 June 1916, he was assigned to the 42nd Brigade. During August 1916, Private Phillips was struck with tonsillitis and since this was before the discovery of antibiotics, his condition deteriorated to the point that he was sent back to England to recover. By March 1917, he was transferred to the 42nd Regiment at the Casualty Care Hospital in Bromley, Shoreham, England. In November 1917 he was deemed well enough to return to active service with the 42nd Battalion and arrived back in France again on 21 November 1917. He saw action in the Battle of the Somme (July – November 1916), Vimy Ridge (April 1917) and Passchendaele (October 1917). During the later stages of the Battle of Amiens, it is reported that on 12 August 1918, while performing his duties as a message runner, he was shot by an enemy sniper and died instantly.

His name is engraved on the Vimy Memorial at Pas de Calais, France and his name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance, in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa. His family received his Victory Medal and the British War medal.

The Battle of Amiens, August 1918, marked the beginning of the end for the German armies and it would prove to be one of most successful battles of the war for the Allies.

After the failure of the German offensives during the spring of 1918, the Allies regrouped and counterattacked along the Western Front. It was prepared in secret, with a major counter-intelligence operation to deceive the Germans as to the real location of Canadian and Australian troops who were to spearhead the assault at Amiens. The assault was based upon a combined army approach to war with the infantry attacking behind a creeping artillery barrage, supported by tanks, cavalry, armoured cars, and tactical airpower.

On 8 August, the Canadians advanced 13 kilometres through the German defences, the most successful day of combat for the Allies along the Western Front, but the Germans rushed reinforcements to the battlefield to prevent the hoped for Allied breakthrough. Subsequently, fighting became far more difficult and costly, especially since the attacking forces were moving beyond the range of their own artillery. By the night of 11 August, most offensive operations had ground to a halt. The battle had been exceedingly costly and the Canadians suffered more than 11,800 casualties in total, including nearly 4,000 on 8 August alone.

The Battle of Amiens was called the 'black day' by one of the German Army commanders. It shook German faith in the outcome of the war and raised the morale of the Allies. Previously, most Allied commanders had predicted the war would continue well into 1919 and possibly into 1920. Amiens demonstrated that the German army was weakening under the strain of four years of warfare and was closer to defeat than anyone had predicted.

The Battles of Festubert Givenchy, June 1915. Following the Battle of Ypres, the decimated units of the 1st Canadian Division were reinforced with volunteers from the Cavalry Brigade before marching south to join in the Allied offensives which were already under way. They joined the fighting at Festubert in May 1915 and Givenchy in June. These battles followed the grim pattern of using a frontal assault against powerful enemy defences. Although the Canadians achieved some of their objectives, the gains were negligible and the loss of life was extremely high with 2,468 casualties at Festubert and a further 400 at Givenchy.

See Peter Wilson Pick's biography.

PETER WILSON PICK

Captain

Born: 15 April 1883 in Guelph Township, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Foreman in the woodworking shop at Beatty Brothers in Fergus

Enlisted: 23 September 1914 in Valcartier, Quebec

Died: 15 June 1915 at the age of 32

Buried: Beuvry Communal Cemetery in Pas de Calais, France



Peter Wilson Pick was born on 15 April 1883 in Guelph Township, Wellington County, Ontario to Richard and Isabella (nee Wilson) Pick. He was the youngest of their three children (William b.1879 and Barbara Scott b.1881). His father had emigrated from England to RR #2 Elora and his mother emigrated from Scotland with her parents and was raised in Eden Mills. Richard and Isabella were married in 1878. Around 1900, at the age of 17 years, Peter joined the local Militia - 30th Wellington Rifles and rose to the rank of Lieutenant by the time he volunteered for overseas service. Outside of the militia, he was employed at Beatty Brothers in Fergus as the Foreman in the woodworking shop. He volunteered for overseas service in Valcartier, Quebec on 23 September 1914, at the age of 31 years and 5 months. He was assigned to the 30th Regiment (Overseas Contingent) Wellington Rifles. The Regiment arrived at Avonmouth (Bristol) England on 2 September 1914. During his time in England, he was assigned to A Company, 1st Battalion, of the Western Ontario Regiment and was promoted to the rank of Temporary Captain on 5 March 1915. He arrived with the regiment in France on 1 April 1915. On 25 April he was admitted to the 85th Field Ambulance station and sent to Casualty Clearance, No. 7 Stat. Hospital in Boulogne, with a scalp wound. He was treated and released back to active duty with his regiment on 27 April 1915. Captain Pick fought in the battles of Ypres, Festubert and finally, Givenchy, where he was struck by a shell on 15 June 1915 and killed instantly.

Captain Peter Wilson Pick was buried with full military honours at the Beuvry Communal Cemetery in Pas de Calais, France and his name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance, in the

Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.



Beuvry Communal Cemetery

He was awarded the Star, Victory Medal, and British War Medal which were sent to his sister Barbara S. Pick, of Fergus.

Fergus News-Record Thursday, June 24, 1915: Captain Pick Killed in Action.

Monday's rural mail brought sad news to Mr. and Mrs. Richard Pick for it contained a telegram from Ottawa notifying them that their son, Capt. Peter W. Pick, was killed in action in France on June 15th, 1915. The news quickly spread around town where Capt. Pick was well known, and cast a gloom over the entire neighbourhood.

The war has been brought home very close to us in the deaths of Mess'rs Gregson and Pick, the only two Canadian-born boys who left here with the first contingent. They did nobly, gave up their lives for their country, and are honored by all. Capt. Pick was born in Guelph Tp. 31 years ago, being the youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Pick. The family later moved near Barrie's Church, and finally to Lower Nichol, near Ennotville, where the father and mother, and one daughter, Barbara, still reside. The only surviving son lives at Davidson, Sask.

When Capt. Pick enlisted he did so as a lieutenant, and was the first officer of the 30th to volunteer his services. He was foreman in the wood-working department of Beatty Bros. lower shops and was exceedingly popular with his men, as he was with all who knew him.

Private letters from our soldier boys at the front do not fail to mention Capt. Pick's bravery and his loss will be deeply deplored by them also. He was wounded in the arm in the severe fighting at St. Julien, but fought on, not even going to the hospital until the worst of the engagement was over. He later returned to the trenches. After the terrible fight at Langemarck, where he distinguished himself, he was promoted to the captaincy. In a letter received by his parents this week he stated that he had been lately on the transport service, in which he probably met his death.

Capt. Pick was a model young man in every way, and his parents have the sincere sympathy of a very large number of friends in this locality, in their sudden bereavement.

Fergus News-Record Thursday, July 1, 1915: MEMORIAL SERVICE

The memorial service last Sunday afternoon for Capt. Peter Pick, killed in action in France, held at the home of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Pick at Ennotville, will not soon be forgotten by the large number present. Shortly after dinner vehicles of all kinds left town for Capt. Pick's former home, several of them containing many of the employees of Beatty Bros. Works where the Captain was engaged as foreman at the lower factory, at the time he enlisted, and in whose hearts he ever held a warm place.

Rev. J. A. Brown opened the service with prayer, after which Rev. R. W. Craw made the address, speaking in the highest terms of the bravery of Capt. Pick, of the clean life he lived, of his untiring devotion to duty, and finally the laying down of his life for King and Country, in a worthy cause. He appealed to the young men of the vicinity to volunteer to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Capt. Pick. Rev. Mr. Kaye of Barrie Hill church read the scripture. It was at this church that the late Capt. Pick when but 14 years of age had taken communion and became one of its members. When 16 years old he joined the 30th regiment, and gradually rose until he became Captain.

Much sympathy is expressed for the aged parents and particularly for Mrs. Pick at this time as on Friday last she had the misfortune to stumble and break her leg.

(FRANCIS) ARNOLD PHILLIPS

602306 Private

Born: 18 September 1896 in Eramosa Township, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Telegraph Operator

Enlisted: 3 February 1915 in Guelph, Ontario

Died: 26 Oct 1917 at the age of 21

Buried: Aubigny Community Cemetery near Pas de Calais, France

Francis Arnold Phillips was born on 18 September 1896. He was the first son of Francis and Mary J. (nee Darby) Phillips, who farmed the western half of Lot 5, Concession 2, between Eden Mills and Rockwood. He was the third of their four children (Ethel b.1886, Isla b.1894 and Gerald b.1900). After his father's death in 1903, his mother continued to run the family farm with hired help. Arnold worked as a telegraph operator until at the age of 18 years, he volunteered for overseas service on 3 February 1915 in Guelph.

Private Phillips was assigned to the 34th Battalion and subsequently transferred to the 5th Canadian Motorized Rifles (Quebec Regiment 5CMR). Private Phillips is reported to have sustained a skull fracture and injuries to his left eye, a wound to his left ankle and a fractured right ankle when he fell into a damaged well on the night of 12 October 1917. A Board of Inquiry was convened to investigate this incident. Witness testimony from patrol members revealed that Phillips and one other soldier (Private Aldridge) had been moving in the dark towards a small building. Private Phillips was in the lead by about ten paces. Aldridge, who had stopped to light a cigarette, heard a scream and found Phillips had fallen some 80 feet down the well. Apparently, a runaway General Service wagon at some time had knocked some of the boards and the wooden top off the well, leaving it unguarded on one side.



Aubigny Communal Cemetery

At the age of 21 years, Private Phillips succumbed to his injuries on 26 October 1917 and was listed as 'Died of Wounds' later modified to 'Died of Accidental Injuries'.

He is buried in Aubigny Community Cemetery near Pas de Calais, France and his name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance, in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

5th Canadian Motorized Rifles

The 5th Canadian Motorized Rifles (Quebec Regiment 5CMR) was formed in 1915, and were sent to England for additional training later that year. In 1916, they were converted to an infantry battalion which was then attached to the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division, CEF (later the Canadian Corps). The battalion saw action in France and Flanders between 1916 and 1918.

WILLIAM WALLIS SAMMON

292256 Private

Born: 22 April 1889 in Chatham, Kent, England, emigrating to Canada and living near Rockwood, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Farmer

Enlisted: 17 March 1916 in Manitoba

Died: 12 April 1917 at the age of 27

Buried: Canadian Cemetery No. 2, Pas de Calais, France

William Sammon was born in Chatham, Kent, England on 22 April 1889 to William and Nellie (nee Phillips) Sammon. He was the older of their two children (Maud Pearl b.1891). He emigrated to Canada in 1905 and lived with the family of George and Isabella Gordon and worked on their farm near Rockwood, in Nassagaweya Township. In 1912, he married Sarah Agnes Glendenning of Rockwood. William and Sarah moved to their own farm near Miami, Manitoba, which is south-west of Winnipeg, at the foot of the Pembina Hills.

While living in Manitoba, William volunteered for overseas service on 17 March 1916, at the age of 26 years, 11 months. He joined the Winnipeg based 222nd Overseas Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) and his Attestation Papers list his occupation as a farmer and that he was married to Sarah Agnes Sammon of Rockwood. On 1 November 1916, Sarah returned to Rockwood to wait for William to return home. After completing his basic training, Private Sammon sailed with his unit aboard HMT Olympic, arriving in England on 20 November 1916. After undergoing further training in England, he departed for France on 29 December 1916. Upon his arrival in France on 9 February 1917, he was transferred to the 44th Battalion (New Brunswick Regiment).

Unfortunately, little additional information has been found at this time about Private Sammon except that he was killed in action on 12 April 1917 during the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Private William Wallis Sammon is buried in Canadian Cemetery No. 2, Pas de Calais, France, about 1 kilometer south of the Canadian Memorial at Vimy. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance, in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.



Canadian Cemetery Number 2

(ROBERT) JOHN STUMPF 402833 Private

Born: 21 May 1893 in Milton, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Clerk

Enlisted: 16 January 1915 in Guelph, Ontario

Died: 28 September 1916 at age 23

Buried: Contay British Cemetery in Somme, France

Robert Stumpf was born in Milton, Ontario on 21 May 1893, the son of Robert Reuben and Margaret Annie Stumpf (of Rockwood). He was their only child. The family later moved to Rockwood, where Robert was raised. Prior to volunteering for overseas service, Robert worked as a clerk and had served three years in the Infantry.

Robert Stumpf volunteered for overseas service in Guelph on 16 January 1915 at the age of 22 years and 9 months. Private Stumpf was initially assigned to the 9th Reserve Battalion on 27 August 1915 for basic training. He was subsequently transferred to the 34th Reserve Battalion and then the 10th Battalion of the Canadian Infantry (Alberta Regiment). There is no record of his deployment overseas to England; however, records indicate that he arrived in France at Le Havre on 17 March 1916. Records show that on 16 May he was being treated for influenza at the 2nd Field Ambulance Station (2 CFA). After recovering, he rejoined the 10th Battalion on 16 June 1916. On 27 September 1916, Private Stumpf was admitted to 3 CFA in Rouen suffering from wounds. The Official Canadian War Diary lists that he died on 28 September 1916 at age 23 years and 4 months. He is buried in the Contay British Cemetery in Somme, France and is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance, in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.



Contay British Cemetery

The Contay British Cemetery in Somme, France, was chosen in August 1916 for burials from the 49th Casualty Clearing Station, which arrived at Contay at the end of August. All the burials in Plots I to IV, and the majority of those in Plots VII and VIII (the plot numbers V and VI were not used), cover the period August 1916 to March 1917. The German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line in the spring of 1917 brought the medical units further east and it was not until April 1918, when the Germans advanced to Albert, that the 38th and other Divisions used the cemetery again.

GORDON DAVID WINSTON

928055 Private

Born: 27 June 1897 in Guelph, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Farming

Enlisted: 4 December 1915 in Guelph, Ontario

Died: 29 September 1918 at the age of 21

Buried: Drummond Cemetery in Nord, France

Gordon Winston was born in Guelph on 27 June 1897 to Ephraim and Elsie (nee Watt) Winston. He was the older of their two children (Agnes b.1905). Both of his parents were of Scottish descent. The family lived in the City of Guelph with Elsie's parents, Lawrence and Jessie Watt. Sometime after 1911, the family moved to RR#3 Rockwood where, after his education, Gordon was employed in farming.

He was only 18 years and 7 months old when he volunteered for overseas service in Guelph on 4 December 1915. Col. John Mutrie signed his Attestation Papers. Private Winston was initially assigned to the 153rd Battalion (Western Ontario Regiment). After basic training, he departed from Halifax on 29 June 1917 aboard HMT Olympic, arriving in Liverpool 5 July 1917. He remained in England for additional training until he was sent to France in March 1918. In August 1918 he was transferred to the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles - British Columbia Regiment (2CMR). He was reported Killed in Action on 29 September 1918. During Gordon's service overseas, his parents moved back to Guelph and there they learned that their son had died overseas at the age of 21 years and 3 months.

Private Gordon David Winston is buried at the Drummond Cemetery in Nord, France and his name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance, in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa. His name is also inscribed on his parents' headstone in Woodlawn Cemetery, Guelph.

The Memorial Cross was presented to his mother.



Drummond Cemetery

JAMES ALFRED (“Alf”) EDWARDS B149650 Private/Gunner

Born: 9 May 1916 in Rockwood, Ontario

Previous Occupations: Crane Operator and Truck Driver

Enlisted: 23 July 1943 at the age of 27 in Toronto, Ontario

Died: 8 March 1945 at the age of 28

Buried: Canadian Military Cemetery, Nijmegen, Holland



James Alfred Edwards was born on 9 May 1916 to William J. and Alice Maude (nee Murley) Edwards of Main Street, Rockwood. He was the second youngest of their twelve children (William George b.1898, Thomas Lenton b.1899, Edward b.1901, Fredrick b.1903, Flora b.1904, Constance b.1906, Geraldine b.1908, Alexander b.1910, Robert b.1911, Maude “Queenie” b.1914, James Alfred “Alf” Edwards b.1916, Llewellyn b.1919). His older brother Thomas was killed during WWI and is also memorialized on the Rockwood Cenotaph.

In June 1930, Alf graduated from Grade 10 at the Rockwood Continuation School. During this time, he was a leader in the Boy Scouts and enjoyed playing the guitar. He went to work for the Atlas Steel Company in Port Colborne as a 5 Ton Crane Operator and a Truck Driver. He served as an Acting Sergeant in the “Non-Permanent Active Military” 63rd Battery of the Royal Canadian Artillery from 1935 to 1939. He next served in the 2nd Battalion Lincoln and Welland Regiment from June 1940 to July 1943. In Toronto on 23 July 1943, Alf enlisted for overseas service in the Army and interestingly, gave his nationality as “Newfoundlander”. Before joining Canada as a Province in 1949, Newfoundland was a British Dominion and after 1933, was directly ruled from London.

After enlisting, Alf was sent to Shilo, Manitoba from August to December for training, followed by one and a half months of additional specialized training in Red Deer, Alberta to become a Qualified Driver and Motorman. He then returned to Shilo until embarking for a seven day voyage to England on 21 November 1944. Upon arrival in England, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry Corps. On 28 January 1945, he was transferred to the 1st Battalion Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (RHLI) and embarked for the European Front. On 21 February, he was re-classified as an Infantry Private/Gunner.

Less than one month later, Private Edwards was killed in action as part of Operation Blockbuster on 8 March 1945, near the German town of Xanten, just inside the pre-1939 German Border with the Netherlands. Both Private James Alfred Edwards’ and Private Charles Humphrey Wilson’s names are on the Rockwood Cenotaph and both were killed on the same day, within 10 kms of each other, in Germany. Private/Gunner James Alfred Edwards was initially buried on the outskirts of Xanten, Germany. Shortly after the end of the War in Europe, his body was exhumed and reburied in the Canadian Military Cemetery, Nijmegen, Holland. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

Many exhumations occurred post war as General Guy Simmons decreed that no Canadian soldier or airman would be left in German soil.

Operation Blockbuster took place between 22 February and 10 March 1945 and was part of the larger Battle of the Rhineland which marked the advance of the Allied Armies through the “Siegfried Line” of defences and into the German homeland as far as the Rhine River. Operation Blockbuster involved some of the fiercest fighting of the War.

“**The Battle of the Rhineland** was fought in Feb-Mar 1945 between Allied forces from Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States (as well as smaller national contingents), and the German forces occupying territory south and west of the Rhine River during the North-West Europe campaign of the Second World War.”

“The initial goal was to reach the Rhine River, the last significant natural barrier between Allied forces and Germany. From their winter positions in the Nijmegen Salient, the First Canadian Army reinforced by elements of the British 2nd Army, began operations to advance south east, clearing all land west of the river. Operation VERITABLE was a costly advance through flooded terrain and German defensive lines, followed by Operation BLOCKBUSTER which succeeded in driving through (German lines) almost to the banks of the Rhine River. Operation BLOCKBUSTER II cleared the town of Xanten to end the fighting in the Rhineland.” - canadiansoldiers.com

Two Victoria Crosses were earned during these operations and Canadian losses were high, but they marked a major turning point of the War. Germany surrendered less than eight months later to end the European portion of WWII.

The Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment returned to France on 5 July 1944 as part of the 4th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division. They moved to Normandy in time to serve with the British 2nd Army. They advanced along the Channel coast with the Canadian 1st Army and helped to liberate Dieppe. The division saw heavy action in the Netherlands in late 1944 and took part in the final offensives in 1945. The Essex Scottish Regiment was a part of: Bourguebus Ridge; St. André-sur-Orne; Falaise; Falaise Road; Clair Tizon; Forêt de la Londe; The Scheldt; Woensdrecht; South Beveland; The Rhineland; Goch-Calcar Road; The Hochwald; Xanten; Twente Canal; Groningen; Oldenburg; North West Europe, 1942, 1944-1945. By the end of the war in Europe, the Essex Scottish Regiment had suffered the highest losses of the Canadian Army with over 2,000 men wounded and more than 550 killed.

See Ernest Henry Gerrie's biography.

ERNEST HENRY GERRIE

B156042 Gunner

Born: 30 December 1923 in Erin Township, Ontario

Previous Occupations: Farming and Machinist's Helper

Enlisted: 1 May 1943 and volunteered overseas on 20 November 1943 in Newfoundland

Died: 4 April 1945 at the age of 21

Buried: Canadian Military Cemetery, Holten, Netherlands



Ernest Henry Gerrie was born on 30 December 1923 in Erin Township to David Henry and Annie Winifred (nee Sanderson) Gerrie. He was the youngest son of their six children (Luella b.1908, Evelyn, Edna, Hugh, and Elwin). Sometime after his birth, his family moved to Rockwood. After graduating from Grade 8 at the age of 13 from Eramosa S.S.#9 in Rockwood, he worked as a farm labourer before moving to Hamilton to work as a Machinist's Helper at the Westinghouse plant.

At the age of 19, on 1 May 1943, he enrolled in the Army (Artillery Corps) under the National Resource Mobilization Act (NRMA): *"Conscription, or compulsory military service, divided the nation in the Second World War and threatened the survival of political leaders. In 1939 Prime Minister Mackenzie King, conscious of the opposition of French-speaking Quebec to conscription in the First World War, promised that there would be no conscription for overseas service. By mid-1940, however, there was enormous pressure from English Canada for total mobilization of manpower. King introduced the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA), which called for a national registration of eligible men and authorized conscription for home defence. From April 1941, the young men called up were required to serve for the rest of the war on home defence duties."* - Canadian War Museum article - Democracy at War / Canadian Newspapers and the Second World War / Canada and World War 2 / Politics and Government / Conscription

He enlisted into the 26th Anti-Aircraft Battery in Newfoundland from 20 November 1943 through May 1944 when he volunteered for overseas service. By October 1944, he had qualified as a radar operator at Barriefield Camp, near Kingston, Ontario (now known as CFB Kingston). On 25 November, he embarked from Canada by ship and arrived in England 5 days later, where he was transferred into the Canadian Infantry Corps as a member of the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment with the rank of Gunner. After completing a six week training course, he was flown directly to the Belgian Front where he joined the same Canadian Division where his brother Hugh was serving in the Provost Corps.

Gunner Ernest Henry Gerrie was killed in action on 4 April 1945, at the beginning of the Battle of Zutphen and Deventer, in North-East Netherlands. He was initially buried near Zutphen. Shortly after the end of the War in Europe, his body was exhumed and reburied in the Canadian Military Cemetery, Holten, Netherlands. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

LAWRENCE NELLIS GRAHAM

A58918 Craftsman

Born: 14 March 1920 in Eramosa Township, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Farmer

Enlisted: 9 January 1942

Died: 16 December 1944 at the age of 24

Buried: Schoonselhof Cemetery, near Antwerp, Belgium



Lawrence Nellis Graham was born in Eramosa Township on 14 March 1920 to John Wingfield and Eliza Mary Jane (nee Nellis) Graham. He was the only surviving son of their ten children (Jessie Agnes, Ellen Elizabeth, Colena Edna, Margaret Lillian, Evelyn Irene, plus four children who died as babies: Marion Eliza, Gertrude, Una and Benjamin). Along with his sisters, he was raised on the family farm on Lot 7, east half of Concession 2 and Lot 7, west half of Concession 3 of Eramosa Township. His mother was incapacitated with Myocarditis and he left school at the age of 15 to work with his father on the farm.

On 4 December 1941, under the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA), he was conscripted into home defence service. At this time, there was an increasing shortage of farm labour and his parents' health was deteriorating. It is alleged that the officers of the #10 Basic Training Course advised him that he would not be able to go back home to the farm until the war was over and they encouraged him to volunteer for Overseas service, which he did on 9 January 1942. During his medical, Private Graham was found to have asthma and rhinitis but was deemed fit. About eleven months later, his father suffered a stroke that left one side of his body paralyzed and with a speech impediment. His mother tried to work the farm with the help of one of his sisters and neighbours (who also had their own farms to look after). He was granted compassionate leave from 15 December 1942 to 3 May 1943 to help care for his parents and prepare the farm for spring planting. He was granted an extension to plant the crops but on 16 May, his mother died of a cerebral hemorrhage. On compassionate grounds, he applied for a discharge (or at least further leave). His application was supported by the family doctor (who had previously served as a Major in the Medical Corps) who wrote "Lawrence was the only one left to work this prosperous farm but it has now gone to weeds. The 110 acres sustained 12 milk cows, 9 young cows, 3 work horses, 2 brood sows, 10 suckling pigs, 400 hens and cockerels and about 20 geese." Senior Officers reviewed his situation but did not want to allow "farmers' sons dispensation" and turned down his request.

Private Graham returned to the Army and qualified as a driver/mechanic and was assigned to the Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, 4th Armoured Troops Workshop as a Craftsman. He departed Canada on 24 April 1944 and after spending one month in England was shipped to France on 28 July.

Craftsman Lawrence Nellis Graham was killed by a V2 rocket on 16 December 1944 in Belgium. He is buried at Schoonselhof Cemetery, near Antwerp, Belgium. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

JERRY TAYLOR GUTHRIE

R183851/J29230 Flying Officer

Born: 21 May 1922 in Acton, Ontario

Previous Occupations: Farming and Leather Factory Worker

Enlisted: 1 September 1942 in Guelph, Ontario

Died: 28/29 July 1944 in Hamburg, Germany

Buried: Nordfriedhof, official British Military Cemetery in Kiel, Germany



Jerry Taylor Guthrie was born on 21 May 1922 to Thomas Park and Margaret Stewart (nee Mackie) Guthrie of RR#1 Acton. He was the youngest son of their four children (Hector Campbell b.1909, Barbara Mitchell b.1912 and Douglas Tobin b.1918). They were raised on the family farm on the East Part of Lot 1, Concession VII, at Crewson's Corners. After graduating from S.S.#12 Esquesing School in 1935, he attended Acton Continuation School until he left in 1937 to work as a farmhand for his father. He also worked for the Beardmore Leather Company in Acton. He enjoyed hunting and was interested in becoming a gunsmith.

In Guelph on 1 September 1942, Jerry enlisted into the Royal Canadian Air Force. He initially was posted to London and then Hamilton for basic training before being sent to the University of Toronto for pre-aircrew education and exams. Upon graduation, he was sent to the #9 Bombing and Gunnery School in Mont Joli, Quebec where he graduated second out of 109 fellow students. On 26 June 1943, Jerry was promoted to the rank of Leading Aircraftsman. On 3 August 1943, he received a laceration to his right leg while trying to "jump the fence" to sneak out to the opera house for an evening. This did not appear to get him into much trouble because three days later, he was promoted to Sergeant, at the same time being recognized for his skill by receiving his Air Gunner Badge. He was promoted to Pilot Officer less than three weeks before shipping out to England from Halifax on 26 August 1943. After arrival in England five days later, P/O Guthrie was assigned to #82 Operational Training Unit - RAF Ossington in Nottinghamshire, where they reported "Guthrie was an exceptionally good gunner". On New Year's Eve, he was posted to #61 Operational Training Unit - RAF Heston, just west of London. During this time, he was promoted to Flying Officer on 6 February 1944 and a month later, F/O Guthrie was posted to an operational unit, RCAF 408 "Goose" Squadron based in Yorkshire.

The night of 28/29 July 1944, on his 21st operational trip, F/O Guthrie's squadron was part of an attack on the German port city of Hamburg. During this trip, his Halifax VII bomber was shot down and all seven crew were killed. They were initially buried in a mass grave marked with a single white cross, in a field near the North Sea Coast, outside of the town of Meldorf. The cross was marked in French "Ici reposent sept aviateurs Canadiens(sic) bombes(sic) dans la nuit, le 28 au le(sic) 29 juillet 1944" – "Here lie seven airmen Canadian bombs(sic) at night, 28 to 29 July 1944". Shortly after the War, their bodies were exhumed and reburied in the Nordfriedhof, official British Military Cemetery in Kiel, Germany. F/O Jerry Taylor Guthrie and F/O C.F. McDougall were reburied in the same grave and share a common marker. Jerry Taylor Guthrie's name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa. His Military Medals including: 1939-45 Star, Air Crew Europe Star with France and Germany Clasp, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal, War Medal (1939-1945), the Operational Wings, Memorial Bar and Memorial Cross were sent to his mother at RR #1 Acton.

Pilot Officer (P/O) is the lowest commissioned officer rank in the RCAF and RAF. It can be confusing because it does not always mean the holder is a qualified pilot. **Flying Officer (F/O)** is the next highest rank and it too does not always mean the holder is a qualified pilot, but it usually means the holder is an aircrew member.

408 “Goose” Squadron was part of the **RCAF Group 6 of Bomber Command**. At this time, they were flying Lancaster and Halifax bombers on night missions over occupied Europe and Germany. By Victory in Europe Day (“VE Day”) the 5,700 airmen and the aircraft of the RCAF had flown over 40,000 operational missions with the loss of 814 aircraft and 4,277 airmen, for an operational loss rate of 75%. Only the German U-Boat crews suffered higher loss rates during WWII. During this time, approximately eight thousand decorations for bravery were awarded to Group VI aircrew, including two Victoria Crosses. Canada’s Bomber Command Memorial lists the names of 10,659 men who were killed due to all causes while serving with Bomber Command during the war.

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was conceived by Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1939.

“Across the country, Canadians mobilized to take part in this gigantic undertaking—an army of experts had to be assembled, airfields developed and equipment, including airplanes, had to be obtained. Between 1940 and 1945, some 151 schools had been established across Canada with a ground organization of 104,113 men and women.

By the end of the Second World War, the BCATP had produced 131,553 aircrew, including pilots, wireless operators, air gunners, and navigators for the Air Forces of Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.”

Pilots were also trained from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Free French, Norway and Poland.

In all, 107 schools and 184 other supporting units at 231 locations across Canada were constructed. This created a network of airports across Canada and many of them still exist today, along with their characteristic triangular runway pattern.

WASLEY PASMORE HARRIS

J28300 Pilot Officer

Born: 16 February 1917 in Toronto, raised in Rockwood, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Engineer

Enlisted: 18 May 1942 in Hamilton, Ontario

Died: 6 November 1943 at the age of 26

Buried: Rockwood Cemetery



Wasley Pasmore Harris was born in Toronto on 16 February 1917 to his recently widowed mother, Annie Matilda (nee Pasmore) Harris. His father, Wesley Harris, farmed near Rockwood and later near Font Hill, in the Niagara Peninsula, where he died in a farming accident on 8 July 1916. Wasley's paternal grandparents were Samuel and Susanna (nee Starr) Harris of Rockwood, and his paternal great-grandparents were some of Rockwood's first 1821 settlers, John and Jane (nee Weatherald) Harris. His great-grandmother was the sister of William Weatherald, the founder of the Rockwood Academy. His maternal grandparents were Robert and Sarah (nee Mickle) Pasmore of Rockwood. Wasley and his older sister, Clara Laura, were raised in Rockwood. Since he was a small boy, he was always interested in flying and was known as an expert builder of model aircraft. As a young man in Rockwood, he was very popular and had a reputation of having "particularly fine character". After High School, Wasley graduated from the University of Toronto in 1941 with his BAsc. degree in Mechanical Engineering. While at the UofT, he joined the Non-Permanent Active Military Cadet Officer Training Corps (NPAM COTC) and then its Auxiliary Battalion from 1937 until 1941. He then moved to Hamilton to work for Proctor and Gamble until enlisting there in the Royal Canadian Air Force on 18 May 1942. About the time of his enlistment, he married Katherine Louise Whitehead (1923-2007) of Toronto.

He was posted to the newly created RCAF No. 9 Service Flying Training School (No.9 SFTS) Centralia, Ontario (part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan). After receiving his pilot wings and the rank of Flight Sergeant, he was recognized as being conscientious, eager to learn and possessing above average skills to become a pilot instructor. He went through further instructor training and was promoted to the rank of Pilot Officer. At this same time, on 16 February 1943, his wife Katherine gave birth to their twins (Gordon Wasley and Katherine Louise). Seven months later, P/O Wasley Harris was transferred to another newly opened RCAF No. 17 SFTS in Souris, Manitoba as an instructor in single engine Harvard and twin engine Anson aircraft. His wife Katherine and their young twins moved to Souris to join him.

On 6 November 1943, P/O Harris was killed along with two trainee pilots in a crash near Eden, Manitoba during a cross-country instrument training flight in a twin engine Anson aircraft. The subsequent accident review concluded that they likely encountered aircraft icing while training to fly on instruments only, became disoriented and crashed.

P/O Wasley Pasmore Harris is buried in Rockwood Cemetery. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

THOMAS EDWIN HAYWARD

B143124 Private

Born: 16 June 1924 in Toronto, Ontario

Previous Occupations: Farming and Carpenter's Helper

Enlisted: 24 February 1943 in an unknown location

Died: 6 August 1944 at the age of 20

Buried: Bayeux British Military Cemetery, Normandy, France



Thomas Edwin Hayward was born in the Mount Denis part of Toronto, on 16 June 1924 to Thomas and Ruby Adeline Hayward of RR# 5 Belwood, in the north east part of Eramosa Township. He was the only son of their three children (Clara and Florence Ellen). His father Thomas was disabled from wounds while serving in WWI. Edwin grew up on the family's farm and he also worked as a carpenter's helper at Rayner Construction. Little else is known about him before he enlisted into the army on 24 February 1943 (location unknown).

After completing his basic training, he was granted leave until mid-June to return home and help his father with spring planting and tending the fields. On 24 August 1943, he embarked by ship from Canada and arrived in England eight days later. Upon arrival, he was transferred with the rank of Private to the Hamilton based regiment, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's).

The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders arrived in England in July 1943, where it trained with the 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division.

On 21 July 1944, Private Edwin Hayward arrived with his regiment in Normandy and almost immediately saw action in the final stages of the Battle of Normandy.

The Falaise Gap / Falaise Pocket (also known as the Chambois pocket) described the area between the four Norman cities of Argentan, Chambois, Trun and Vimoutiers. The combined Allied Armies attempted to encircle and destroy the withdrawing German Seventh Army and Fifth Panzer Army during August 1944. Tough resistance by the Germans delayed the closing of the gap and while 150,000 German soldiers were captured and the roads were littered with their destroyed vehicles and tanks, about 100,000 soldiers escaped the Allied trap. While Germany's losses were over 10,000 dead, Canadian losses were heavy with over 18,000 dead or wounded.

On 5 August, Private Hayward was severely wounded by a mortar bomb during the prelude to the Battle of the Falais Gap and taken to a field hospital. On 6 August he was transferred to #30 General Hospital in Bayeux, Normandy, France but died from his wounds.

He was buried in the Bayeux British Military Cemetery in Normandy, France. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

JOHN DUNCAN HILTS

A109555 Private

Born: 8 May 1925 in Rockwood, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Factory Employee

Enlisted: December 1943 in Guelph, Ontario

Died: 22 February 1945 at the age of 19

Buried: Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, near Nijmegen, Netherlands



John Duncan Hiltz was born on 8 May 1925 to Albert Bertram (Bert) and Alice (nee MacLennan) Hiltz of Rockwood. He was the second oldest of their six children (Donald John b.1922, Louie Victor, Margaret Deline, Annie May and Gertrude). In 1939, after completing Grade 7 at Eramosa S.S.#9 in Rockwood, John started to work at the Wonderful Soap Company in Guelph, to help support his family.

In December 1943, he enlisted in the reserve battalion of the Guelph Headquartered 11th Field Ambulance Royal Canadian Artillery Medical Corps. One month later, he volunteered for overseas service in London, Ontario. He was sent to Chatham for basic training before embarking for England in August 1944. Nine days later, he arrived in England where he was transferred to the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, 13th Battalion. By September, he was in France taking part in the Canadian Army advance along the coast and into Belgium. On 4 October, during the early stages of the Battle of the Scheldt, he was wounded near the Belgian port city of Antwerp. After five weeks of treatment and recuperation, he rejoined his regiment in early November as they continued to clear the Dutch coastal area up to the pre-war border of Germany. By 22 February 1945, he was attached to the Fusiliers Mount Royal as they were involved in Operation Veritable (8 to 21 February) and the beginning of Operation Blockbuster (22 February to 10 March). Private John Duncan Hiltz was killed in action on the opening day of Operation Blockbuster in exceptionally heavy fighting near the Kalkar (Calcar) Goch Road.

Private John Duncan Hiltz was initially buried in the same cemetery in the nearby small village of Louisendorf where Trooper Gordon Earl Mack was also buried. Two young men, who grew up within a few miles of each other, died half a world away within a few miles of each other, within one day of each other and in the same battle. Shortly after the end of the War in Europe, his body was exhumed and reburied in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, near Nijmegen, Netherlands. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

GORDON EARL MACK

B115290 Trooper

Born: 28 April 1925 in Eramosa Township, Ontario

Previous Occupations: Farming, Barn Construction and Carpenter

Enlisted: 14 August 1943 in Orillia, Ontario

Died: 21 February 1945 at the age of 19

Buried: Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, near Nijmegen, Netherlands



Gordon Earl Mack was born on 28 April 1925 to George Ernest and Jennie May (nee Lillie) Mack of Lot 16, east half of Con.VI, Eramosa Township. He was the third of their four sons (Lloyd George b.1919, Donald Thomas b.1921, and James A. b.1928). After graduating from Grade 8 from Eramosa S.S. #7, he went to work with his father and brothers on the farm and building barns in the area. He also worked as a carpenter for William McCutcheon in various locations throughout Erin and Eramosa Townships. His hobbies were fishing, hunting, trapping and reading Zane Grey western novels. When he was 17, he joined the militia of the 29th Battery of the 11th Field Regiment (Artillery), headquartered in Guelph. He attended a training camp from May to November 1942.

On 14 August 1943 in Orillia, he enlisted in the same regiment and went through basic training and additional training in Windsor, Nova Scotia. On 26 June 1944, Gordon embarked for England from Halifax, arriving seven days later. At this time, he was in a tank regiment but on 31 August, he transferred into the Canadian Base Reinforcement Battalion of the Canadian Infantry Corps, in response to the urgent need for infantry to replace heavy losses while fighting along the coast of France and into Belgium. Upon arrival in Belgium on 17 October, he was assigned to the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Regiment (RHLI), Anti-Tank Support Unit. This was shortly after the beginning of the Battle of the Scheldt (where the Rhine River enters the North Sea). At this time, the RHLI was involved in fighting on the islands north of the Belgian port city of Antwerp, and for the next months was involved in the liberation of the Netherlands. His letters home mentioned the grim conditions at the front. On 25 January 1945, he wrote to his parents about his hope to live in southern Wales and join the Royal Navy when the war ended.

In the final days of Operation Veritable (8 to 21 February 1945), the RHLI was involved in exceptionally heavy fighting along the Kalkar (Calcar) Goch Road. Trooper Gordon Earl Mack was killed in action on 21 February 1945 near the town of Keppelen, Germany. In a letter to his parents, his Captain spoke highly of Trooper Mack and described how his four-man squad was advancing along the side of a road when they were hit by an artillery shell. Only one seriously injured man survived.

Trooper Gordon Earl Mack was initially buried a few miles northwest in a cemetery in the small village of Louisendorf. Shortly after the end of the War in Europe, his body was exhumed and reburied in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, near Nijmegen, Netherlands (see connections with John Duncan Hilts on previous page). His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

WILLIAM HENRY PARKINSON J24930 Flying Officer WO/AG

Born: 8 March 1915 in Eramosa, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Mining - Diamond Drill Operator

Enlisted: 29 April 1942 in Hamilton, Ontario

Died: 8 May 1944 at the age of 29

Buried: Gosselies Communal Cemetery, near Charleroi, Belgium



William Henry Parkinson was born on 8 March 1915 to William H. and Eliza Jane (nee Coker) Parkinson in the village of Eramosa. His father died just eight days after his birth. He was the youngest of their three sons (Archibald W. b.1908 and George R. b.1910). His mother subsequently re-married William Hodgkinson. After graduating from Guelph Collegiate at the age of 17, he worked in an interesting variety of farming, including working on a ranch and a fur farm. Early in 1942, William moved to the gold mining town of Timmins, Ontario, to work in the Coniaurum Mine as a diamond drill operator for a short time before enlisting at Hamilton on 29 April 1942.

William Henry Parkinson joined the RCAF at Hamilton and after completing his basic training, he was sent to the #4 Wireless (radio) School in Guelph on 21 July 1942 and received his aircraft Wireless Operator badge - WO. On 21 February 1943, Henry was sent to #2 Bombing and Gunnery School in Mossbank, Saskatchewan where he then received his Air Gunner badge – AG. One month later, on 21 March 1943, he was commissioned as a Pilot Officer (P/O) in the RCAF Special Reserve. After two weeks leave, he was sent to #32 Operational Training Unit (OTU), Patricia Bay Airbase (now Victoria Airport) in British Columbia until he embarked on a six day trip to England on 16 July 1943. On 21 September 1943, P/O Parkinson, WO/AG was transferred to the 24 OTU and promoted to the rank of Flying Officer (F/O).

On 10 January 1944 F/O Parkinson, WO/AG was transferred to Bomber Command's No. 6 Group (RCAF), No. 61 Base for further operational training in Yorkshire, England. On 21 February, he was transferred to RCAF 432 (Leaside) Squadron, flying Halifax III bombers. The evening of 8 May 1944, his squadron took part in a raid on the rail yards near Haine-Saint-Pierre in German Occupied Belgium. Near the French town of Maubeuge, their Halifax was hit by a night fighter and their pilot (P/O Ibbotson, RAF) ordered all crew to bail-out before attempting an emergency landing. Four crew members were able to bail-out before the aircraft crashed and burned upon impact with the loss of the remaining three crew members, including P/O Ibbotson.

German records indicated that F/O William Henry Parkinson and his two fellow aircrew (P/O Harry Ibbotson and F/O Stanley Allen Hawkins) were initially buried in what was known as a "Comrade's Grave" (or shared grave) in the small Belgian town of Grand Reng. Shortly after the end of the War in Europe, their bodies were exhumed but their individual remains were not able to be identified. Their shared remains were reburied and marked with all three names in the Gosselies Communal Cemetery, near Charleroi, Belgium. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

DONALD FRASER TITT

R271259 Sergeant

Born: 31 January 1925 in Detroit, Michigan. Raised in Rockwood, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Woodworker building aircraft parts.

Enlisted: 23 August 1943 in an unknown location

Died: 22 October 1944 at the age of 19

Buried: Chester (Blacon) Cemetery in Cheshire, England



Donald Fraser Titt was born on 31 January 1925 in Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A. and was the only child of Cyril Ernest and Margaret Ethel Titt of Rockwood. He grew up in Rockwood and attended high school at Guelph Collegiate. After graduating from Grade 8, he went to work in Weston (Toronto) at the Massey Harris Plant as a woodworker building aircraft parts.

On 23 August 1943, Donald Fraser Titt enlisted (location unknown) in the RCAF and was sent for basic training before being sent on Course 72 at #10 Bombing and Gunnery School at RCAF Station Mount Pleasant, near Summerside, Prince Edward Island. Upon completion on 16 March 1944, he received his Air Gunner badge. Donald embarked for England and arrived on 10 May 1944. He was soon transferred to the #82 Operational Training Unit at RAF Ossington to train night bomber crews and was promoted to Sergeant. He was next transferred to Bomber Command's No. 6 Group (RCAF), No. 61 Base for further operational training in Yorkshire, England before being transferred again to No. 1659 Holding Composite Unit, flying Halifax bombers at RCAF Topcliffe, Yorkshire.

Sergeant Titt never flew an operational mission. The evening of 22 October 1944, his Halifax aircraft and her crew were on a night navigation training flight in bad weather and crashed and burned on impact near Little Langdale, in the Lake District of Cumberland (North-West England). All eight crew (seven Canadians and one Briton) were killed. The accident report indicates they had turned off their navigation lights and were practicing flying specific headings and altitudes as instructed by Air Traffic Control (ATC). While they acknowledged ATC's instructions, they failed to carry them out. The aircraft was reported to be circling at very low altitude so a fighter aircraft was sent to help guide them back to their home base. Unfortunately, it arrived just in time to witness them crash into a peak known as Great Carrs, near Little Langdale. The exact reason for the crash was never determined but navigational error combined with disorientation was suspected. It is possible that the pilot attempted to descend out of the heavy clouds and mist to get a visual fix on the ground, but hit the peak in the process.

Sergeant Titt's Commanding Officer, Group Captain G.A. McKenna, wrote to Donald's father that the "aircraft was off course and flying at a lower altitude at the time than it should have been. Exact reason of the crash will never be known."

Sergeant Donald Fraser Titt was buried in the Chester (Blacon) Cemetery in Cheshire, England. A memorial service was held at Rockwood's St. John's Anglican Church on 5 November 1944. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

A memorial cairn was erected at the crash site to the eight aircrew of Halifax Mk.V, LL505 and it is still surrounded with a large amount of aircraft wreckage. In 2005, Canadian Embassy staff and representatives of the RAF participated in the re-dedication of this memorial. It is the most visited WWII aircraft crash site in Cumbria (formerly Cumberland).



Halifax Crash Site Memorial, Cumbria

GEORGE ROBERT WARE

A35224 Gunner

Born: 8 May 1917 in Nassagaweya, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Farmer

Enlisted: 1 June 1940 in Guelph, Ontario

Died: 15 August 1944 at the age of 27

Buried: Bayeux War Cemetery in Bayeux, Normandy, France



George Robert Ware was born on 8 May 1917 in Nassagaweya, to Albert and Alice Ware of Rockwood. He was one of five children (Albert Henry, Alice, Evelyn Pamela and Peace Albert Bruce). George was raised in Rockwood and attended Eramosa S.S.#9 in Rockwood. After graduating, he worked as a farmer and operated farm tractors and equipment. Prior to enlisting for overseas service, he was a militia member of the 43rd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment headquartered in London, Ontario.

On 1 June 1940, George Robert Ware enlisted in the 12th Field Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA), headquartered in Guelph. He completed his basic training and in March 1940, he was sent to Camp Sussex in New Brunswick for further training as a tank driver/mechanic. After completing this course on 17 February 1941, he was assigned to the Regiment's Guelph Headquartered 16th Battery. He embarked from Halifax and arrived in Liverpool, England on 30 July 1941. They were equipped with the very good performing Sorel, Quebec made 25-Pounder Field Gun/Howitzer. Gunner Ware and his 12th Field Regiment RCA were part of the 3rd Canadian Division. He was stationed with his regiment in England until they landed at Juno Beach, Normandy on D-Day, 6 June 1944.

Operation Tractable (14 August to 16 August) was an important part of the larger, overall battle of the Falaise Gap / Falaise Pocket. The heavy Canadian losses during Operation Totalize were inflicted by some of the strongest opposition on the Normandy front. After re-grouping, the launch of Operation Tractable on 14 August was a concentrated effort to break through the German lines towards Falaise. Supporting the ground attack, RAF and RCAF aircraft were providing tactical air support. Unfortunately, in the afternoon of 14 August, they attacked short of their target within the German lines and for an hour, their bombs fell on the Canadian artillery and transport areas.

These were the conditions in the afternoon of 14 August when Gunner George Robert Ware was severely injured by a bomb blast. He was initially taken to a Field Ambulance Station and then transferred to a Field Hospital, followed by a more capable General Hospital. His wounds were too severe and he died in the early morning of 15 August 1944. Gunner George Robert Ware was buried in the Bayeux War Cemetery in Bayeux, Normandy, France. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

DOUGLAS WALTER WHEELER

A89292 Trooper

Born: 15 May 1923 in RR#1 Belwood, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Farming

Enlisted: 5 November 1942 in Fergus, Ontario

Died: 9 August 1944 at the age of 21

Buried: Bretteville-sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery in Calvados, Normandy, France



Douglas Walter Wheeler was born on 15 May 1923 to Walter and Elizabeth Wheeler of RR#1 Belwood. They were a large family and Douglas with his four brothers and six sisters (George, David, William, Arthur, Gladys, Myrtle, Maggie, Mary, Ida and Wilma) were raised on the family farm. Douglas' mother died some time before he enlisted.

Douglas Wheeler enlisted in Fergus on 5 November 1942, under the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA). From 19 December 1942 to 7 January 1943, he was in the Chatham Military Hospital with mumps. Once he had recovered, he was reassigned to the 28th Canadian Armoured Regiment (British Columbia Regiment) and sent for training as a tank gunner. After completing his training, he embarked for England on 10 July 1943 and arrived eight days later. A few months after his arrival in England, his regiment was equipped with the new Sherman Medium Tank under the experienced command of Lieutenant-Colonel Don Worthington, with tank combat experience in North Africa. Trooper Wheeler and his regiment continued training in England for almost a full year. After the D-Day landings, they arrived in Normandy, France on 23 July 1944 and were deployed just south of Caen, in preparation for Operation Totalize.

Operation Totalize (7 to 10 August 1944) was initiated to break out of the Caen perimeter and force the German Army into retreat. It was part of a much larger Falaise Gap / Falaise Pocket plan to encircle and capture the German divisions that had opposed the D-Day invasion of Normandy. In this four day operation, the Canadian army suffered heavy losses while gaining only half of the distance towards their objective of capturing Falaise. The Canadian Army was advancing along the main Caen-Falaise road and the highest point along the road was a hill known as Point 195. The capture of this vital hill was assigned to Lieutenant-Colonel Worthington's 28th Armoured Regiment (British Columbia Regiment) along with two companies of the Algonquin Regiment. The attack was delayed by a day to allow for aerial bombing, but instead this allowed the enemy to prepare for the inevitable assault.

At 5:00 am on 9 August, the 28th started their advance through the fog and smoke but the poor visibility soon had them heading to the left / east of their planned track. At 8:00 am, they reported (incorrectly) that they had reached their objective, but they had accidentally passed through a gap in the German defences and in fact were 6 kms east of their objective. The 28th Armoured Regiment was surrounded on three sides by stronger enemy forces. The German attack was swift and devastating. The 28th was initially enveloped in anti-tank and heavy mortar fire while a force of more powerful Tiger and Panther heavy tanks attacked them from the south.

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At 8:30 am, the 28th reported they were under heavy attack and requested artillery support, but because they were still confused about their position, the artillery shells fell 6 kms away on Hill 195. At 9:00 am, Brigade Headquarters tried to contact the 28th but there was no reply. By nightfall, the 28th Armoured Regiment (British Columbia Regiment) had lost 47 of their 52 tanks with the loss of 112 men killed (including Lieutenant-Colonel Worthington) and 34 taken prisoner. The two companies of the Algonquin Regiment lost 128 men killed and 45 taken prisoner.

That night, the few remaining tanks and the surviving infantrymen and tank crew made their way back to allied lines. Their reports describing the battle against much superior firepower and manpower helped piece together the events of the day. After their near destruction, the 28th Canadian Armoured Regiment (British Columbia Regiment) was reinforced and re-equipped and just five days later, they were back in battle for the closing of the Falaise Gap.

Information from the few survivors told how Trooper Wheeler's tank was hit and immediately caught fire. Only one of the five man crew escaped before the flames and fear of imminent explosion prevented further attempts to search for survivors in the middle of the battle.

On 9 August 1944, Trooper Douglas Walter Wheeler was killed in this action and buried in the nearby Bretteville-sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery in Calvados, Normandy, France. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

CHARLES HUMPHREY WILSON

A108336 Private

Born: 13 June 1922 in Eden Mills, Ontario

Previous Occupation: Tool and Die

Enlisted: 28 September 1943 in London, Ontario

Died: 8 March 1945 at the age of 22

Buried: Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, near Nijmegen, Netherlands.



Charles Humphrey Wilson was born on 13 June 1922 to Wilkins Roy and Susan Irene (nee Spinks) Wilson of Eden Mills. He was their only child. Charles grew up in Eden Mills. While attending high school in Guelph, he played hockey for the Guelph Juveniles. After leaving school at the age of 17, he went to work for the Cooke and Denison Tool and Die Works of Guelph until 28 September 1943, when he enlisted in London, Ontario.

During his enlistment physical examination, he was initially classified as medically unfit for overseas duty because he was deaf in one ear from an earlier ear infection. However, on 9 February 1944, he was re-categorized as "Fit for Duty" and sent for basic training at Camp Petawawa. While there, he trained and qualified as a driver and gun fitter in the Royal Canadian Artillery. After completing his training, he embarked for England on 21 November 1944. Shortly after his arrival in England, he "re-mustered" (voluntarily transferred) on 2 December into the Lincoln and Welland Regiment with the rank of Private. The Canadian Infantry Corps was experiencing high losses and were requesting volunteers to replenish their ranks. After less than two months of further training in England, he joined his regiment in the Netherlands. It was the beginning of February and as part of the 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was heavily involved in the Battle of the Rhine near the Dutch frontier with Germany.

Five weeks later, on 8 March 1945, Private Charles Humphrey Wilson was killed in action while taking part in the fierce door to door and room to room fighting in the German town of Veen. He was initially buried 6 kms west in the town of Sonsbeck. Shortly after the end of the War in Europe, his body was exhumed and reburied in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, near Nijmegen, Netherlands. His name is also memorialized in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

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- Margaret Wilson and the family of Jerry T. Guthrie

Special thanks to Gordon Carothers for his dedication to this project and spending hundreds of hours researching the lives of the fallen.

Please contact the Guelph-Eramosa Township Heritage Committee with any corrections, information or photos that may be included to help improve this booklet when it is next updated.

general@get.on.ca or 519-856-9596 ext. 125.

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