

*Voices of War*

*Royal Winnipeg Rifles*

*Canada*

*1944-1945*

**Ian Stewart**

Royal Winnipeg Rifles 2020

Royal Winnipeg Rifles

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Dedicated to past, present, and future *Little Black Devils*.



*Hell is not hot. It is cold and wet, stinking of the dead immersed in the oozing mud of a sea-soaked land. Each day was a long and terrifying prelude to a longer and more horrifying night.*

*Battle of the Scheldt October -November 1944*

*Rifleman Jim McLean*



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## Preface



Quite often visitors to the Royal Winnipeg Rifles' Regimental Museum tell the guides that "I know my relative was a member of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, but I don't know what he did, where he fought or what he experienced. He never talked much about it."

The Regimental history, *Named by the Enemy* (2010) admirably details 135 years of history from the origins of the Regiment to the modern era. The sections on World Wars I and II provide readers with battle plans, big-

picture descriptions of Canadian, British and German troop movements and in-depth maps with arrows going north, south, east, and west. What it does not provide are personal narratives of ordinary soldiers; the stories our visitors want to know.  *Holding Their Bit*  (2018) was compiled to supplement the regimental history of World War I in this regard.

This book takes on the same task. Readers are introduced to a cross-section of memoirs and recollections, letters and stories of men who served with the Little Black Devils during World War II. Many were gathered by Alex Koppers and put together in the collection *Perspectives* (2002), while others were gleaned from the Royal Winnipeg Rifles Association's publication *The Devil's Blast* and from the regimental archives.

Veterans' stories in this collection fall into two categories. The first are anecdotal, stories dads or grandfathers might tell their kids or while joking with other vets around the Legion's "Bull Shit" table. Breaking minor military rules, fudging a few facts, shirking a task, skating around regulations, drinking, cavorting and generally playing the ass are young soldiers stock in trade. Remember, most of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles were teenagers when they went to war in 1940 and, as the sayings goes, "Boys will be boys" or in this case, "Soldiers will be soldiers".

The second set of stories are often tragic recollections of the horrors of war, life changing injuries, violent sudden deaths and the never forgotten heart-rending loss of one's best friends. On June 6, 1944, these young men's world was transformed. Within days, most of the Regiment's originals were dead, those lucky enough to be only wounded were being transported to England, while others were prisoners of war being shipped in cattle cars destined for labour camps in Germany or occupied territories.

These stories were all written by D-day veterans or men who joined the regiment during the first days of the Normandy campaign. All these men fought together and, so, names cross over into multiple stories. Alex Koppers, Jim Bage, Jim Parks, Ed King, John McLean, Gerald Henry and others are sharing their experiences with the ones they trusted to understand what they saw, experienced, and did, fighting in the Normandy Campaign, across France, in the Scheldt estuary, the German Rhineland and the final liberation of the Netherlands. These are the stories most dads never shared: too painful to remember and impossible to forget.

## Introduction

In the course of its history the Royal Winnipeg Rifles has been known by different names. In 1883, the 90<sup>th</sup> Winnipeg Battalion of Rifles was authorized and is the oldest infantry regiment in western Canada. In 1885, the 90<sup>th</sup> faced its “baptism of fire” during the North-West Rebellion at the battle of Creek Fish. Supposedly during the battle, a native warrior asked, “I know who those redcoats are, but who were those little black devils”, who were fighting so fearlessly? The moniker stuck and the motto *Hosti Acie Nominati* (Named by the Enemy in Battle) and the rampant devil is emblazed on the Regiment’s cap badge. All men of the Regiment proudly call themselves “Little Black Devils”.

During World War I (1914-1918), because of the battalion numbering system adopted by the CEF (Canadian Expeditionary Force), the regiment was authorized as the 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Battalion (90<sup>th</sup> Winnipeg Rifles). The 8<sup>th</sup> Canadians entered the maelstrom of war during the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915. It fought along with the other Canadian battalions during the Battle of the Somme (1916), Vimy Ridge (1917), Hill 70 (1917), Passchendaele (1917), Amiens (1918) and the Last 100 Days Battles (1918). Following the war, the CEF demobilized and the regiment became the Winnipeg Rifles and, in 1933, was granted the name Royal Winnipeg Rifles. World War 2 began in September 1939 and, in June 1940, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division was created to meet Canada’s growing war



needs. In July 1940, recruiting began for the Canadian Active Service Battalion to be known as the Royal Winnipeg Rifles.

Was there a typical Little Black Devil in 1940? In his book, *The Best Little Army in the World* (2015), Jack Granatstein provide some useful demographic information. Many were the sons of World War I veterans; so, they were, in fact, the 20th century's first generation of "Baby Boomers". Canadian war artist Alex Colville wrote that, "I was born in 1920. This was the year in which most of the Canadians killed in the Second World War were born." World War II was a young man's war, a fact we are reminded of when we visit battlefield cemeteries and read the inscriptions on the headstones.

These young men were children of the "Great Depression". Whether you grew up on a farm, in a town or a city, life was hard for many Canadians during the 1930s. There wasn't much chance for a formal education and school was often not a family priority. Turning 12 or 14 years of age, meant going to work, so most soldiers had a grade six or seven education, much the same as men who enlisted in World War I. Generally, the Battalion's officers had finished high school.

About 70% of Rifle enlistees, in 1940, were in their teens or early twenties and many were underage. One of these boys was Jim Parks, one of the last of our D-Day veterans. He was 15, in 1941, and, because his friends were joining up, he acquired some fake identification and went to sign-up.

“When I went to join up, Sergeant Jones knew me. He’d been my sergeant in the cadets and militia. He said, ‘That’s OK.’” Jim Bage was also 15 years old when he enlisted. “I dreamed of enlisting and seeing the sights, England mostly. I thought of adventure, not realizing the danger involved... Along with my brother Bill, we joined the army in Winnipeg instead of Dauphin. I was known in Dauphin and they knew I was underage. I had my older brother’s identification.”

A Little Black Devil was about 5 foot 7 inches tall and weighed in at less than 160 lbs. (This is why teenage boys and girls who come into the museum and try on a World War II battledress, often find it fits them perfectly.) Like World War I soldiers, they often grew taller and most gained weight in the army. Plenty of high caloric food, even if not too tasty, does that to a young man.

In July 1940, the members of the Little Black Devils began training at Camp Shilo, Manitoba, and three months later were transferred to Debert Camp, Nova Scotia, to continue training. In September 1941, 36 officers and 860 other ranks of the Little Black Devils arrived in England and were posted to Aldershot Camp, southwest of London. They trained for two years at various camps on the south coast of England and, in August 1943, were transferred to the Combined Operations Training Centre at Inveraray, Scotland, to begin training for the invasion of France.

By 1944, the young soldiers were fit for battle, strong enough to carry 60+ pounds of kit and weaponry. Every Rifleman carried a Lee-Enfield .303 rifle plus two bandoliers of extra ammunition; he carried four 30 round magazines for his platoon's Bren machine guns, hand grenades and bombs for the 2-inch mortar and PIAT (Projector Infantry Anti-tank). His personal kit included a water bottle, a bayonet, a utility knife, an entrenching tool or pick (for digging his life-saving slit trench), a gas mask and a gas cape, a rubberized groundsheet, a few tins of food, emergency rations, cigarettes, lighter, extra socks, housewife (sewing kit), shoe polish, shoelaces, shaving kit, toothbrush, aluminum mess kit, a folding spoon and fork, playing cards and whatever else he thought necessary (a lucky condom, perhaps).

The Royal Winnipeg Rifles *War Diary* entry of July 5, 1944, reads, "The sea was rough, and the landings look difficult, but the operation was on!" Rifleman Gerald Henry was decidedly less than happy on July 5, writing many years later that due to seasickness, hitting the beaches was a relief. "Death", he wrote, "would be better than this." Some memoirists have noted that the British sailors manning the landing craft were overly generous with the British navy's rum rations, distributed to calm the men's seasickness and jagged nerves.

On June 6, 1944, the Little Black Devils landed on Juno Beach at Courseulles-sur-Mer and were the first Commonwealth troops to land on France's Normandy coast. As the Canadian Press correspondent Ross Munro wrote, "Bloody fighting raged all along the beach... after a long struggle, which was bitter and savage... the Winnipeg's broke through the open country behind the beach." It was a hard day for the Little Black Devils, but nevertheless a proud day. The Battalion's war diarist wrote that "The Battalion during this day, D-6 June 44, not one man flinched from his task, no matter how tough it was-not one officer failed to display courage and energy and a degree of gallantry. It is thought that the Little Black Devils, by this success, has managed to maintain the tradition set by former members. Casualties for the day exceeded 130."

The Winnipeg men fought their way inland and, on June 8, fanatical Nazis from the 12th SS Panzer Division attacked the Rifles positions at Putot. In a fierce battle, they, and the two other battalions of 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division, prevented a German breakthrough to the beachhead. However, three companies were almost wiped out and many men were captured. "It burns me up to think I spent four years training to get at the other guy and was taken prisoner after less than three days", said Captain Phil Gower. For one company, worse was in store. The captured men and officers of Major Frederick Hodge's company were murdered by Nazis of the 12<sup>th</sup> SS Panzer Division, from then on known to the Little Black Devils

as the “Murder Division”. In ensuing battles, few of the 12<sup>th</sup> SS were taken prisoner or chose to be taken prisoner.

The Battle for Normandy, according to Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery, was to be short and quick; however, it raged from D-Day, 6 June 1944, until the destruction of the German Army during the Battle of Falaise, 20-25 August 1944. Fighting was constant as the Canadian and British armies put pressure on the key city of Caen. Outside Caen, the Rifles fought a bloody battle for the Carpiquet airport on 4-5 July 1944. They faced withering machine-gun fire and heavy artillery and mortar fire. Over 200 replacements were sent to the various companies. The word from the NCOs, Ed King said, was “Dig a trench, get down and stay the hell down and keep your head down. You're no good to us dead.” But, some of these young soldiers died before they could dig in. Jim Hayward wrote about one young replacement, “He was 19 years old. I'm doubtful if he ever fired a shot. Bob Chisamore and I felt bad, as we had attempted to look after this young fellow.”

The regiment suffered 132 casualties at Carpiquet, more than any other day, excepting Putot. Jim Mclean wrote, “Most of my friends were dead”; the original Little Black Devils in the rifle companies were gone dead, wounded or captured in the month of fighting from D-Day to Carpiquet. The Little Black Devils were in reserve for much of the Battle for Caen but were not safe from mortar fire and shelling. Alexander Corston

remembered those days, “We were camped in the courtyard out in the country. I sat down in a little niche there. I just started to read the paper and “cripes”, the first shell that came over went BANG and killed two fellows in the courtyard... It hit them and killed them.” Artillery and mortar fire caused over 60% of battle casualties (much the same as during the First World War.). After the liberation of Caen, in mid-August, the Canadians and British Army attempted a breakout towards Falaise. With the decisive victory during the Battle of Falaise, the Normandy Campaign ended, and the German army then fought a fighting retreat through occupied France.

In September 1944, the Canadian Army advanced up the seacoast of France to help liberate key ports. The task of capturing the formidable 16th century fortress of Fort Neuilly in Calais was given to the Little Black Devils. The fortress was protected by a wide deep moat and 33-foot-high reinforced stone walls. The first attack was unsuccessful but, the next day it was attacked with Wasps (flame-throwing universal carriers) and after the enemy was “warmed up” and, as the war diarist wrote, “a little white flag was seen hoisted and hundreds of Germans poured out through the open doors with hands up.” By the end of this operation, Jim Hayward wrote, “Thirty-three people make up a full platoon, but usually you were lucky to have twenty-six. I believe there were only six or eight of us left (in my platoon) after the Calais encounter.

The Rifles then assaulted across the Leopold Canal to help clear the Scheldt Estuary and open the strategic port of Antwerp. During the 6-13 October action, war-correspondent Ross Munro wrote, "The bridgehead should have been lost, the battalions wiped out... it was only by sheer guts that the Western units hung onto their positions." The Battalion war diarist described the conditions the men faced, writing on October 7-8 that, "Continuous shelling and machine-gun and small-arms fire made movement almost impossible and the troops suffered greatly from being wet and cold. Casualties for the day were high and evacuation slow and difficult as wounded had to be carried for over a mile over flooded fields and roads blocked by fallen trees. Prolonged exposure to wet and cold still have to be endured in flooded slit trenches or smashed buildings as unusually bold enemy snipers and machine gunners are on the lookout continuously and often succeeded in infiltrating between companies and platoons. Few of these lived to tell their story as the Royal Winnipeg Rifles were no less aggressive." Many years later, Rifleman Jim McLean wrote down his thoughts on the Battle of the Scheldt: "Hell is not hot. It is cold and wet, stinking of the dead immersed in the oozing mud of a sea-soaked land. Each day was a long and terrifying prelude to a longer and more horrifying night."

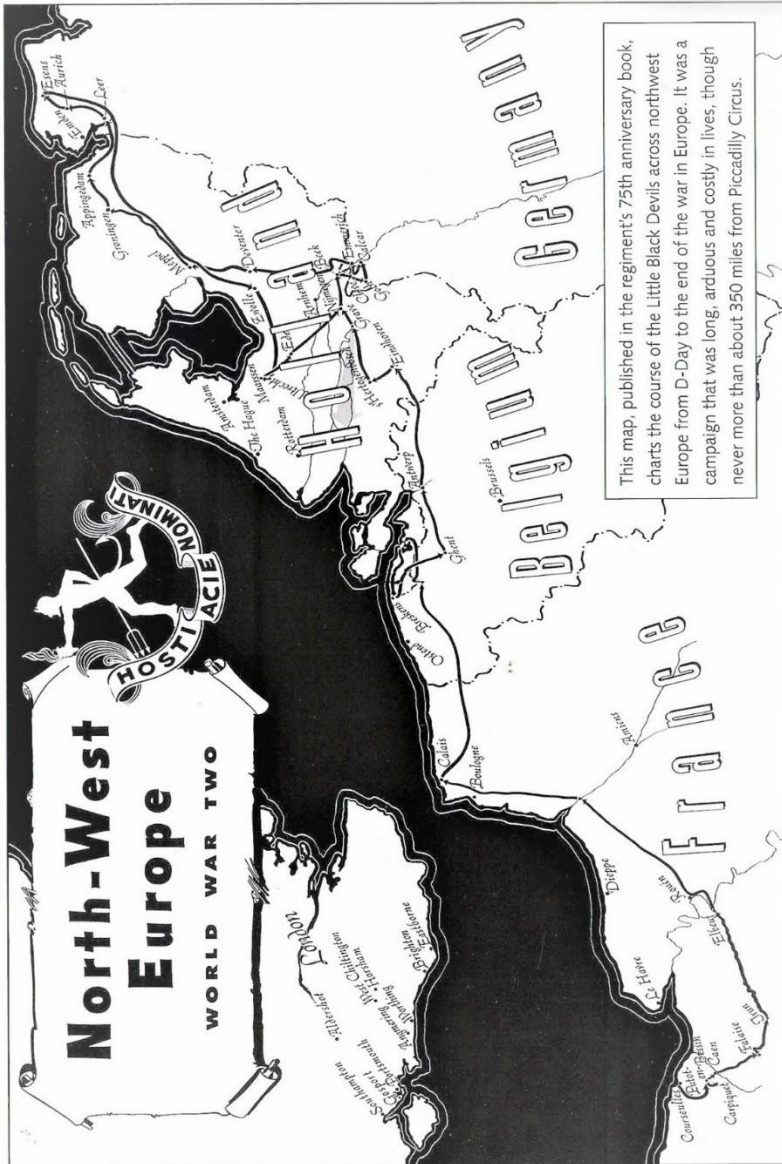
Following the gruesome month in the Scheldt, the Canadian army took up static positions, rested and trained the much-needed replacement troops

near the Dutch city of Nijmegen, during the fall and early winter of 1944-1945. German shelling of the area still took many lives. In February-March 1945 the Canadian Army advanced to the Rhine River in Germany. Gordon Maxwell commented, "There were some bitter hard-fought battles in the next few months." The plan was to clear the approaches to the Rhine in preparation for the invasion of the Nazi homeland. In mid-February, the Little Black Devils advanced on Cleve and attacked Moyland Wood, where Major Hugh Dennison won the Royal Winnipeg Rifles' second Distinguished Service Order. During the Battle of the Rhine the Regiment attacked and captured Emmerich, Germany. During April and May 1945, Little Black Devils fought their way through northern Holland and helped liberate the Netherlands. The Regiment's last major battle of the war was on April 21<sup>st</sup> and on 7th May 1945, Germany surrendered unconditionally.

3700 men served in the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. In nine months of action, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles suffered 2339 casualties, of which 512 died. Many more died after the war, as a consequence of injuries suffered. Two, Arthur Rutland and Clifford Blake, have unknown graves and are memorialized on the Groesbeek Memorial in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery. Out of the 800+ men who landed on D-Day only six of the original D-Day officers and less a dozen other ranks were with the Regiment when Colonel Fulton dismissed the men in Winnipeg. Only two



other Canadian infantry regiments lost more men than Winnipeg's Little Black Devils.



This map, published in the regiment's 75th anniversary book, charts the course of the Little Black Devils across northwest Europe from D-Day to the end of the war in Europe. It was a campaign that was long, arduous and costly in lives, though never more than about 350 miles from Piccadilly Circus.



Unidentified Rifleman, 1943, Bren gunner, 1944, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives, Soldier with PIAT, 1944, Library & Archives Canada



Rifleman Al Jesson, wounded during Battle of Carpiquet, Royal Winnipeg Museum & Archives



Bren gun in action, Library & Archives Canada



Sergeant Wally Karp going into action on Wasp (Universal Carrier equipped with flame thrower) going into action, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum Archives



Carpique Airport, 1944, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum Archives



6-pound anti-tank gun in action, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives



Rifleman W. McMillan and Sgt. J. Retty service a 6-pound anti-tank gun.

Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives



A little game of chance, a little wine, Holland 1944, Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives



Relaxing in Holland 1945 with captured German Lugers (G. Scully on left), Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives



Ketchen Collection, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives

## **Stories**

### **Enlisting**

R.M. McMurray (H- 41218)

On June 25th, 1940, I went to Brandon with Bob Anderson, Bill Dimery, Bill Buchanan, John Delipper, George Cowling, Murray Wishart and Gordon Naylor, all from Russell, Manitoba, to join up.

Major Buck Hunt was the recruiting officer of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles.] I told him I wanted to join the Camerons. He said, "That's fine son. Join here and when you get to Winnipeg, look up the R.S.M. (Regimental Sargent Major) and tell him, and that's all there will be to it."

He was right. We went to Winnipeg to the old Robinson Building on Albert Street. Well, I found out who the R.S.M. was and I walked up to him and said, "Hey you." And he said, "Get your hands out of your pockets, stand at attention and call me Sir." I said, "Yes sir. I want to go to the Camerons." He said, "You will rot in this outfit, and become a soldier."

Buck Hunt was right, that's all there was to it.



## **I am a Winnipeg Rifle**

Gerald White (H- 40870)

A large group of civilians was clustered on the street in front of the large doorway of the Robertson building on Albert Street, in Winnipeg. On the steps stood an army sergeant who continued to bellow, "You! And you! And you!"

Gradually the group disappeared into the building leaving two solitary figures to soak up the rain drops. After a moment's deliberation the sergeant shrugged and stabbed a finger in my direction. "Okay you too. Get the hell in here. No use both getting wet." As I entered the doorway, I heard him mumble something about scraping the bottom of the barrel." But by that time, I was so thoroughly drenched that his sarcasm, like the raindrops, simply rolled off my back.

The medical exam was brief. The doctor yawned when I walked into his office, and he glanced at me warily as I begin unbuttoning my shirt.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Taking off my clothes," I told him.

"It is not necessary," the doctor replied. This was just a little too easy. No eye tests. No ear examination. This guy didn't even ask me to stick out my tongue and say, "Ahh".

"Well maybe a cough for two," I suggested. "I hear that's routine procedure."

The doctor ignored my remark and scratched his signature on a piece of paper.

“I didn't see you enter on crutches,” he muttered, handing me the paper, “so take this to Battalion headquarters. You're in.”

I looked around me. Men were walking briskly up and down the corridor with sheets of paper in their hands. The hustle and bustle appealed to me. Earlier that afternoon I had been in the nearby Lindsey Building where the Air Force Recruiting Depot was located. In civilian life I'd been a photo apprentice and entertained dreams of becoming a Pilot Observer. Still in my pocket was a set of attestation papers the Air Force recruiting officer had instructed me to complete, advising me at the same time that it could take up to six months for the papers to be processed.

Six months. Hell, the war could be over by then!

I dumped the Air Force attestation papers into the nearest wastebasket and felt a surge of exhilaration. I was a Winnipeg Rifle now.

## **The Story of Milton "Sammy" Trotman (H- 41442)**

Edwin Brown (SH- 16784)

On our arrival in England at the old Oudenarde Barracks in Aldershot, we were inspected by Their Majesties King George and Queen Elizabeth. Sammy was right behind me. As the royal couple went by, the queen passed a remark to the effect that Sammy certainly fitted well into our unit.

The king nodded his head, walked another couple of steps, then stopped and said, "Just a minute my dear."

He walked back to Sammy and said, "Sammy, Sammy Trotman?"

To which Sammy replied, "Yes Your Majesty, it's me."

The King's response to that was, "I want that man in the Officers' Mess immediately after the parade."

A nod from the RSM and Sammy was off the parade the moment they were gone. The RSM at that time never told us what happened in the Officers' Mess, but Sammy did say that he was invited to have dinner with their Majesties at Buckingham Palace. Sammy had been the King's Bodyguard Batman during World War I, when the King was the Duke of York.

## Good Times

by Bill Curran (H- 59923)



It was Christmas and we were staying with my old Uncle Charlie in Shepherds Bush. George says, “Wouldn’t it be terrific if we got a turkey for them for the holidays?” His plan was marvellous. We got all beered up because it was cold, and away we went to Hyde Park to get a swan. George said that when it was all plucked and all, Uncle Charlie wouldn't know the difference.

It was pitch black and I was crouched down by the water with some sticky buns, and George was hiding behind me with a 4 ft. length of 2 x 4. When the swan reached for the bun, I yelled, “Now George!”

He gave me a helluva shot on the head with the two-by-four and when I fell into the water the swan gave me a nasty black eye.

The Bobby's turned up and turned us over to the Provost and they had us handcuffed to an old steam radiator in the hall. One end of the radiator was bust so we pulled the other loose and took off. Needless to say, it's pretty hard to escape when two of you are running around with a steam generator between you.

It was New Year's Eve 1943; I was on switchboard with George Tapon. About the stroke of midnight, we heard a shout from the floor above, where "A" Company were the tenants.

"Are you ready?"

"Ready when you are," someone answered.

"Then let 'er rip," came the reply.

Whereupon two characters from "A" Company opened fire with their Bren guns out of the windows, firing live ammo and tracers down the driveway. When they finally stopped, they shouted out of the top of their lungs, "Happy New Year to one and all", in very slurred words. We never did find out who those two characters were.

## **Now It Can Be Told**

Ernie Youngson (H- 41377)



When we were stationed in England, I tried to be a clerk in HQ Company under the command of Lieutenant Harry Knox. He had to sign the passbook, but he not only signed the one that I had made out, but he said, “What the Hell, Youngson, I'll sign the whole bloody book, plus another one!”

Well, anytime I went out for an evening, weekend or on my leave, I took the signed passbook with me. Many and many a time I came across a

comrade (officer included) who had overstayed their night out on leave. Well, what we done was destroy the original and just make up a new one. By that way, I became a good “Buddy” of the cooks, transport company and “I” section. I was always able to get as many extra snacks as I wanted - get transport to different places and so on. I tried to keep the scheme to Battalion and Headquarters companies - but I got to know some terrific guys from the other companies, and I sort of looked after them also. I used to meet quite a few on the trains and (as we all did) liked just to stay out that few extra minutes, hours, days, with someone “special.” I guess I was the worst offender.

I guess I cheated the “Defaulters Parade” out of quite a few members. Ha, Ha, Ha. I used to carry a passbook with me (unsigned) and when I came across a member of some other unit who was late, we would just fill out the pass and scribble a signature. I don't know how they made out.

## Recollections

Jim Parks (H- 20580)



### *Rations, Cooks and Kitchen Fatigue*

The best cooks were usually grabbed off by the Sergeants' Mess and when the officers found out they would grab them. It meant a good go for the cook as he could prepare the same rations in a more palatable manner. He also had better quarters and more time off. Corporal Bill Parks was one of them and since he was a fellow Scots-Canadian he passed a few tidbits to our hut. Occasionally the men's mess would be allowed the luxury of a good cook, usually at the preference of the cook.

One of our worst fears was getting a new cook who was partial to vanilla extract. Mainly their grumpiness was a façade because they were looking for a sympathetic ear. You learned quickly not to complain directly to a cook, or you would starve and never get in on the seconds. The cooks were



a good source of rumours and were somewhat similar to bartenders with their sympathetic ears.

Peeling spuds (7 sacks per day) wasn't a bad choice if you were on kitchen fatigue. Generally, three of you were assigned, sometimes four, to do the job. you could sit down, set your own pace and get lots of coffee (and toast, if you were quick on the draw). If you stuck with it, you could finish by 4 p.m. and except for handing out rations you are finished for the day (with pockets full of spuds for French fries). If you were "pearl diving", that is washing pots etc., your days were longer.

The other kitchen chore I mentioned, i.e. handing out food at mealtimes was a chummy deal. You would keep a sharp eye out for your buddies and dip the ladle a little deeper when they came along. Conversely, the shallow dip was for those who were bastards (yes, we had them too). You had to do all this with one eye on the line up and the other on the cook in charge who was serious about making sure there was a little left over for latecomers-to make sure of this we were not entitled to eat until all had been served.

#### *Fallout-- The Sick, Lame and Lazy*

The Regimental Aid Post (RAP) had the usual crew of orderlies, a Corporal and a Sergeant. They were expert at spotting a malingerer a mile away. Although they were fooled sometimes (or were they?). It was amazing how many times a soldier walked away with aspirin in his hand rather than an excused duty slip. Others were sent to hospital with their kit never to

be seen again. As the months went by, the unit and its RAP developed more character. Doc Caldwell arrived on the scene and Corporal "Needles" Pash became the friendly philosopher. At least if the Doc didn't believe you "Needles" gave you a sympathetic ear. About once a year we received booster shots and if you were lucky you were near the front of the line and you got your shot while the needles were still sharp. If you were at the end of the line the needle felt like a bayonet and it was just as blunt. There was a rumour that Pash sharpened the needles in his hut at night after frequenting the bar.

### *Pioneer Platoon*

Their chores were various. They looked after the "Honey Wagons", built latrines for the C.O. and at times made crosses for the deceased and did mine-sweeping (several members were severely wounded). They had their share of good personnel, some of their officers were Bill Speechly, Mackenzie and Moglove, NCO and other ranks were Cartwright, Barrett, "Snake Eyes" Taylor, Tully, Sawchuk and Bates to name a few. These chaps were good drinkers, gamblers, and they loved a good time. They possessed idiosyncrasies and because their duties were of high-profile you tend to remember them. It seems to me that a few of the Pioneers mastered the art of looking busy, thus avoiding irksome parades and duties. We can all remember them walking around with a spade, a piece of wood or a toilet plunger. If ever there were con jobs, these were it, and the Pioneers were the masters. Of course, the rest of us were a little jealous of their ingenuity.

They, like the band and the M.P.s, were also favourites of the cooks, as you could find them conveniently repairing things around the cookhouse at mid-morning.

### Snipers

We had a tall, gangly, quiet-spoken Indian sniper by the name of Prince, who went about his dangerous job day after day. I remember lining up for chow with Prince on the outskirts of Caen. We talked about how he set himself up and waited for his prey. I particularly asked him how he managed to keep still, to which he replied, "It's easy, if there is no movement on the other side, I doze on and off for a while and if I'm patient I'll find a target or two, I'll change my location a few times as well."

Prince said his worst fear was from his own troops, especially if there was someone new to the regiment who was not aware that he was in the area. He must have had many uneasy moments because in those days we had frequent replacements due to casualties. Prince was a type who, if he had wanted to, could have carved a few notches on his rifle butt. After discharge he disappeared up to Northern Manitoba to do trapping. He later resurfaced when the Korean War broke out and Fort Osborne Barracks was like a reunion depot. Larry and I went to the wet canteen quite a few times and we shot the breeze with Prince and others a few times. Prince enlisted with the Princess Patricia's and our loss was their gain. We haven't heard from him since.

### Nicknames

It seems that every issue of the "Blast" rekindles memories. In Wakeham's letter in the September 1985 issue he mentions "Boghole" Prost which reminds us that we are more inclined to remember people by their nicknames or some other idiosyncrasy than their actual surnames. "Boghole" was a carrier driver in 4 Platoon. He was always getting stuck hence his nicknames.

There are many more:

- Al "Lard" Woods was a little heavy in the middle and "Gramp" Seeley, that bull of an Irishman from Dauphin, Manitoba, gave him that name.

- "Gramp" got his nickname from "Big Mike" Korney, also from Dauphin. Both "Gramp" and "Big Mike" were close friends and very strong.

- N.J. Lowe our coronet playing bandsman then a mortarman, later to be awarded the MM and he climbed to the rank of Lieutenant. We used to say "Swing and Sway" with Lowe N.J.

- Doug "Butch" Milhausen, name given to "Butch" by members of the band before he became a mortarman. "Butch" used his army career to cultivate his grey hair and learn to play cards.

- "Horizontal" Roads, the most relaxed soldier you could find. "Horizontal" believed in the old saying that if you can sit down don't stand, if you can lie down don't sit. He always slept Crusader style with his back on his back with his arms folded across the chest with his mouth open as if to catch flies.

- Mel "Frosty" Freeze, his favourite story was about a girl he met at the dance in Croydon whose name was Allison Frost.
- Larry "Salo" Salisbury, he had a lot of other nicknames and was game for anything for a laugh.
- R.O. "Feet" Thomas, he drove the regimental water truck and had a good-sized pair of feet (size 15). "Feet" carried an old record around with him appropriately called "Tip Toe through the Tulips."
- Al "String Bean" White was a lean chap. "Stringbean" hailed from Nokomis, Saskatchewan, famous for its railway junction. He loved corned beef hash and hardtack ground up and fried together, topped with plum jam. Just a hungry prairie boy. I vividly remember him on D-Day clinging to a compo box that was drifting out to sea. His mortar carrier had been dumped in 12-15 feet of water and sank. He was later picked up by the Royal Navy.
- "Ants in his Pants" Campbell was a fidgety fellow appropriately named. He was a sucker for a crap game and was always looking for someone to stake him to a crap game. "Ants" and I were wounded by the same 20mm ack ack shell in France but not enough to get a "Blighty".
- Frank "Dude" Towers was our cowboy from Dauphin. He stuck his arm over a sand dune on D-Day and took a slug.
- "Bull" Klos was one of the regimental strongmen who was as strong as an ox.

- Jim "Moses" Rennie, we all liked this tall gentlemanly fellow from the prairies. Moses tried to stay on the straight and narrow but liked a few drinks. The boys tried unsuccessfully to steer him into a Cat House in Ghent, Belgium. He could recite pages from the bible without sneaking a look.
- "Jasko Mosko" Mosoven, a likeable strongman from Brandon. One of the fastest diggers of a slit trench that I know.
- Jack "Sweat Nose" Holmes, a close second at digging slit trenches to Jasko. "Sweaty" was our barracks room lawyer and kept us laughing.
- Charlies 'Old Snake Eyes' Taylor loved to play craps.
- Wally "Killer" Karp great regimental boxer.
- "Blackout" Pollock was a tall rangy kid from Brandon, who came to our platoon with a pair of black eyes, hence the name.

## **A Young Soldier Learns It Is Not All Honey and Roses**

George Wakeman (H03583)



*George Wakeham, Joe (Barney) Google on motorcycle,  
England 1942, Royal Winnipeg Rifles & Archives*

I was enamoured with the military at an early age. Watching the soldiers parade down Portage and Main on November 11th when I was just a youngster was a captivating event, and the thrill of a lifetime for me. During the summer of 1939, headlines in the paper every day echoed the war scare in Europe when Hitler broke the pact, he made with Britain's Prime Minister Sir Neville Chamberlain, then on September 1st, 1939 Germany attacked Poland. On October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1939 I enlisted with the Winnipeg Light Infantry. I was given Reg. number H- 3583, full uniform and puttees, the Enfield rifle and a gas mask, all First World War issue. Several weeks of training went by, when my turn came up for guard duty which was an unexpected turn of events. It seems the government feared

sabotage would be a present danger, and the Winnipeg Light Infantry was designated the role of guarding main railway bridges, iron works, factories and other steel and equipment firms in the city which would likely be making ammunition or war equipment. One week I would be guarding bridges, the next week it would be factories, and if anyone came near it was, "Halt who goes there, advance and be recognized." On the bridges we walked back and forth. At the manufacturing plants we had sentry boxes to stand in, four hours on and four hours off, and the nights were cold, cold.

One cold night in November, I was on guard duty at a manufacturing plant in the city's west end. It was around four in the morning, peaceful, dark, and very cold and there I was, standing in the corner of my sentry box with my coat collar wrapped around my head, half frozen and fast asleep when a duty officer decided to pay us a visit, the first I'd seen since starting guard duty weeks before. Of course, upon his arrival no one said, "Halt who goes there." I don't remember who the officer was, but when he yelled, I jumped out of my reverie in dazed surprised. He was livid with rage, saying, "The place could have been blown to hell for all the good I was doing." I thought it was a stupid remark considering the war was a continent away and all we were guarding was a half empty building, but he did catch me sleeping when I should have been awake. I was of course put on Orders for sleeping on duty, or something like that, but I didn't much care. I had wanted to go overseas and fight the enemy



not play toy soldier. I guess the seriousness of what being in the army was all about still hadn't sunk in. I still had a lot to learn. It was in December, after being on Orders for longer than necessary that I was duly court-martialed and discharged as "unlikely to become an efficient soldier", with the commanding officer reminding me that if this had occurred overseas where the war was in progress, I might have faced the firing squad forthwith for dereliction of duty. I don't think this message hit home at the time for I was just happy I didn't have to do that stupid guard duty anymore.

I was driving a truck when, on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1940, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles started mobilizing in the old Robinson building on King Street and in the first weeks of June were running recruiting ads in the Winnipeg Free Press. This was the regiment dad was in during the First World War and I couldn't resist trying to get back in the army. The day was June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1940 and my reg number was H-40684. A month after moving to Shiloh I was called into the orderly-room and notified my number henceforth was to be H- 3538. I guess the war department notified them of my previous service, but nothing was asked or said.

### **Aboard ship to England**

Once everyone had settled down, with kits stowed in the rightful places, we went for dinner. Our meal on the ship that night was about as plain as one could possibly put together, but it was eat what was there or starve. I can't recall one meal throughout the entire voyage that I really enjoyed,

and we endured it for more than two weeks. Most everyone was upset with the food but complain as we like it didn't change the daily fare. The first day out we were treated to a surprise none of us had anticipated. We are all lined up to receive a tot of rum. Apparently, it is the custom at sea for servicemen to have a "tot" of rum everyday. A tot would be a jigger of pure rum poured in your glass and another attendant would half- fill the glass with warm water. The rum itself was pure, and thick like molasses so the drink was fairly potent. Needless to say, there was always plenty to drink on board, and I do believe that helped to settle many an upset stomach after a rough sea churned one's innards. Apart from the short space of exercise each day, our time was spent playing cards, crap games, or some other like activity. Since we were on the high seas, all cigarettes, candy and other goodies was duty-free so most of us stocked up on cigarettes, candy and chocolate bars. The cigarettes were really something. One brand was called C to C which was short for Cape to Cairo. Everyone likened them to camel dung. They were just horrible. The only other brands were English cigarettes, Capstan and Woodbine. Since our Canadian money wouldn't do us much good once we landed most of us blew what little money we had on cigs and candy. So, every day the crap game and poker game were played for the only thing we had of value, and that was cigarettes. "I'll bet three cigs" and "I'll up you two" was the usual banter one would hear among the poker and dice games, with the pot holding some 20, 30 or more cigs at a time. For 18 days we

whiled the days away in this manner while the ship zigzagged back and forth across the Atlantic to escape any lurking U-boats. We had a few U-Boat warnings along the way, but I dare say they probably wouldn't have thought the rusty old *Orbita* worthy of wasting a torpedo on anyway. So, we arrived safe and sound in the port of Liverpool, England, on the morning of September 14th. Liverpool itself, where my dad was born, seemed to have had a good many buildings flattened by bombs, obviously high-flying bombers. It was our first real look at the devastation of war and quite unlike what I had imagined it to be. A ship lay on its side in the water, and what seemed like areas of half a block in size, just a hole, and lots of rubble. The port of Liverpool was a mess.

### **Aldershot Camp**

As we started on our journey, it seemed like a whole new world to me. We didn't have a clue as to our destination, but after a full day's journey going through what seemed to be one city and town after another, we passed through the city of London, so large it seemed to have no end. The devastation was unbelievable as we passed area after area of whole blocks of buildings flattened by bombs. Piles of rubble everywhere, but it didn't seem to bother the populace much for buses and cars were going in every direction, and no end of people were walking helter-skelter here there and everywhere. I've just never seen so many people before in one area.

Within a day or two after moving in we were paraded before the paymaster to receive our first pay in English money, and strange money it was. The Pound was 20 shillings, the Half-Crown was 2 and 1/2 Shillings, Florin was 2 Shillings, the Schilling was worth 12 Pennies, Sixpence worth Pennies, Threepence worth three Pennies, a Penny worth two Half Pennies, the Half-Penny worth two Farthings which was one quarter of a Penny. A Guinea was worth 21 Shillings. It was certainly novel currency and indeed and it took quite a bit of getting used to. The Pound note especially was twice the size of our Canadian dollar. That evening most of us just dying to try it on a newfangled money system took a train to Aldershot to shop, visit a pub or just walk around. There were several pubs, and all with funny names like the "Rose and Crown" or the "Horse and Antler" or the "King's Carriage," the "Goose and Duck" or the "Queen's Arms" and so forth.

There was very little by way of change in our daily fare, and during the three and a half years I spent overseas the food was generally the same no matter what camp you were in. Breakfast was always mush, with canned bacon and pancakes, made with powdered milk, or scrambled eggs with toast and greasy hash browns. Dinner might be soup and bread and a mutton stew or bland potpie of sorts, oftentimes beans. Supper could be dehydrated potatoes again, done in a variety of ways, with sausages or roast mutton and a vegetable. It seemed that however nutritious the food maybe, garden fresh vegetables for a thing of the

past. For dessert you could almost count on it being rice pudding, bread pudding, or a custard of sorts. Our breakfast beverage was a poor grade of coffee, and for other meals we had tea. Coffee at canteens or restaurants always seemed like an ersatz coffee that we drank with gusto. In England tea was the customary drink, so we drank lots of tea. Our meat, whether it be roasted fried, broiled or whatever was always mutton, which we ate almost five days a week. Other times it was sausages and they were something else. We used to liken them to sawdust stuffed inside a French safe, because the sausage, had very little meat mixed with a whole lot of breadcrumbs and spices inside this awful casing of cellophane, or something similar.

Starting our second week in camp, after the excitement and novelty of our new world wore off a bit, we were given our first schedule of duties, and training for everyone began in earnest.

### **1943**

I'd been with the Royal Winnipeg rifles since June 14th of 1940, just a twenty-two-year-old and by this time in 1943 had been in England for some two years. Most of us were fed up and tired with the same old parade square training and field maneuvers month in and month out. To most of the boys it seems like we were there for the duration and we were never going to see action. Most everyone was itching to get it over with. Night after night we watch the bombing of London and other cities in the distance, the buzz bombs and later the V2 rockets, but for the most

part our troops were fairly safe, ensconced in the countryside area of southern England.

The first weekend of July I headed to Edinburgh for my 9-day leave on July 10<sup>th</sup>. The local newspaper headlines were all ablaze with the invasion of Sicily. The Yanks, under General George Patton and Montgomery's 8<sup>th</sup> Army which also comprised the Canadian 1<sup>st</sup> Division of General Crerar had launched an invasion of Sicily. I ran into my friend John Mosiuk who spent his leave in a town called Falkirk and was heading back to camp. His glowing account of Falkirk charmed me into staying there the next day and I had a grand time, so much so that I overstayed my leave by more than I should have. As luck would have it, I was caught by the MPs the very day I was heading home. I was taken to Edinburgh and spent the next three days in the famous dungeons of Edinburgh Castle awaiting and MPs from Cove to escort me back, the cost of which came out of my pay. The camp Commandant sentenced me to 30 days in Leatherhead, the hardest detention I had ever experienced to that time. I had gone AWOL a number of times when on leave over the years, and the sentence, usually seven days in the regimental guard room wasn't too tough, which is probably why I always took an extra few days, but after Leatherhead I was cured. After my 30 days was up, I was given another sentence for good measure. When the Sergeant Major paraded me before the Colonel, he opened up a sheaf of papers, which was likely my service dossier and looked up at me. He was livid. "Look at this record", he

yelled, "What the hell is the matter with you soldier, every time you go on leave you forget to come back. What have you got to say for yourself?" I have to admit I was stunned by his attitude and mumbled the first thing they came to mind. "Guess I'm just fed up with army life sir," and he replied, "I can see you've been over here far too long with too much time on your hands. You need a change of scenery soldier, first draft to Sicily."

## **The Tale of a Stick of Wrigley's gum**

By Ed Patey (B-1560)

This story happened in Normandy, probably about D-Day plus 5 to D-Day plus 20. We were back for one or two days behind the lines and out of action for reinforcements. One of the new recruits, who was very young to us anyway, because we were at least 20 to 22 years old, really could not wait to “get into action” and he did keep broadcasting it that he just wanted to get going. Well, the next morning “we were there” and he was still “Gung-Ho to go”. I had the Bren machine-gun on the upper ridge of a sunken road and the rest of the section was taking cover on the road below.

Things were happening pretty fast and they were hitting us with quite heavy mortar fire. Suddenly, one landed in the sunken road, a near direct hit, and our new man was blown up and caught most of the blast. He jumped up screaming, not wounded by fragments, but he had lost his hearing. I got the #2 man to take over the Bren, grabbed a rifle and got our new young friend to grab the end and follow me back to the field station. In my back pocket I had one half of an old Wrigley's spearmint gum stick, covered in dust. I gave it to him to keep him quiet. This piece of gum, I want you to know, was a real sacrifice gift, as I had landed with a package of five sticks, and this, my last half of a stick was for me.

Every time I heard the mortars coming, I would drop to the ground and he would do likewise and follow me. We had to do these two or three times



on the way, but we did get him to the field dressing station where he could be looked after.

I got back to the unit and section and never did hear how he made out and how serious it was.

I still think about "that" half stick of Wrigley's gum and how useful it became that day.

## The Surrender at Chateau Pegache

By Cliff Chadderton (H-41397)



Clifford Chadderton, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives

As I watched Ken Redshaw on CTV's show W5, a funny occasion at Chateau Pegache near Calais ran through my mind.

As I recall, Ken and I were upstairs, when we heard many Jerry voices down below. Thinking we were outnumbered, you left your Sten gun and I left my pistol upstairs and we went back down. Much to our surprise, there were several Jerrys in the basement, and one had left his rifle behind. You grabbed it and captured the bunch of them yourself.

## **Maggie the Dog**

Jack Morris (H-1996)



Jack Morris (on left) and Maggie, France 1944

The dog “Maggie” was our mascot and she went through the whole war with us. She was only a pup when she followed us one night and remained with us for the duration. She was a fantastic dog, and very intelligent also. She lived two or three years after the war with me, in Souris, Manitoba, and had a litter of pups.

## Out of the Line After the Liberation of Caen

William Curran



Support Company Officers and Sergeants, Royal Winnipeg Rifles, Caen August 1944.

1<sup>st</sup> row: Cpt. W. Savage, Sgt. Ferguson, Lt. B. Strachan, Sgt. J. Stewart, Sgt. Randall.

2<sup>nd</sup> row: Sgt. Ratte, Sgt Brant, Sgt. Fullerton, Lt. G. Hughes, Sgt. T. Plumb., Sgt Meyers, Sgt. Enns, Sgt. Adams, X.

One incident that readily comes to mind, is when the 3rd Canadian Division was taken out for a rest after 52 days in action. We marched about 15 miles back to a rest area, passed through the 2nd division who are on their way up front.

Lo and behold, there were mobile baths, clean socks, shorts, shirts, and battle dress. One did tend to become rather ripe after several days in the same clothes. In the rest area we were entertained by Wayne and Shuster, and other entertainers; it was a good show.

How well I remember our first fresh rations, after eating a lot of canned food and hardtack. We actually had fresh bread from the field bakery. The early-morning issue of rum sure went down smooth, once you got used to it. Being a young punk of 19, as I was so many times reminded, it took quite a while to get used to rum. None of that watered-down Liquor Commission stuff, but rather as the Navy type called it "Pusser rum".

Outside the city of Caen, called Calgary on the maps we were shown aboard ship, before we were dropped over the side, into a landing craft, a few of us "liberated" a winery, where they were huge vats of cider curing in the sun. Man, that cider sure how a kick like a mule, to the young punks among us. Have you ever heard of the expression, "Hitting the eye of a needle at ten paces?" That cider went through us like the proverbial goose. It was quite an emotional moment when we encountered the first French civilians. For them it was the end of four years of occupation by a bunch of weirdos from across the Rhine. They could hardly believe that we were Canadians, and that this time we would not be leaving the same day. Somehow, I don't quite recall being showered with wine or flowers, but of course there was a job to be done, and the relaxation would come later, like "liberating" a winery or what have you.



## From D-Day to VE-Day



*As we approached the beach, the firing became intense, but the shelling had moved farther inland, and the German defenses started to respond with machine gun fire from their concrete pillboxes. Finally, the landing craft could advance no further. It stopped and the ramp was lowered.*

D-Day- Rifleman Jack McLean

## Preparing for D-day

Gerald Henry



June 1 became a day with a great deal of activity. Moving personnel into different groups, checking on all equipment, and making ready for a move. The day ended with everyone being briefed on what was to take place. This was done in small groups, with our own senior officers. The exact detail of the operation was revealed with the real names. The Winnipeg Rifles were to land on the French coast of Courseulles. This was the first-time real names of places were used. Prior to this, we had some briefings, but with coded names only. At this briefing, I was informed that I would be responsible for all Winnipeg Rifle vehicles which were involved in the landing. It was my job could keep all vehicles mobile.



That night, long after lights-out, conversation kept up in a steady flow. I was more of a listener than a participant, as I had no mother or father, wife or children, nor girlfriend. I think my greatest concern was not to return with an arm or leg missing. I think most of us wished for death than return to Canada seriously wounded.

June 2 dawned bright and clear, with preparation being made to move out. It was sometime during this period that I was given a backpack flamethrower to wear on the landing. I had never seen one before, let alone know how to use it. My restraint to the thing fell on deaf ears. The platoon Sergeant told me all there was to do, just do this, do that, and pull the trigger of the nozzle. Make sure you took care of it because it could mean life or death, not only for me, but for many more around us. All of my friends told me, if the Jerrys see you with that thing, you'll be lucky to ever get to use it. Due to the circumstances of D-Day, I never did have to use it, and I thank God for that.

We were issued an invasion pack, which contained concentrated food packs, water, sterilization tablets, along with other things and yes, a vomit bag. Also, a pay parade for some French francs and 4 crowns in English money.

Sometime during the afternoon, after a convoy trip from camp, we began loading on our allotted invasion craft. I was assigned to an LCT. Aboard our craft was a Sherman tank, a self-propelled gun belonging to the Fort Garry Horse Tank Regiment in support of the Winnipeg Rifles. We had one of our

own anti-tank platoon 6-pounder guns and of course, the Bren gun carrier used to pull it, a truck with ammunition for the six-pounder. Between the cab and the trunk box, we had tied the platoon dispatch rider's Norton motorbike. Also, we had a Bren gun crew and carrier from our company, and of course, myself, my toolbox, and the flamethrower travelled with the ammunition truck. We had our evening meal ashore and stayed there quite some time before reboarding our landing craft and moving out to sea. I feel it must have been quite late that night.

June 3 was a very uneventful day. As I recall, we must have been far enough from shore that there was no land insight; however, we were not alone. There were craft from horizon to horizon. Weather was not looking very nice for landlubbers. Already some were looking green. With no sleeping quarters nor eating area, a burner was set up in the bottom of the LCT for a cooking area. I can't recall what we had to eat, but I do know it wasn't the Royal Albert. I think it consisted mainly of tea and compositions.

June 4. Weather really bad. Our barge seemed to go about 20 feet up and then drop out from underneath us, while those who look green yesterday were ghastly this morning. No one seemed hungry. I still felt okay, however. I found lying in the back of the truck seemed to keep me more oriented than trying to move around, I spent the best part of the day there. Now, I was raised on coffee. I drink it black, no milk, no sugar; so, I

just hated Compo tea. A powdered milk, sugar and tea mixture which gave no choice but to drink it or leave it. Most of the time I did without.

Later that day, we are ordered into the LCT crew's quarters for a briefing. This was a narrow room that stretched from starboard to port at midship. Our platoon Sergeant was in charge of the briefing. The news was D-Day was cancelled for 24 hours. There are a lot of other orders discussed at the same time and during these a chap across the table from me again to heave up into his puke bag. He had an upper partial plate that came out and into the bag as he was being sick. That wasn't so bad until he reached into the bag and retrieved and replaced the partial plate. From then on, I was no longer green but sick and wished to die. No comfort now in the back of the truck.

June 5. No let-up in the weather. Seas were just as rough as yesterday. More compo tea. Everyone seemed to be sick. I don't think anyone could eat, and if they did, keep it down. There were only about twenty or so Canadians aboard the craft. Just the crew with each piece of rolling stock that we had. Very little contact with each other, hardly any conversation. A long day. At least I had a place to lie down. Most sat on the steel floor and wrapped their blanket around them. All around us was nothing but landing craft and ships of all sizes. Later in the day, word came that we were to hit the beaches in the morning. I really believed, due to seasickness, it would be a relief. We all felt that, no matter what, let's get off this towing barge. Death would be better than this. Our time for landing

with set an H+ 35. This was it. Nothing to do but wait for morning. Each man to his own thoughts. I'm sure a lot of silent prayers.

June 6, 1944. Early morning, likely about 5:30. Cloudy and cool with strong winds. Not much of any improvement over yesterday. More compo tea and dry rations. The sea was so rough, it was almost impossible to walk without holding on to something. All during the crossing, we had very little contact with the LCT crew. Today would be no different. This day was full battle dress with every piece of equipment that was issued for survival, along with two extra bandoliers of ammo for our .303 rifles.

I wasn't quite as sick this morning, but I was churning inside, wondering how I would stack up when the going got rough, wondering if I would be too scared to keep control of myself.

We were in sight of the coast where we were to land. All seemed quiet then. The only people who had a watch were the Sergeants, so we never really knew what time it was. So far, I could see, it must have been not until about 7:00 when all the heavy guns begin to fire round after round, at the German defenses. This softening up barrage kept up for quite a long time. Somewhere about 7:30 or 7:45 the first of our battalion stormed the beaches. All the softening up did was alert the enemy of the landing and gave them the chance to be settled in for our guys to run into. With the sea being so heavy, their landing was difficult. They were being dumped off in water four, five and six feet deep. Consequently, this gave all the

advantage to the Germans. It took a great deal of heroics and casualties to silence the concrete gun emplacements and the machine gun nests.

In the meantime, we could just sit offshore and wait. H + 35 came and went along with three or four more hours before we finally moved into shore and dropped ramp. Our barge had made it close to the beach so we only had about three feet of water to drive off in; I might add, without a shot being fired at us.

As we came off the ramp, we had a good view of the beach with its dead and wounded, all lined up under the protection of the escarpment, while being attended to by our medical people. Our line companies were hard hit. By the time we had landed, the beaches were all being cleared by our troops, and the Germans retreating steadily inland.

We only had one instance in getting off the beach. A Bren gun carrier in front of us hit a mine and was thrown over on its side. As we weaved by, there was no time to see how the crew fared.

My next view of death was very close to the beaches, maybe within a quarter of a mile. We drove through a crossroads with a German staff car turned over on its side. Sprawled half in and half out was a dead German soldier, the first one I was to really see. He was sort of sitting on the ground with his back leaning against the rear seat, with a shot between his eyes on the forehead. No Hollywood scene could have left such a vivid imprint on my mind. The backpack flamethrower was now forgotten. It was riding in the back of the truck, never to be used by me or in my care again.

## **Humbly..... Just as I am**

by Gerald M. Henry

I have said this many time - I was not trained to be a Rifleman: I was trained to be a mechanic.

Very early on the morning of June 7<sup>th</sup>, my- to- be- good- friend Alex Koppers, Dispatch Rider, came in search of my mechanical ability. A gun crew needed my services. So, I grabbed my tool kit under my left arm, slung my rifle over my right shoulder, and Alex and I went biking across No Man's Land. I'm sure it must have been a good mile to where this gun crew was under cover. The crew Sergeant told me that their carrier had stalled in the middle of a field, of about 10 acres or so, and they needed it badly.

My question, "Is anyone going to come with me?"

His response was, "No, you will be under fire and you will have to run close to the ground, and fast"

I asked him, "What did the engine do?"

His reply was simple, "It just stopped."

I gave him my rifle, grabbed my toolbox, and away I went. I don't think I could get any faster or closer to the ground. I now had the Bren gun carrier between me and the enemy. The bullets were ringing off the steel plating of the carrier, so I waited until the firing let up, then threw my toolbox into the carrier. There was another hail of bullets and now it was my turn to swing up and over into the carrier. Another blast of ammo came my way. I

had to do this whole procedure again to get over to the other side of the motor, where the carburetor was. I was sure the carburetor was my problem. So, lying down in the carrier, I went about the business of taking it off, and apart. Sure enough, there was a thin piece of paint in one of the jets. Now, I had saved the car bowl of gas, so it was ready to go. All through this performance, bullets were hitting the carrier.

My next problem was that I had to get over the partition between the motor and the driver's compartment, which I managed to do without getting hit. My next concern was whether or not the key would turn, or would there be a dead battery? I gave a sigh of relief when the motor started, and I was able to head back to our embankment of brush and earth. My job was done in a fairly short time. I did have great training, and as it turned out to be, "The Lord was with me on this day and time."

The rescuing of the carrier and anti-tank gun which was attached to the rear of the carrier was so important and needed for the survival of the crew.

## **R.W.R.'s Outfought Nazis in Winning Beachhead Objectives**

Winnipeg Tribune, July 22, 1944



*Lieutenant S. Ketchen, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives*

In this letter to his father, excerpted in the *Winnipeg Tribune* on July 22, 1944, Lieutenant S. Ketchen describes what he saw and did during the Normandy campaign: D-day, the battles at Putot, Carpiquet Airport and the city of Caen.

The story of the Rifles' heroism in this bloody battle is told in letters by Lieutenant Sotheby (Sub) Ketchen, R.W.R. Platoon Commander to his father Brigadier General H.D.B. Ketchen, 1301 Wellington Crescent.

The young officer's eyewitness account is particularly vivid, and the *Tribune* here reproduces some of the thrilling excerpts:

After 8 months special training, the R.W.R. pulled out of England for the greatest adventure in the regiment's history. Everyone was seasick and



thoroughly soaked, Lieutenant Ketchen said in his letter and, "It seems that our landing craft might be sunk anytime.

"The fire on the beach was terrific... The Germans had a strong fort built up- all heavy concrete, lots of pill boxes - it took a lot to get through them but somehow my platoon completed their mission successfully.

Landing craft and men were being blown up on the beach all over. It was quite a fight getting off the beach, but our men were simply marvellous. I must say they did splendidly.

We moved inland very quickly and had to fight our way to our objective-- the first about eight hundred yards. After that it was just like a movie, cars turning over as we knocked the drivers out, etc. During the advance I shot at and wounded a Hun major and sergeant major with my Sten gun. They were trying to get away on a motorcycle and I captured them as prisoners. My platoon took quite a few prisoners as we moved inland. We dug in about nine miles inland and battled on for two days (at Putot), then met the first counterattack which included tanks. They drove us out of the town. We sure handed it out and I'm sorry to say also took it.

However, we counter-attacked ourselves and retook the town. Our artillery can sure put up a "crump". We were up against the best Hun in the country, all dressed up in camouflage suits, but I want to tell you our fellows put up a real show.

We were near a strongly defended airfield (Carpiquet) and in the fighting around it we were pinned down to the ground for four or five hours. I really

thought the jig was up. It was sheer suicide around there. We took a lot of mortar fire and it was really stiff. My old heart nearly stopped, and I couldn't breathe. It sure is hell...

The Fort Garry's of Winnipeg supported us in that show- Captain Christian's Squadron (He is from St James) did well...

There were very few of the R.W.R.'s of D-Day left. It is nearly five weeks now and that is a long time for an assault division to be without relief.

The Hun is pretty smart and has a lot of very cunning and clever snipers. I'm sorry to say I have lost many good friends through them. My own platoon sergeant, Grey, of Winnipeg, and my chum Lieutenant Jack Benham, Winnipeg, were both killed by snipers... We got those snipers.

Tanks are sure a hell of a thing to fight. I saw 15 of ours lost in 100 yards but the crews got away. They had also taken about the same number of German tanks and some 88s in that fight.

I believe the hardest part is over, but the rest will be tough enough. But things could not be tougher than the first few days.

I think we will surely win and probably it may be over this year.

This letter is a mess, but I haven't had a chance to take off my clothes since we have landed.

I hope we will soon be relieved. I have been strafed by Hun aircraft and also by our own. That can't be helped.

We have often battled for 3 days without food or rest.

I think my chum" Duke" Glasgow is a prisoner as some of his papers he had with him have been found when searching for him. I hope so very much. I am one of the only four junior officers left in the unit- mostly missing and wounded.

They tell us that the Third Division to which we belong in the western Brigade has gone to a new high in history in the invasion operations... The R.W.R.'s have met and licked the best in the German army, time and time again, during the last few days. We moved forward again next day, and we were opposed by the Hun paratroopers and the 21<sup>st</sup> Panzers and we had a terrible fight.

Our artillery put down a great crump and we asked some English tanks to come and help us which they did well, and we pushed on and took the town. The smell and sights were fierce, but it is surprising how one can stand up to it...



Lt. J. Battershill, Family Collection

## **D Day June 6th, 1944**

Jake Miller (H40740)

The day before D-Day, B Company boarded the mother ship. The assault craft were slung on the side of the boat. The night of June 5<sup>th</sup>, Padre Horton gave a prayer and a message. We slept on the floor aboard ship. Few of us were able to sleep. After breakfast, on the morning of D-Day, each platoon entered an assault craft and was lowered into the channel water about a half mile from our assigned beach area. Then in our assault crafts, we headed for our Juno target area.

About 50 or 60 yards from the shore we jumped into the water, almost to our chests, with full battle dress. It was heavy going. The bullets from snipers and machine guns were starting to rip into our craft even before we jumped into the water. Once out of the water all hell broke loose. There were German fighter- bombers strafing and bombing the beach. The boys were getting picked off while still trying to make their way to shore. Lieutenant Rod Beattie, our platoon officer, was hit in the spinal column, while still in shallow water. He was unable to pull himself onto the beach. As I was on the beach, I saw Rifleman Emil Saruk start to make his way to get behind one of the pillboxes that was giving us so much trouble. I had been firing into the weapon slit of that pillbox. Shortly after Saruk was out of sight, the firing at us from that pill box came to an end. We figured Saruk had silenced it, but of course, there was no way of proving anything under

those conditions. Emil had always been a model soldier. He always got the “stick” when on guard duty. He was killed in action 06/ 06/ 44.

I was firing into a pillbox when a sniper returned fire. Being in a prone position, the sniper's bullet grazed my lower left side. Seconds later a mortar bomb landed on my right side and I got sprayed with shrapnel. A bigger piece hit my right knee area. I started to crawl forward when Rod hollered, “Jake don't leave me.” I crawled back and try to drag him away from the water's edge. With the wet sand and all, I was unable to pull him away from the incoming tide. Bill Welch, our platoon sergeant, was still up and around. I hollered at Bill to help Rod to the higher ground. Sargent Welch just picked up Rod Beattie like a child and carried him to the shelter of the sand dune.

## Paralyzed on Juno Beach-Lieutenant Roderick Beattie



Twenty-one-year-old Lieutenant Rod Beattie was paralyzed when he was shot in the spine as his platoon's landing craft hit the beach on D-Day. Jim Parks recalled that he dragged Beattie, as well as other wounded, out of the water and up the shore so that they wouldn't drown. The battle on the beach continued and, as the water rose higher, a wounded Jake Miller was unable to pull Beattie further up the beach. He called to Sergeant Bill Welch to help and Beattie was finally carried to safety.

## D-Day

by J.H. Hamilton



We were fortunate because from *Llangibby Castle* we went directly onto an LCI (Landing Craft Infantry) and were lowered into the water by davits. The water was much choppier than we had ever encountered in any of our schemes and coming off the mothership a large wave hit our landing craft and we were slightly damaged at the back. One of the twin engines was knocked out, and, we were short of power. We were some 10 miles out from the beach at that time, and our sailors had quite a job getting us into the shore.

Because of the lack of power, we were being swamped by the heavy waves. Because the waves were so high, they were washing over our landing craft, and our first casualty was Rifleman Andrew G. Mutch, who was, as we all were very, very seasick. He was lying on the gunwale and as



we came into about two miles offshore, a large wave washed him off, and he went down. We never saw him again.

Because of the lost engine, we were somewhat separated from our wave, and there was quite a bit of enemy fire on the coast, and we were being heavily fired upon as we approached. I was the second man in our section, and the lad in front of me was Rifleman Philip Genaille, and as the ramp went down, he took a burst of machine gun fire in his stomach, while I wasn't touched by that burst. There was a tracer in the burst, and you could see it coming to us, and Genaille was killed instantly.

I got off the landing craft and crossed the narrow sandy beach to the edge of the beach sand dune. I got some protection, but still, I suffered a piece of shrapnel lodged in my right nostril. I was unconscious for some time and being one of the early waves on the beach, there was no first-aid station. When I came to, I tried to put one of our field dressings on, but it is pretty hard to dress your own face wound, so I just continued to let it bleed. Finally, there were five or six walking wounded, and we formed up a section and moved off the beach to follow the route of our company inland, and I went to the village of Sainte-Croix, which our battalion had taken. There were a number of the Germans lying in the streets.

When we came off the narrow sandy beach, I saw a number of Canadian Scottish that had been killed. They were lying about, and the red poppies were in bloom. It struck me then of a poem that we learned in school by Captain McCrae: In Flanders Fields the poppies blow/ Between the crosses

row by row. That certainly struck me, seeing the Canadian Scottish lying dead amongst the red poppies blowing in the wind.



Wounded Canadian soldiers on Juno beach June 6, Library & Archives Canada

## **My Recollections of D-Day**

Jim Parks (H-20580)

We were on our way to the beach and the LCT (Landing Craft Tank) was rocking due to the heavy waves. In our briefing we were to land and support the engineers. The engineers had two armored bulldozers with huge blades in front. The protective armour being one inch thick, reaching to the top of the cockpit and protecting the driver, was about 12 feet off the ground. In addition to the armored bulldozer and driver there were two extra sappers and a sergeant, who were to take the long ropes with grappling hooks attached and hook them onto the barriers set in the water by the Germans. The idea being that as the bulldozer moved forward, they could hook them on the barriers and drag them into shore and allow the LCA (Landing Craft Assault) carrying the Infantry to come through a cleared area. We were to rush ashore, set up our mortars and lay down smoke to cover the engineers and the boys coming in. However, as we know, timetables are sometimes broken in times like this. In addition, we were told that the beach defenses would be knocked out and we would be walking in (or wading) with no harassment. That was not so.

Our touchdown was delayed a bit because on the way in we hit a mine tied to a barrier and it threw the craft slightly off course. Then a 75 mm shell hit the left front of the craft where a sailor was winding down the door. He continued to wind it down despite being seriously wounded. The armor-

piercing shell came through the ramp, and luckily for us it hit the large bulldozer blade at an angle and ricocheted up and away, leaving only a large gouge in the blade. The bulldozers left the ramp but, in so doing, pushed the LCT further back as they left the ramp. We were about 250 yards from shore and Sergeant Tommy Plum, on orders from the boat commander, said, "Let's get going." I took one look at the bulldozer and it had water lapping near the top of the cockpit. That meant it was 12 ft. deep and our mortar carriers were waterproof to travel in water only 4 feet deep.

In any event, the carrier with Rifleman Carl Wald driving drove off and into the water. It seemed to float a while then started to sink. Some of the crew swam for compo boxes and hung on to them (all this with the tracers flying about). "Stringbean" White, from Nokomis, Saskatchewan, hung onto his food box until picked up by the navy later. Holmes swam to a barrier and hung on. We were next to go and into the deep we went. As we sank, we started throwing off our heavy equipment as we had left our buckle's undone and we did not want to be weighed down.

I thanked God I had done a lot of swimming in my day and did a combination of dog paddle, breaststroke and the Australian crawl. A LCA just missed me by a whisker and I swallowed about a quart of water and nearly bought it. About 25 to 30 yards ahead of me the LCA started disembarking and I still couldn't touch bottom with my boots. I was able to scramble in just behind the last section wading in. By the time I reached

the shoreline, I had passed two or three wounded lying face down and grabbed them by the collar and dragged them to dry ground. That started something. I spent a few moments dragging a few more in. I remember Rod Beattie in particular, as he moaned and said he was numb. I dragged him further in so he wouldn't drown.

All hell was breaking loose. I had only my vest and helmet. Another platoon had gotten through the embankment further to the left. When I had a chance to look around, I could see that quite a few of the gang had been caught in the crossfire, some on the barbed wire, some in the water, and on the shore. Lance Corporal Martin was right beside me and he had been mortally wounded. I dragged him to the cover of the pill box nearby and went out to an armored bulldozer and I pointed out that Bales and the two others were hanging onto the barriers in the water and the driver drove back out to the barrier, in about six or seven feet of water plus waves and picked them up. I was able to pick up some equipment and a Sten gun from Corporal Scaife, who had been killed, and then I returned to the pill box where, by that time, quite a few had gathered. Things were a little quieter in a different way. There were more people, first aid men, more infantry landing and artillery. Corporal Martin said he felt cold and I held him and comforted him for awhile until he passed away. Later in civvy life I was able to meet Rod Beattie again and we talked, and he introduced me to his wife. I met Corporal Martin's parents, they hollered to me as I went by their

house in Winnipeg. His dad said, "I had a son in the Winnipeg's, did you know him?" We talked a while and I went on.

A later wave brought in other mortar crews including Frank "Dude" Towers who seemed anxious to get going. We said, "Keep down "Dude, there are snipers galore." Dude said, "You're crazy!" He stuck his arm above the embankment to prove it. "BANG" A shot through the arm and he had a Blighty.



1944 Sniper Section, Rifleman Prince, the regiment's most prolific sniper, kneeling middle (see Jim Parks Recollections)

## Military History of Jim Bage

By Jim Bage



Life was ordinary for me growing up on the farm. It was depression time from 1927 until 1939 when war broke out. We all had our chores to do on the farm, but we also had playtime. The best part about the farm was the animals, my Shetland pony and dog, "Old Min". We had dances in the winter and used horses and sleighs to get us to neighbouring farms and barns where the dances were held.

In December 1939 war was declared. I was 14 years old, and like most boys of 14, I dreamed of enlisting and seeing the sights, England mostly. I thought of adventure, not realizing the danger involved. However, at 14, I was too young to enlist. I quit school after the eighth grade and went to work in the airport under my dad. Why? Who knows? My dad was a very strict disciplinarian, nothing we ever did was right for him. Some people

tried to talk me into going back to school, taking courses to become a pilot. School? I just had my freedom, so I was not all anxious to return. It was really kind of silly, looking back.

However, at 16, after another altercation with my father, I was ready to leave home for good. So along with my brother Bill we joined the army in Winnipeg instead of Dauphin. I was known in Dauphin and they knew I was underage. I used my brother Ralph's birthday because he was 18 at the time. We enlisted on July 10, 1942, at Fort Osborne in Winnipeg. We stayed there approximately two months, then we were sent to Debert, Nova Scotia. We were given orders that we were to sail to England in December 1942. My brother Bill stayed behind; he was not considered fit for duty overseas.

It was exciting to sail on the Queen Elizabeth. I had kitchen duty, so had great meals. I loved the ship. We did not sail in convoy, nor did we have an escort, since the ship was considered fast enough to escape the German U-boats. We arrived in Scotland after a week of travel and there I had my first trip to the hospital. I came down with the mumps, so we were quarantined. After I left the hospital, I was sent to the south of England to join up with my outfit, the Winnipeg Rifles, C Company. Robert McKinnon, my brother-in-law was a Corporal with this unit, so I was granted permission to be with him. We enjoyed our time in England. On the first leave I went up to Northumberland to visit the relatives. We were stationed mostly on the Isle of Wight and Brighton. Oh, it was a fun time.



Even the war games in Scotland did little to make me aware of the dangers yet to come. Maneuvers were hard, especially when we had to jump into the loch with full uniform, boots and all. We were told not to get our rifles wet, to hold them over our heads. Of course, being 5 ft. 8 inches, I sunk-- rifle and all. That loch was deep, so they ended up fishing me out. Robert was wounded in Scotland for live ammunition was used.

Eventually the days were closing in for D-Day, June 6<sup>th</sup>. I was AWOL from leave, as usual. I was at Newcastle, late coming back to camp. The camp moved without me and an army truck was sent to pick me up. I joined the outfit in Portsmouth, England.

I cannot begin to describe the horrors of the beach Landing June 6<sup>th</sup>. We had a very rough crossing on the channel from England to France. The weather was awful. The sailors kept giving us their rum ration, so when we were in our landing craft, I was feeling no pain, nor was I seasick. Landing craft could not get too close to the shore, so we were let out in deep waters and waded to shore. When we hit Juno Beach all hell broke loose, so I sobered up in a hurry. The beach was filled with wounded or dying comrades. Trace bullets were flying. Firing was intense. It was the real thing. I figured we would never get across that beach. One of my buddies was shot crossing the beach, so he asked me to take his Bren gun, so I became Bren gunner # 1. Sebastian was Bren gunner #2. In fact, I tried to avoid being a Bren gunner. I told the corporal I was a Rifleman, not a Bren Gunner, only to be told, you are a Bren gunner now.

Our role was to give cover for our men making their way to the destination areas. Some of our guys actually laid on barbed wire that was all along the beach. We made our way to the railroad tracks-- this was our objective according to the briefings we had in LC 1. We were shown on a map, as to what direction to take. The Germans were waiting for us. I think they fired on us with every weapon they had. At the railroad tracks our tanks turned back, since they were only artillery.

We got down in our trenches, but not to rest like I thought. I had been volunteered to go on a mine laying patrol. Three trucks were sent out. I was in the first truck. We went to a field farther up the tracks and proceeded to the far corner. Two of us were on guard. We had most of the mines unloaded when we were fired upon. We could not tell where the firing came from, it was so dark. The second truck was blown up and the third truck at the gate turned around and took off. Five of us from the first truck hit the ditch and begin crawling back to camp on our hands and knees. We did not know the password when we reached camp, but fortunately we were allowed to enter. I was never so glad to reach my foxhole.



Winnipeg Rifles with captured German pistols. Wally Karp standing at back (n.d.) Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives



Unidentified Royal Winnipeg Rifle bringing in a German prisoner captured in Holland 1945, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives

## Remembering D-Day

John (Jack) McLean (H17560)



John (Jack) McLean (H17560)

It happened so long ago that some of my memories are getting dim. In the intervening years there has been no one with whom I could discuss the details, and when I do think about it, it makes me feel sad and depressed. However, I will do my best to recall and put on paper the facts, as I perceived them.

As I remember, sometime around May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1944, we were moved into a sort of concentration camp in a wooded area north of Southampton. It was quite a nice camp surrounded by a fairly high fence. It was patrolled by British soldiers with orders, we were told, to shoot to kill anyone trying to sneak out of the camp. So, to my knowledge, no one tried to sneak out.

During this period, we were briefed on our landing site and our D-Day objectives. We also spent considerable time studying 3-dimensional pictures of our beach, although we didn't know where that beach was to be. Parades were at a minimum, but we spent a lot of time going over our equipment and other small details. There were lots of Americans in the camp and we had quite a lot of picture shows and were entertained by American entertainers. It was the first time I heard the song "Mares Eat Oats". The Americans had a lot of money, by our standards, and there were lots of illicit crap and poker games. One of our men, Joe Urbanovitch, who loved to gamble and was usually broke, made it real killing and for a while he was a very wealthy man, also a very generous one. Joe survived the war and I met him once where he was operating a bingo game at a carnival.

Sometime around June we were loaded into trucks and moved to Southampton and directly onto ships. As I recall, we were very young, very well trained and very well-equipped, for that time, and I think overall, we felt invincible. We were raring to go. I don't remember the name of the ship. it wasn't a real big ship, but it wasn't too bad. It seems to me we boarded in the evening. There was certainly lots of activity in the dock area, hustle and bustle everywhere, and every square foot occupied by some type of invasion equipment.

I think the ship remained at dock overnight and sometime the next day moved out into the English Channel. It was very rough, and D-Day had been postponed for a day or two because of this rough weather. Quite a few

were seasick. But quite a few poker and dice games broke out. Nearly everyone wrote letters to their loved ones. We were told the letters would be posted later, but they never were. I wrote to my wife in Scotland and my parents in Manitoba, but I found out later that they never received them.

Finally, the big day arrived. We were up about 3:30 a.m. and had a good breakfast followed by a church service. We all received a final message from General Eisenhower. Just as dawn was breaking, we boarded the landing craft and were lowered to the water. What a sight greeted us that's morning! In front of us was the coast of France and to each side of us and behind us, as far as the eye could see, were thousands of ships of every size, kind and description. Warships of every size and description were shelling the beaches in the area behind the beaches. Near our position was a rocket ship. Every few minutes it would release a whole cloud of rockets. You could watch them leave the ship in a cloud of smoke and watch them gain speed till they were out of sight.

The Channel didn't seem too rough while we were on the ship, but that changed when the infantry landing craft touched the water. As I remember, the waves were five to six feet high. At one moment we would be on the crest of a wave, with the whole invasion panorama and the coast of France in view. The next moment we would be in a trough with nothing visible but water. Many of our men became seasick.

As we approached the beach, the firing became intense, but the shelling had moved farther inland, and the German defenses started to respond with machine gun fire from their concrete pillboxes. Finally, the landing craft could advance no further. It stopped and the ramp was lowered.

I was a member of 13 platoon C Company of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. I was the Lance Corporal of Number 7 section. Each landing craft held one platoon of Infantry. There were three rows of benches on which we sat on the run into the beach. Our platoon consisted of three sections: 7, 8 and 9, and platoon headquarters. Our section, Number 7, was the first section off the landing craft. We had inflated our "Mae Wests". This impeded our advance as we tried to keep our weapons clear of the water. I am over six feet and could soon touch bottom with my toes and I started to pass other members of the section. As I remember, we had to go about 300 feet through water to reach the beach and our first objective was the section of the sand dunes on the beach. By the time I reached the sand of the beach I was almost exhausted, and I came abreast of Andrew Maty, another six-footer of our section, I slowed down, and just as I did, Andrew was shot above the temple. I saw him fall and forgot all about being exhausted. Although it was a very serious wound, Andrew survived.

The next obstacle was rolls of concertina wire. It was about 20 to 30 feet across this wire, and it was about two feet high. Just beyond the wire were the sand dunes and at least temporary safety. We had a device to blast a hole in the wire called a Bangalore Torpedo. It was a long plastic hose filled

with explosive, which was to be thrown over or shoved through the wire and then blown up. However, our Bangalore Torpedo man never made it out of the water, so we had to make it through the wire as best we could. I was about halfway through the wire when I was hit. The blast stunned me, and I fell into the wire. I don't know if I was out for seconds or minutes. By the time I came too, the remaining survivors were through the wire and into the sand dunes. When I looked up, there were bits of bloody cloth on the wire to my right and my first thought was maybe my legs are gone, although I felt no pain. I looked around and found my legs still intact, but a few feet behind me one of my comrades was minus his legs and he was dead. I don't know if he stepped on a mine or if it had been a mortar shell. Several of our men had been killed or wounded by whatever it was. I was in a very exposed area and my next thought was to get out of there. I discovered that my very good friend, "Wheeler" Graham, was in a shell hole in the dune not too far from me. I called to him and he called back. If I could make it, there was room for me. I untangled my equipment and gathered my legs up under me and then jumped up and ran. As I neared the shell hole, I threw my rifle in and dived in, and in doing so hit my bayonet. It just broke the skin on my throat but for a moment I thought I had killed myself. Until that time, I had felt no pain and didn't know that I had been hit. Wheeler noticed a tear in the clothing on my back. He examined it and told me I was hit in the back.



I got my first field dressing out and he bandaged it for me. We remained in the sand dunes for about half an hour while our officers got things organized. There was a bit of shooting back and forth but, with our inexperience, we could not identify where the shots were coming from. After a while we formed up and moved out in single file, our section leading. A short distance inland we came to a canal and again we had to take to the water. It was quite deep, so we had to inflate our "Mae Wests". We made it across okay and moved inland about a quarter to half mile. We passed fenced-off areas with signs saying "Achtung Minen".

As we neared a road that crossed our front we were fired on again and we dashed for the ditch. It was a fairly high grade with deep ditches that provided good cover. We still couldn't determine where this firing was coming from, so some of us crawled up on the edge of the road and we tried to locate it. We had just barely looked over the road when the man next to me was hit in the forehead and died instantly. Three more of us were knocked out at this location.

We moved off again following the ditch to our left to try to get in behind our first objective. By this time, my right leg was getting very stiff and painful, and I discovered that my leg had been hurt much worse than my back. I showed the wound to our officer, Lieutenant McQueen, and he told me to go back to the beach and get it dressed and attended to. I said goodbye to my buddies, and they said I'd see them later today or tomorrow and make my way.

It was a lonely trip back to the beach. I felt much fear and my wounds were hurting more. I guess the adrenaline had slowed down, but I finally made it. By this time reinforcements by the hundreds were arriving. There were tanks and trucks and mine clearing devices. There are a lot of prisoners and the wounded had been gathered up in the shelter of the dunes. The beach was an extremely busy place. The wounded had been given blankets, but I had missed out on that and I became very cold. A captain, who I didn't know, invited me to share his blanket, which I gratefully did. He was wounded in the arm. He had a small flask of rum in his inside tunic pocket. He asked me to get it out for him and we killed it between us. That sure perked us up. Sometime in the late afternoon, we were told that those who could walk should make their way down to one of the tank landing craft which were still beached, waiting for the tide to refloat them. Mine cleared strips to the boats had been marked off with ribbons. I was still able to walk so made my way down to the boat. There, we were given a cup of tea and a Spam sandwich. When the tide came in, the boat refloated and moved out into the Channel. By this time, our "Mae Wests" had been discarded and the British soldiers gave the wounded their life jackets.

For me D-Day was over. The next day in mid-channel we were transferred to a much larger ship where we were again fed tea and spam sandwiches, and our wounds were dressed, and we were transported to England.

Our section leader was Corporal Jim Kyle and I recently learned that a remote Lake in the Duck Mountains of Manitoba had been named for him. He came from the next village to my hometown. We joined the army one day apart and were close friends throughout our army career.

I am not sure, but I think only one or two, besides myself, survived the war. Most of my friends were dead by D-Day plus 3. That is around June 8th or 9th, 1944.

On Remembrance Day I can still, in my mind clearly see them... Jim Kyle, Roy White, Wheeler Graham, Nathaniel Tafler, George Brown, Everett Stevenson, Glenn Harkness, Fred Stefaniuk, Lieutenant McQueen, Andrew Maty, Ole Olson, George Modine and Stuart Culliton.

Cecil John Graham- Killed on June 6, 1944

R. W. G. B. J.  
22 June 44.

Dear Mrs. Graham,

I am afraid that this letter must be one of sad tidings. Your son, C. J. Graham, was a member of my platoon. He went into action with us and did good work. Unfortunately he was killed in action against the enemy.

His death was instantaneous and he suffered no pain. The regimental padre saw to his funeral and he is now buried in a cen. plot.

If I can furnish you with more information please don't hesitate to write.

I am,  
Richard S. Maguire



Cecil John Graham of Minto, Manitoba, aged 23, KIA June 6, 1944. Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives

R. Wpg. R.

22 June 44

Dear Mrs. Graham,

I am afraid to say that this letter must be one of sad tidings. Your son C.J. Graham was a member of my platoon. He went into action with us and did great work. Unfortunately, he was killed in action against the enemy.

His death was instantaneous, and he suffered no pain. The regimental padre saw to his funeral and he is buried in a Cdn. plot. If I can furnish you with more information, please do not hesitate to write.

I am

Richard S. Moglove

## **Fight at Putot-June 8, 1944**

*Gordon Vivian McQueen*



Gordon Vivian McQueen, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives

Things began to get hotter. Lots of lead seem to be flying around. I decided that if it got to hand-to-hand fighting, I would need some movement. I decided to get rid of my small pack and webbing. I tied a bandolier of ammo around my waist, fixed bayonet on rifle and started to crawl along the ditch. Who do I meet crawling toward me? My pal Tanner. We shook hands. I said, "Tanner, if anything happens to me tell Norma I didn't know what hit me." He said. "G.V., you tell the girlfriend the same thing." We stayed together till we were relieved.

(Both survived the war. McQueen's brother, Lieutenant Lewis McQueen, was killed on June 8 at Putot. McQueen and Norma were married for over 50 years and named their son Lewis John McQueen)

**My experience with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles of Canada World War II**  
Ed King-- Member of the Cree First Nations

I was a reinforcement. I landed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1944 and I got to the Royal Winnipeg Rifles on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July. We never had much land at that time. Just a few miles inland. We just waited for the orders to come for us to move up to the frontline. Sometimes there was a dispatch rider from the front lines at our camp. He would tell us the latest news. One time we had a young soldier from the Regina Rifles sent back from the front lines as they found out he was only 16 years old.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July there were about three hundred soldiers ready to move up. I went to talk to some of them. Some said they came straight from Canada and had never seen England. One said he was in the army for three months. I saw some old friends and my cousin Louis Ouillette.

We were called to form up in ranks of three and get onto trucks. Anyway, I ended up in the back end of a truck. Next to me was a soldier from Alberta. He said his name was Laboucane. He talked a lot.

We did not go to the front until July 5<sup>th</sup>. The Royal Winnipeg Rifles were in bad shape. Some sections were wiped out. An NCO gave us the order to dig a trench. He said, "Get down and stay the hell down and keep your head down. You're no good to us dead." The NCO said, "Dig and dig fast." There was an Indian Canadian soldier that got there about the same time as I did. Anyway, we got digging our slit trench and got about 3 feet down

in the ground. We talked some. He told me his name was Badger and was from an Indian reserve around Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. As we were talking, Laboucane came up to us and asked if he could use our pick. He said the ground was really hard. So, I gave him the pick, but he just sat there on that pile of dirt and kept right on talking.

Just then the same NCO came and said, "Dig your trenches and stay down." It was too late for that soldier. A mortar shell it real close to of us and got Laboucane. A piece of shrapnel came through his steel helmet and got him across the forehead. He never moved.

There was a D-Day Soldier close by us. He never talked too much. He said a few words. It was really hard for him to talk. He was the only one left out of his section. He was also an Indian, but I don't know if he was a Cree Indian. He kind of broke down when someone asked about a friend, had his head down. I never got this Indian soldier's name. I saw him lots of times after. The last time I saw him was on the 14th of August 1944. If he was killed or wounded, I can't say.

On the 6th of July I was put into D company 18th Platoon, 7 section. There were only two men in section 7. Corporal Prayzner was a great leader, smart and brave. He said he came in on D-Day. I got to know Prayzner pretty good as the battles went on. I could say he was my teacher and may have saved my life lots of times by him telling me what to do, where to be or not be. He would say, "You get down and stay down till I say went to move."



Prayzner was an older man than the rest of us. He said he was married, and he was a Catholic. We were all very young. I was 18 years old at that time and most of the ones I came with as reinforcements were not 20 years old yet.



Somewhere in Germany 1944, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives

## Carpiquet

Jim Lowe (B 146066)



Jim Lowe, 1945, "A" Company 1945 (note two wound stripes on sleeve)

In the Battle of Carpiquet in July 1944 I was in A company. Our company led the first assault on the airport. Some of us made it through the apron wire and reached the landing strip, where we came under intense small fire. I was shot in the left hand. The bullet entered sideways and broke several bones in my hand. At the same time, one of our Corporals, a fellow named Champagne, was hit by a burst from the same machine pistol. The bullet pierced his lung. The other two lads helped me pull him into a shelter made from some fallen timbers. As we dragged him into cover, another

shot penetrated his arm. He needed help badly, so the other two fellows left to look for a stretcher bearer (Medic) and I stayed with the corporal. I tried my best to bandage him, but it was terribly difficult under the prevailing conditions. I held him in my arms for over an hour and tried to shelter him from the increasing fire. He died in my arms... And I will never forget the feelings on that day. I had, by that time, lost quite a bit of blood myself and there was nothing left to do but to leave him and try to make my way back out. When I left him, he was still wearing the little Norwegian seamen's dagger that I had given to him on the previous day.

ARE  
CANADIANS  
COWARDS  
?

CANADIANS

You are again to assume the offensive. In case you should come into a hopeless situation don't lose courage. Germany treats prisoners of war according to the Hague and Geneva conventions. Your soldier's honour will be respected

BETTER COME ACROSS  
THAN GET A CROSS

German propaganda leaflet, The Memory Project

**Letter to the Padre**

Major P.W. Murray

July 23

To the Padre

Winnipeg Rifles

I buried two men yesterday. One was Thomas Bryon Cratty L105331, born 1914, and John McLeod, Born 1911. There was only his hands and his legs to be found. Torso in bits. Identified by his identity card, blown to bits. I believe they are both your men. Cratty is for sure. McLeod—Rifle no. 2862770. I don't know what Regt. but they were both quite close together south of Carpiquet Airport MR972669.

Major P.W. Murray

D.M.A.,

2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division



*"Keep in touch with the folks at home"*

ON ACTIVE SERVICE  
with the  
CANADIAN FORCES

Padre  
To the Regiment July 23 1944  
Winnipeg Rifles

I buried two ~~men~~ yesterday  
One was  
Thomas Byron Cratty  
L 105331. Born 1911

and John McLeod. Born  
1914. There was only his hands  
and legs to be found - torso in  
bits. Identified by his identity  
card. blown to bits.  
I believe both are your men  
Cratty is for sure  
McLeod - Rifle no 2542770.  
I don't know what Regt. but  
they were both quite close  
(over)

Excerpt, Padre Edward Horton Collection, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives

## **Battles: D-day, Carpiquet, Caen, Falaise, Scheldt, Moyland Wood and Deventer**

By Gordon Maxwell (L104173)

We started out for D-Day, landing on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944. It was a one-day trip over very rough water. George Vandale and I were playing crib. We looked at one another and both became seasick at the same time. I stayed sick for the rest of the voyage over and even after we landed.

We were on a flat bottom landing craft that never ceased to rock and pitch over every wave. We couldn't land in the order that we were supposed to because some had priority over us. That meant that some crafts had to be on the beach before we were because they were needed there. Word soon came and we went into land. A British major was on our craft with a carrier and a driver. They were first off, and they hit a landmine. They were blown sky-high. The driver was killed by the blast, but the major survived the mine, although he was a little shook up. Captain Strachan was also on our boat and the order came to wade ashore. Johnny McLean was the driver and he drove in alone on to the beach.

The water was up to our waist; there was lots of shelling and machine gun fire. Luck was with me that day and I made it through all right. That night we set up our anti- tank gun. There were a few German fighting patrols around, and it became a very long night. At the break of dawn Major Fulton came through to see how it was going. I turned my Bren gun at him, as it

was too dark to see who he was. I decided not to fire. If it was a German, we may be able to take him prisoner. I finally figured out who the man creeping around in the dark was. It had been a close call for Major Fulton. The toughest time in the world for me was at Putot, France, when the Germans had overrun the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. We made a run to get out of there and were successful in our retreat. I had the carrier driver, Johnny McLean, stop and let me off at the O Group. I met up with Royal Winnipeg Rifles and asked if they needed a lift. They were glad to have some help. The Germans were attacking a company or part of one and we were able to hold them off and keep the front line. They started firing mortar shells at us and the two boys who had joined were injured, but they were able to walk out of there. I was there all alone for a while. Then someone came along and said that the Canadian Scottish Regiment was going to relieve us. This was music in my ears.

During the latter part of June, we were in a quieter place, awaiting orders for our next attack. Just before dark we were able to brew up a coffee as we were using a barn or a shed for our cooking. The fellows were sitting around, and the subject of ages came up. Someone asked Watters (G-19232) his age, his answer was that he would have been 25 on July 26<sup>th</sup>. Someone asked him why he said it that way. His answer was that he thought he would not live until his next birthday. His parents were devoted members of the Salvation Army where they lived. I think he came from Nova Scotia, but I'm not sure after all these years.



Not long after that came the Battle of Carpiquet airfield. We had to stay there and be shelled, over and over. It was continuous all day and very severe. Watters was our carrier driver. I told him I was going to see how the others were doing and he begged me not to go because of the danger. Well, I thought it was dangerous everywhere, regardless, so I left. When I came back, the trench had been directly hit and Watters had been killed. Next was the battle to liberate Caen, France. There were severe shelling and machine-gun altercations. We had one track blown off our carrier, but we're lucky otherwise. Near Falaise, we were waiting to attack when an 88 German shell hit nearby. Alex Koppers was wounded. I dressed his wound later on in the day. We moved on and into Falaise. There was bitter fighting and our gun came under heavy shelling. As luck would have it, none hit the mark. The blast of the 88 knocked Gordon Naylor out. Critchlow got wounded also that day, leaving us with four men. At Calais, we had many German prisoners. We stripped them of their weapons. Surprisingly, they were very cooperative. There was lots of bombing in Calais. When the Allied airmen jumped out of their planes to parachute down, the Germans shot at them, wounding and killing most of them.

At Scheldt, we had hard living conditions, it was very wet and cold. At the Leopold Canal, we had set our anti-tank gun up on the bank. We had no bridge to cross on. One night we took ammunition to the forward company. On the way back, the Germans opened up machine gun fire. It

seems like bullets were going between my legs, barely missing me. We got out safely.

The Moyland Woods was a tough battle for me. We had to cross through a boggy coolie. I found a safe crossing, which had taken me most of the day to discover. Just before dark, we moved up on the other side. Jock Mackenzie was my driver and we came to a minefield. I was telling him which direction to go, left, right. It became too dark and I got out and walked in front, going through the field that way and calling back where to go. Making it safe and sound though, I inquired about my friend John Buchanan. He had been killed in an attack, which I took rather hard. A German Jew (John Wolpe) had joined our Battalion at Calais. He said Sargent Buchanan had been too eager to reach his objective and he wouldn't stop.

I crossed the Rhine River over a pontoon bridge and thought the bridge would come apart. It never did, but we were always going uphill. The pontoon we were on would go up and down. We were back in Holland to liberate the Dutch. There were some bitter hard-fought battles.

I had been leading a gun crew as a corporal. Then along came Sargent Lamoroux. He didn't come up with us that day for battle but came along after we got to our objective. I questioned him the next day about where he had been. I didn't agree with his excuses, and so the next morning he was gone. A few days later Sergeant Woods came to take over the crew.

We went on the attack and he didn't come along either. We had some discussion as to where he had been and the next day he was gone.

At this stage of the war, I was slightly cranky. The next tough battle was to liberate Deventer. There were four in our crew and things were done differently. As a rule, we would attack as a line company or I would travel with them and come back to get the crew and gun. It was done effectively this way; we were to wait until we got orders from the dispatch rider, whose name was Alex Koppers. He didn't come back, but he had not for a good reason, he had gotten wounded. Another dispatcher came and his name was George "Bunker" Hill. He was a dependable dispatcher. My driver did not want to go on the attack to Deventer. I used a few strong words to persuade him and finally coerced him to change his mind.

A shell landed near us as we approached Deventer and it rocked our carrier. We caught up to the line company and there was a lot of machine gun fire coming down the street. We moved to the front of the company and met up with a tank at an intersection. The captain in the tank told me not to go any further, as it was too dangerous. We continued the liberation of Holland. That battle at Deventer would be my last tough one.

At Essen, Germany, I went to an O group meeting where Major Beaver told us the Germans had surrendered and the war was over. A large cheer went up and a lot of hand shaking. When I got back to my platoon and announced the news, more cheering and laughing prevailed. Later I was

sent to the C.A.O.F (Canadian Army of Occupation) in Germany. I went with the advance party to get things organized for the rest of the troops.

After the war I got married and had two boys and a girl. Farming soon became my normal way of life again and I was glad to get back in Canada.

Royal Winnipeg Rifles Commanding Officers: D-Day to VE Day 1944-1945,



Lt.-Col John Meldram



Lt.-Col Lockie Fulton DSO

## **Wounded at Caen**

Alexander Corston (B- 38752)

When we were advancing on Caen, we were supposed to have a 24-hour rest. We'd been on the front all along. I picked up the newspaper, the Canadian Press News, got a haircut from one of the guys and just sat down in the square. We were camped in the courtyard out in the country. I sat down in a little niche there. I just started to read the paper and "cripes", the first shell that came over went BANG and killed two fellows in the courtyard... It hit them and killed them.

I thought it was just the blast that knocked me over and I fell underneath the half-track...this Corporal and myself, we went under the wireless truck. I said, "It'll only last about 15 minutes and then it'll be over." It got all quiet and I went to get out and, "Oh cripes," I said, "Oh Jesus Christ, I'm hit." He crawled out and got the stretcher bearer who pulled me out of there. He gave me a pill, gave me a shot and put me on top of the jeep on a stretcher and hauled me back to a beach hospital on the French coast.

I was there for a couple days before I went across the channel to an English hospital. I was in the English hospital for a couple of days and then they shipped me to the 24th Canadian General Hospital in East Grenstead before they took the shrapnel out. They never did anything for me until that time. They just gave me a bath, that's all.

The nurse came to give me a bath. I said, "I can bath myself." "No, no, no!" she said, "You don't touch yourself. I 'll bath you." So, she bathed me.

That's when they shipped me out to the 24th Canadian General and that's when they operated on me to take the shrapnel out. Gangrene set in after. The doctor took off the cast. "Oh God!" he said, "I'll have to operate but I can't use the operating ward in the hospital. I'll have to operate on you right here in the ward!" They put a new cast on my leg and put a little jar of maggots inside to clean the dead skin.

I was in hospital for a little over seven months. Gangrene set in- poison-painful. Fixed it up though. We used to call the Doctor "Bob Hope". He was as comical as Bob Hope.

I don't know if the letter got delayed or what, but my mom thought it was brother Albert that got hit. But it was me that got hit.

When I got wounded and I was in the hospital, there was a little fellow that got wounded in the throat. He had a tube in his stomach... Took his food in a glass funnel. One day he went to the Officers' Quarters. An officer had brought a bottle of liquor from home. The officer gave him some liquor and he got half shot! He came back to the ward and said, "Come on chicken, let's go to the pub." I said, "Well, okay, all right." We went out through the gate. It was not very far to the pub. They weren't supposed to let the fellows from the hospitals - Blues - into the pub. We drank beer. He put the beer into the funnel, wouldn't even taste it. We came back to the hospital at 10:30, half shot.

In the hospital there was also a little Scot's fellow. He was shell-shocked. He'd hear the "buzz bombs" and, oh God, he jumped under the bed! He'd get under the bed every time he heard a "buzz bomb".

When I was discharged, they discharged me to a waiting station for a ship- hospital ship. There was a guy on the ship, he was fine until they untied the ship and he was sick until they tied up in Halifax! He was sick every day. We'd take him food in our mugs. As soon as we tied up in Halifax, he was fine again.

## **From Caen to Falaise**

Earl McIntyre (H-42292)

Since nearly all the citizens of Caen had moved out before the shelling began, we found the place deserted. Our officers told us to find a place to spend the night. We found a house with a garage as part of the house and an upstairs bedroom above it, and a little garden in the rear. One of the first things we learned to do under such circumstances is to dig a hole for a latrine. In digging the hole, the boys dug up a gallon crock of butter and a bottle of wine. There also were some chickens in a pen. We helped herself to a chicken, fried it in the butter, buttered our bread with a lavish helping of delicious butter. It had been months since we had anything this close to a home-cooked meal.

I had received my three stripes following the battle at Carpiquet and after the meal and wine, I felt quite satisfied with my condition in life!

Following the battles in the Caen area we were finally able to relax and rest for a few days. Some of us were fortunate enough to be taken to Chateau Beauregard, a beautiful old Chateau on the Caen Canal between Caen and the English Channel. We had warm baths and a complete change of clothing. I even took a swim in the canal. This was my last swim with a whole body. About two weeks later I was wounded and suffered the loss of my right leg.



## Caen - July 1944

Alex W Koppers (H 40916)



Dispatch Rider Alex Koppers, Nijmegen, Holland 1945

The day we started our advance for the capture of Caen, we were formed up in what we would call "open fields". We were not the first attacking regiment, so had to wait our turn to move off. I had a bad case of dysentery, which was quite common and nearly everyone had it at one time over there. Our platoon officer told me I should go back to one of the echelons and catch up with them in Caen, later. I felt too miserable to bother so stayed with our platoon. While we were waiting, our air force came over to bomb a path for us to Caen. We were watching the planes; they were quite low, coming over with the bomb-bay doors open. We could even see the bombs leave the plane. It sure made us feel good to

think of all that landing on the Germans. All of a sudden, we could see they were dropping too early and getting some of our troops to our rear. In fact, they knocked out a lot of what was to be our artillery support, plus tank support and even some of our infantry troops who were taking part in this attack.

We finally got rolling and ran into a lot of shelling and mortaring, at times very heavy. At times we had to go to ground for some protection. At one of these times I ran to get behind some shrubs. There was a Canadian soldier lying there from the 9th Brigade. I was asking him how the attack was going. No answer. On closer look I saw his wrist was very white where he had been wearing a wristwatch. That called for a closer look. I found he had a small wound in his left temple; a very good reason for not answering me.

We would move, stop, move again, move, all quite usual when shelling is heavy. My platoon decided to get a rush on, as not far ahead of us was an old castle. On my motorcycle I could seldom hear incoming shells or mortars. When everyone else hit the dirt, I just followed what they did. Crossing one field I could see there was a trench right across where I would have to go. I was going at a good clip and wondered how I would get across that communication trench. When I took a fast glance for a spot, there to my right was a German. He had been killed in the trench, a communication trench is not very deep, so I used him as my bridge. It did give one a funny feeling in the stomach, but then I was able to catch up to my fellows. As

we got closer to the castle, I could picture Germans with machine guns in every slit, however, they had pulled out. One of our gun crews had jumped out looking for shelter from the shelling and their driver took off with their carrier and gun. The gun Sargent sent me to catch up to him and bring him back, sure some job over that rough field. I did manage to catch up and had him return to his crew. After that we continued our advanced right into the outskirts of Caen where we set up our defense and were there about two days, if I remember correctly. I think that covers this day sometime in July 1944, our trip to Caen.

## **From D-Day to the Leopold Canal: A Sketch of the War Experiences of Stan Creaser**

Stan Creaser



Stan Creaser

I joined the Royal Winnipeg Rifles regiment at Stroud Park, near Horsham in England July 8, 1943. I was assigned to D Company, 18 Platoon. I took part in some landing exercises which included those taken at Inveraray, Scotland.

About the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1944, we were loaded on troop ships and taken across the channel and off loaded three days later into landing craft about 10 miles off the coast of France.

I was very sick on the way to the beach. The water was rough. As we drew near to Juno Beach, the landing craft door was lowered, and we moved out into the water and started towards dry land. I tripped over something

below the water and fell down. I did manage to get up and carry my Bren gun to shore. We crossed the beach as quickly as possible, amid mortar and small-arms fire, toward a village.

One of our jobs was to check a church tower for snipers or observers. Our Lieutenant, Jack Mitchell, told us during our briefing in England that the church should be completely destroyed because of the intense fire directed at it from our warships. We found little or no damage; I was the one ordered to climb up and check, no Jerrys, thank God.

We got through the minefield on our way to Putot (June 8), saw Jack Mitchell win the Military Cross by literally throwing landmines off a bridge to allow a tank to cross, all under fire. We got to Putot on the second day and dug in on the east side of town. That evening Mitchell called for volunteers to go out laying mines. I was in the back of the truck in the middle of a field passing out crates of mines when the enemy attacked. Bullets were passing through the canvas top of the vehicle before I managed to jump out. The Pioneer officer told us to disperse and find our own way back. Several of our group got lost and were taken prisoner. They were fortunate that they weren't murdered along with the others taken that day. I saw them all back in England after the war ended. Our company missed the worst of the fighting when the enemy entered Putot, a terrible battle for our regiment. We were placed in reserve after the mauling at Putot.

On July 3<sup>rd</sup> we moved up into position to attack Carpiquet airfield. The enemy shelled all night; even so I got some sleep. With our American born Sergeant O' Day, we launched the attack on July 4<sup>th</sup>, we were up against a determined enemy force. They had dug in tanks and multi machine guns fired at us as we tried to close in on them without any cover over open ground. Luckily for me, they were using tracers in their machine guns. I could duck down as they passed over me. Lance Corporal Holiday and I stopped to look around. We seemed to be alone, so I stood up and turned around. We had just taken a couple of steps when a shell landed behind us. I got a shell fragment in my right leg behind the knee.

We checked in with Major Fulton, our Company Commander. Although I could still walk, he ordered me back. I started out with Jack Mitchell and Jack Hamilton, both badly wounded but able to walk. We were walking out under enemy shellfire when Mickey Austin, our R.S.M. (Regimental Sergeant-Major), picked us up in his jeep and took us to an aid station.

I was returned to England patched up and returned to the regiment at Elbeuf just over the Seine River on August 30<sup>th</sup>.

We had a good crossing of the remainder of France, with the few interesting happenings. The day after rejoining the regiment, I was moved from one section to another, i.e. back to my original section, all in the same platoon. The section I moved up from was led by Corporal Earl McIntyre. That day we came under an enemy barrage, as we move down a road, the men in that section were all killed or wounded.

One time later, as we were advancing down a railroad track walking between the rails, Germans would appear with their hands up, maybe two or three at a time. On one occasion they had a trench dug beneath the rails and a fully loaded machine gun pointed in our direction. They never fired a shot. We nearly ran out of men taking prisoners back.

One night we were ordered up in the darkness to attack Old Fort Nieulay, just outside of Calais. We ran into very stiff opposition; the sky was quickly filled with star shells making it as bright as day. The machine guns were murderous, we lost some men, fortunately we were withdrawn.

The next day after extensive bombings from the air we were ordered up again behind a heavy artillery barrage. Corporal "Red" Prayzner and I were in the lead this time, stepping over dead comrades from the night before. We elected to stay very close to our artillery cover and so we surprised about 8 or 10 enemy hiding in a house beside the road. They had left their machine guns set up in the middle of the road. Our Lance Corporal White wanted the arrogant officer's pistol. When he reached for it the officer removed his steel helmet and started to swing it at Kevin. He changed his mind when I jabbed the Bren gun barrel into his face. At this point others from our regiment passed through us and entered the fort with flamethrowers and captured it.

After the prisoners were taken out and we were moving up, a shell fell near by and I got a small fragment in my rear end. Our Medical Officer, Captain

Caldwell, after he had a look at it, said it wasn't much worse than what I might get on Halloween night back home.

A couple of days later a German Jew civilian, John Wolpe, came out from Calais and told our officers the Germans wanted to surrender, this after a two-day truce to allow civilians to leave the city. He was given a uniform and a Sten gun. He returned with some officers under a white flag. This man stayed on with our unit, got promoted and wounded later on, caused quite a buzz when he wound up in England without proper I.D.

Leopold Canal.... now acting Lance Corporal without pay. We crossed the canal behind the Canadian Scottish and the Regina Rifles and "dug in". The ground was very soggy. Standing in our slit trenches we were up to our knees in water before morning.

Led by Lieutenant Jim Bullock, we moved up to take a small village. Anyway, while leapfrogging along the road to the village under fire, "Red" Prayzner was shot and killed instantly. We seemed to have things our way for a while. When the enemy attacked, I was left with one man as a rear guard, lying alone in a shallow depression in someone's backyard. Sometime during the day, probably while leapfrogging, I got some sand or clay in my rifle bolt. The only way you could reload was with your foot. When the Germans arrived, I scrunched down as low as I could and watched them shoot at me. I was aware of being hit twice and was bleeding a lot. This was around mid-day. I passed out for a while. When I



awoke, they were shooting at me again. I was in some pain and had probably moved without knowing it. It was getting late in the afternoon. After two or three bullets hit the dirt in front of my face, I pulled out a dirty handkerchief and waved it above my head and called out "Comrade". A German who spoke English told me to come over to them. When I attempted to stand, it felt like I had a hundred pounds on my back. At this point the other man with me, I'd forgotten about him, called "Comrade" as well. He was allowed to help me. He was a recent replacement. I don't recall his name. I noticed my rifle stock had several bullet holes in it when I finally got to my feet. I guess they were shooting at my rifle instead of me.

When we joined the Germans, I was standing talking to them when everything went black. I could still hear but couldn't see.

I awoke in a hospital bed, surprised and pleased it wasn't a German hospital. Actually, I was on the top floor of a nunnery in Eeklo (Belgium) that was being used as a hospital. A doctor came by and said, "You can smile now, but when you came in, we didn't know whether to help you or to bury you". Several blood transfusions were needed to get me going again. I was shipped back to England.

The war, for me, was over.

## The Battle of the Scheldt

by Jim Hayward (G-24301)



Unidentified soldier, Scheldt Estuary, 1944, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives

From September 25th to the 29th, the regiment fought their last battles in France, and with the capture of Calais on September 29th, we rested for

two or three days. "A" Company had taken a great number of casualties, and Number 7 platoon had lost Lieutenant Morgan and Sargent Fulton. I lived with others in Fort Nieulay, which "A" Company had helped capture. We moved into Belgium early in October and some of us slept in barns, while others slept in houses which the Belgian people made available. I lost my pocketknife while sleeping in a hayloft. My friend, Bob Chisamore and I walked down the road in the evening and found a small cafe. The middle-aged lady proprietor told us we were the first Canadian soldiers she had seen since the First World War.

We moved over to Maldegem, Belgian, and prepared for the assault into Holland. Perhaps it was this little town or village where Bob Chisamore and I discovered a fair and dance in progress. We join the Belgian girls and folks in a very happy and joyful dance. I did not use strong drink, but the Belgian people shared their bottle with Bob, and he, not being a real drinker, got a bit tipsy. On our way back to our billet, Bob began to urinate as we walked in the cobbled road in our hobnail boots, and he said, "I'm a flamethrower."

Number 7 Platoon had such a small number of riflemen left after the Calais battle; with no Lieutenant, no NCOs, it made sense that we join with Number 8 Platoon until reinforcements arrived. Corporal Moflier, a very fine fellow, took us under his care and eventually Sergeant Richardson and Lieutenant McSkimmings took us over and we got some new people in to fill up the ranks.

Thirty-three people make up a full platoon, but usually you were lucky to have twenty-six. I believe there were only six or eight of us left after the Calais encounter.

Ken Meade, who was an acquaintance of mine back home, drove a Bren carrier equipped with a flamethrower in support company. Although the Winnipeg Rifles did not take part in the October 6<sup>th</sup> early morning assault, our flame-throwers were in position before daylight to shoot their deadly flames across the Leopold Canal.

When we cross the canal later in the day, we made a makeshift foot bridge beside a blown-out bridge. This footbridge was made of planks and anything that could be utilized. The battle was raging, and things were really hot on that canal dike.

We joined the two others 7th Brigade regiments, the Canadians Scottish and the Regina Rifles. At times it looked like would it we would be thrown back into the canal. We threw our number 36 hand grenades at the enemy and they threw their stick grenades (potato mashers) at us. They attacked us at night, and we beat them off. There were many dead men lying everywhere. We put up flares with the two-inch mortar at night so we would not be surprised by the enemy. It rained a great deal, especially at night, and we were cold and miserable. It was difficult to get rations and ammunition to us. Although it probably not a wise thing to do, once some of us ate some German biscuits.

We were told that the German 64<sup>th</sup> Division, along with some SS groups, were confronting us at the Leopold Canal and we were continually under fire by artillery, mortars and machine guns. We patrolled into enemy territory in small groups at night, and they did the same to us. Corporal Rutland, a very fine man, and liked by everyone, was captured one night and we never saw him again. His is one of the many unknown graves, and his name is commemorated on the wall at Holton Cemetery. (Arthur Rutland and Clifford Blake are the two Royal Winnipeg Rifles with no known grave.)

We had a few Manitoba Indians in the R.W.R.s and they were fine soldiers. One night it was raining very hard and we covered each slit trench as best we could with gas capes and old boards, to try and keep a little bit dry, when we were not in the machine gun positions taking our turns at guarding the front and sending flares up from time to time. It was usually two hours on and two hours off.

A little further along the dike, a rifleman sat with his fingers around the trigger of a Bren gun. Fatigue got the better of him and he went to sleep. A German patrol sneaked in and one of them took hold of the Bren gun's bipod legs and gently pulled it towards himself. This caused the Bren to fire a short burst, and it caught the German between the eyes.

On our front, a soldier had been watching and thought he saw several Germans sneaking towards him. This can happen to anyone, and I've had it happen on more than one occasion. Your eyes play tricks on you, and I

found it best to look away or towards the sky to clear your “screen” once in awhile. When this fellow heard the Bren chatter, he came running to my slit trench and said, “There's Germans attacking us and they're all around us, we are surrounded.” I came charging out of my slit trench with my rifle, in the middle of night, I walked right into Lieutenant Walsh’s and Sergeant Burchen’s slit trench. There was probably five gallons of water gathered on top of their cover, and when that came down there was cussing like you couldn't believe. I took off towards where the Germans were supposed to be; I would rather face the enemy than face those two officers. They never found out who gave them the cold shower in the middle of the night. And, as it turned out, there was no Germans around except for the previously mentioned patrol.

Brigadier Jack Sprague was commanding the 7th Brigade, and he had been since before Calais. The commanding officer of the Winnipeg's was Colonel John Meldrum, but sometime during the Leopold Canal operation, he was either wounded or became ill, and was replaced by Locky Fulton, who became Lieutenant Colonel. He commanded the regiment until the end of the war. The Major of “A” Company was John Carvel, and we called him “Suicide Carvel”. He was reckless and daring, and we were expected to be as well.

I had carried the PIAT (Projectile Infantry Anti-Tank) weapon for quite a few weeks now; since I first joined the Rifles, and I was anxious to have someone replace me. Billy Brewster was my number two, and he carried

the PIAT bombs. Frank O'Neill was there Bren gunner in number seven platoon.

We couldn't see some snipers who were shooting at us from about a hundred and twenty-five yards away, but the sergeant discovered where they were holed up, and I quieted them down with a bomb.

Lieutenant Walsh and Sargent Bushen did a lot of prowling around in enemy territory, getting information for us, as to enemy strength and positions. Later on, they were both killed. Paul "Doc" Kohlenberg and Tom Madill were our stretcher-bearers in number seven, and you would never find better or more brave comrades anywhere. Tom was killed later in the war.

After three or four days, we were taken back to Maldegem in small groups, for a bath and shave, and to clean up. Before going back to action, Frank and I knocked on a door and an elderly couple took us in. We made it known we were hungry. The man opened a trapdoor in the floor and went into a cellar. He brought up two herrings for each of us. The lady put them on a plate with a piece of bread, and we ate a pretty good meal. I lost a filling from one of my teeth during that meal and swallowed it.

We went back to our group after dark. In the morning, we attacked the German position and Frank was killed. I found him lying on his face with the Bren gun still in his hands. I turned him over; he had several bullet holes in his chest.

We came under a terrific shelling and when it was over, we cautiously came out from under cover expecting a counterattack, but instead received another heavy shelling. Billy Brewster was taken out in bad shape, and I was left without a number two on the PIAT.

Large areas were flooded, and we had orders to wade through water about two feet deep, to liberate a small village or town. We walked on the cobblestones and kept between the trees at each side of the road. We came on to higher ground as we approach the first buildings. The first people we met were Dutch. They had been taking shelter in a public building basement. They told us the German saw us coming and cleared out. We dug slit trenches and prepared to defend in the event they came back to attack us.

I had a small pack, which I had carried from back in France. It contained two Luger pistols placed inside a dry pair of socks. When I got my boots off, I dried my feet and put on my dry socks. My buddy said, "Well look at that damned Hayward, with the only dry socks in the company."

Some Dutch people came out with frying pans of sausage meat, gave us some and treated us with great joy as their liberators. A few minutes later, we got orders to immediately abandon the place and move back through the flooded highway. The boys laughed and said, "Old Hayward is going to get his dry socks wet."



The people look bewildered and concerned at our leaving and could not understand. We felt somewhat embarrassed to leave them, but you have to follow orders.

When a small group of "A" Company went out at night to get some ammunition and rations, we were given two jugs of rum--army issue rum. The weather was getting colder. When Hank Grant noticed that I didn't line up for the rum ration, he asked me to get in line with my cup and get an extra ration for him. (In 1983, I took a bottle of rum to the reunion in Winnipeg and gave it to Hank. We had a good laugh over that).

We were in some buildings in a small village in came under attack from snipers in a brick building across the street. I stuck my .303 rifle out the window to try for a shot and immediately a sniper shot a bullet through the fore stock of the barrel. The Lieutenant ordered me to get the PIAT ready, and I lay on the floor in a hallway, and a had Hank load the bomb. When they open the door, I aimed in the sniper's area and fired, but the bomb just landed in front of us in the street. Hank had neglected to hook the retaining ring in the clip. The door was slammed shut and the PIAT was reloaded. This time I delivered the bomb into the brick building, and we heard no more from the snipers.

We were running and shooting, and I jumped over a low wall. When I was still in the air, I knew I was going to land on a dead German. In a flash of time, I noticed several things about him. He was lying on his back with his mouth open and I noticed a perfect set of white teeth. Also, he was a fine-

looking fellow with features similar to those of my Uncle Sam Hayward, back in New Brunswick. He had several wounds and his arm was blown off just below the elbow. I managed to scramble off him as soon as I landed. I ran between some buildings and saw a German run into a small building, and I ran behind him with my rifle. He gave me a look as if to impart that he was far superior to me and was not about to surrender. I threatened to lay the bayonet into him, and he changed his mind. He was an SS Lieutenant, not much older than I, and he had a flesh wound on his upper left arm. I took his pistol and waited while he bound his wound up with a black scarf to stop the bleeding. I then marched him out and turned him over to some boys who were guarding a bunch of prisoners. We finally got a few reinforcements, and I finally got rid of that big heavy PIAT. I got a 9 mm Sten gun, and a German magazine holder for my belt. It held four mags, and with one in the Sten, gave lots of firepower. We each carried two number 36 hand grenades with the release handles hooked to our front web straps.

We had a fight with some Germans, and they retreated, and we took over some nice trenches they had dug. We knew Number 8 Platoon was on our right. I looked from this trench and saw about dozen men running at a slow jog from right to left; they were carrying their helmets in one hand and their weapons in the other. I raised my Sten and said do the Lieutenant, "They're Germans." He said, "Hold your fire, that's some of eight Platoon." Then he noticed the grey uniforms and said, "Give it to them, they are

Germans!" I aimed the Sten gun and pulled the trigger. The gun misfired. The Germans trotted on and didn't know we were there.

I got a hold of the German M38 Schmeisser machine gun in 9 mm. It was a beautiful weapon, so I threw the Sten away, and carried the Schmeisser. It's firing rate was 3 times faster than a Sten and, after a few days, Sergeant Richardson suggested I had better get rid of it, or one of our own boys would mistake me for a German in a night battle.

We moved out into some open ground and came under fire by snipers, but we could not tell where they were hiding. We had several casualties and I can still see Tom Madill going with a soldier, much larger than he, draped over his back. This fellow was a new recruit to the regiment and had a bullet wound along the side of his head under the helmet. Sergeant Richardson said to form an extended line and walk out towards the woods, so they couldn't get all of us before we got them.

We hadn't gone far, when to our surprise, two Germans in camouflage suits stood up from behind some turnip rows. The large turnip tops had hidden them. Someone suggested that we shoot them, but we took them prisoner.

We started to move up to a new position in the night, but we were apparently observed, and we came under heavy artillery and mortar fire. We laid down in a small orchard, and I had a small box of compositions and a Sten gun. With shells falling and exploding all around, I went sound to sleep, and I dreamed we were in a battle and we were being shelled.

We were all in need of sleep. When I awoke, I was all alone, as the rest had left after the shelling ceased. I picked up the Sten and the box of rations and move toward some action taking place quite a distance away. The concussion from artillery shells knocks the tile shingles off roofs, and when I was picking my way around the building and walking in the tiles, a sheep jumped up and took off. Scared the half-life out of me!

As I moved ahead another 200 yards and had a bayonet thrust at my middle and a command to halt. It was a relief to hear a Canadian voice, and it was Eight Platoon. When I inquired about Seven Platoon, they told me they had passed through an hour ago.

It was about three hours to daylight, and I decided to stay with Number Eight till then. I went into a small building and lay back on something and went to sleep. I was awakened about 4:30 to take a stand on guard and found I'd been sleeping on a pile of junk iron. At daylight, I found Number Seven Platoon dug-in on another dike. Sergeant Richardson said, "Where the hell have you been Hayward? We already reported you missing in action."

Our final objective in the Scheldt Battle was the town of Breskens on the seacoast, and we were gradually working in that direction. Corporal Moflier was wounded, and we lost some other NCOs and I became Corporal of Number One Section, Seven Platoon. We had to cross the street in a small village and a machine gun was set up at one end, well barricaded by sandbags. We went across in groups of threes and fours, and

the German fired bursts from his M42 at every group, but we all made it safely. This seemed to make him angry and when a large pig came out on the street, he killed it. A large guinea fowl flew up on the ridge of a building and he shot at it, but only knocked out a bunch of feathers. Someone sneaked around and got the German, and we did admire the excellent position he had to cover the main street.

I went back to carrying a .303 rifle, and I shot a German through the right side. While running past him, I noticed a P38 pistol lying beside him, so I stopped and picked it up and put it in my tunic pocket. I then bound up his wound with his shell dressing, after pulling his shirt up. I assured him he would be okay, but I don't think he understood English. I often wonder if he really did survive. I hope so. I still have the P.38 at home.

Around October 22 or 23, we got some reinforcements and a young fellow named Leslie Bull was put into my section. I think he may have been from British Columbia. We prepared to attack the Germans on the afternoon of October 24. Leslie found some eggs in a hen house and he put them in his mess tins, and he said to Bob Chisamore and me, "We'll cook these later on." Bob said, "They'll probably be scrambled after this do." Bob had a can of bully beef and he opened it and shared it with some of us. I promised to open my can later in that day. We carried them in our Bren pouches. We had a chocolate bar which could only be eaten with an officer's permission. It was an emergency ration.

We formed an extended line around noon and advanced on the Germans. They let us come well out in the open and then hit us with everything they had: mortars, 88s and machine guns. We laid down some smoke with the two-inch mortars and tried to dash back to cover.

Leslie Bull said, "I'm not going to make it." I grabbed his Bren gun, along with my own Sten and just as I got to cover, I looked back and an 88-artillery shell exploded and send Leslie 12 to 15 feet into the air. Later Doc Kohlenberg went out to get him but he was dead. He was 19 years old. I'm doubtful if he ever fired a shot. Dismayed, Bob Chisamore and I felt bad, as we had attempted to look after this young fellow.

I believe Leslie Bull was the only casualty we had that day, but I, for one, had a close call; a piece of shrapnel went through the tongue of my boot and lodged in the top of my foot. It's still there and doesn't bother me. Also, a bullet chipped a piece off the heel of my boot.

Chisamore was in my Number One Section and we decided to open my can of bully beef for supper but, to our dismay, it was spoiled. I had carried it quite a while and at some time, a piece of shrapnel had gone into the can and opened it to the air. We hated to throw it away but didn't dare eat it. Bob and I had been close buddies since we landed from an L.C.I. in Normandy. After dark on October 24th, some of the boys went and got us a couple of boxes of compo rations. I can't remember all of that was in the compo box, but I do remember a can of jam, a can of margarine, some cans of M&V (meat and vegetables), a can of rice, and a green round can with

50 cigarettes. A piece of tape held the can's cover in place. I ate a can of cold rice at about 10 P.M. (My last meal in action) and lay down to sleep with a German greatcoat for a cover. I remember the coat had a particular smell, kind of musty.

We awoke at approximately 1 A.M. and made ready to attack the Germans who had beaten us off the previous day. We walked in single file down the road to a smaller road at right angles on our right. Lieutenant McSkimmings told me to take my section right into where I could see the building, and put my men down, and come back and report to him. This I did, and when the buildings began to loom quite clear in the very dark night, I quietly put the boys down and went back for further orders. McSkimmings said, "You're not nearly close enough yet." I told them I could see the buildings quite plainly. Sergeant Richardson said, "Take your section right in close Hayward."

I went back and got the boys up and we extended out our line and moved forward about 50 paces. Suddenly, a German soldier raised right up in front of me, from a slit trench not 20 feet away. He said something that must have been a challenge and I let him have a burst from the Sten gun. Bob Chisamore ran up beside me and we were right in among a bunch of Germans. We threw four hand grenades at them and cut loose with our Sten guns. (Bob had changed to a Sten gun too.). In night attacks, we often yelled like Comanche Indians of the old American West. We were told after the war this had a demoralising effect on the Germans.

Bob only had two mags for his Sten, and he soon ran out of ammo. I had five mags, so I gave him one. I could hear Sergeant Richardson yelling, "Give them Hell, Hayward." A bullet went through my battle dress pants just above my left knee and cut a road through the flesh. I was firing my last Sten mag when something hit me and knocked me down. I don't know whether it was an 88 or a mortar shell. There was an awful flash and a terrific explosion right near me. I said Bob, "I'm hit." That was the last time I saw Bob. He is buried in Holten Cemetery in Holland.

Rifleman Choquette put my field dressing on the worst wound, and he said, "It's alright kid, you're going to be okay." At 27, he was four years older than I, and he had half a dozen iron crosses he had taken off Germans. Three days later he was killed.

Doc Kohlenberg bound my other three wounds and gave me a shot of morphine and, along with one of the other boys, started back with me. It was daylight and I was lying on a stretcher on the floor of a casualty clearing station, and I wasn't feeling too good. I glanced sideways, and there was Lieutenant McSkimmings on another stretcher. I believe he was shot through the stomach.

Later in the day, I was carried on a stretcher into the operating room in the 12th Canadian General Hospital in Bruges, Belgium. Two Belgian girls about my age begin to cut my clothes off with scissors. When I was nearly naked, I felt awfully embarrassed. I think they knew it and got a sheet and covered



me up and smiled at me. The Doc put a pentothal needle in my arm and told me to start counting.

When I awoke, I was in the hospital ward with many Canadian and German soldiers. There was Corporal Moflier and two other R.W.R. Corporals. Two weeks later I was on a hospital ship to the 13th Canadian General Hospital in England.

## **The Leopold Canal Show**

John Paisley

A German sniper got me during the Leopold Canal show. At the time we had taken a small village and we were searching the dugouts for Germans. We had quite a bag of prisoners but there were others still hiding away. One of my boys told me about a Jerry who was in one of the dugouts. I went up and hollered for him to come out. He didn't come. I saw he was badly wounded. He had been left there for three days with one leg badly rotted. I was just lifting him up to take him back for medical aid when "PING" a Jerry sniper got me.

The bullet went through my stomach and just missed by spine. There wasn't much to it. I felt the numbness creeping over my left side. When they carried me back, I begin to think of the night before, when we had to hit the ground every four or five feet to dodge mortars. When I thought of that, I thought it was very funny to finally get it by being hit by a measly sniper. I was carried back by stretcher bearers. They work very, very well. They deserve a lot more credit than they sometimes get. They carried me to a Casualty Clearing Station, and I was operated on within four hours.



Somewhere in Holland, 1945. Left to right: P.H Mead, D. Mason, Harold Prout, Freddie Roy, Brian Smith, Joe Roshick. George Rogan, H. Bolger E.O. Berman Don McDonald Geoff Frank. The dog's name is "Flame" Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives

## **Chaplain/Major Edward Horton**

By Clifford Chadderton

In any infantry combat regiment, there are some who stand out.

No ex-member of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles qualifies on as high a level as Padre Edward Horton.

The leadership at the front is the job of a good commanding officer. There is another kind of leadership, however, which pervades throughout the unit.

This was Padre Edward Horton. Long before we hit Juno beach on D-Day in June of 1944, his influence was felt by the officers and men of the unit. In England, He was always available for counselling. When we went on the tough schemes, I can still see his army boots slogging around muddy fields and the Cliffs of Dover.

Where the troops went, he went--both spiritually and physically.

When I said earlier that the job of leading the troops at the front was that of the commanding officer, I am very proud to say that Ed Horton would, on any given day during the battles of Normandy, officiate in the burial of some of the regiment which he held so dearly to his heart. He would write the relatives at home, and he would comfort those of us who had survived the battle.

Probably the most significant scenario, though, is that he was not going to confine his activities to the rear echelons.

Thus, on October 10 of 1944, when I was commanding Charlie Company and preparing for a raid on the Germans, who occupied a village about 300 yards away, I looked up and saw the smiling face of Ed Horton. I may well have asked him what he was doing so close to the front-- but I probably did not! You see, we were very accustomed to seeing our Padre giving reassurance when we were in the heat of battle.

The German shell and, later, grenade which did me in (loss of leg) came right into the opening of a fortification built by the Germans themselves. When I came too and our brave lads were digging me out, I glanced over-- and there was Ed Horton. He had been in the same slit trench and, thank the good Lord, he was spared.

But thanks extends to the wisdom which led him to the Royal Winnipeg Rifles and to a place where he was not only our spiritual "rock of ages" as we prepared for war-- and as we fought fierce Battles of Normandy, but also a man who stood right with us in the thick of it all.



Padre Horton, service aboard D-Day transport ship, June 5, 1944



Padre Horton, funeral service, somewhere in Europe

## **Fighting With the French Resistance-Tony Hubert (H- 64804)**

Tony Hubert (H 64804)



I was captured on the 8th of June 1944 in the orchard. We were captured by Kurt Myers' SS troops. We did not know what the time that 22 of our men were shot. We were taken to Stalag #3, spent a few days there, then loaded in a boxcar to be sent to Germany. As the train was travelling, the three of us broke out of the box car: Joe Lagimodiere, Alfred Steele and myself. I found Alfred Steele but could not find Joe. We hid in the wheat fields until daylight. There was a bridge over the river with one Gestapo at each end.

A French lady and the two of her sons were working in the garden, I drew their attention, they came to us. We talked, they were people that worked for the underground and they gave us civilian clothes. The next night we

were taken by an officer of the underground to the camp of Captain Le Coz, who was their commanding officer.

We joined the forces of Captain Le Coz, a group of five hundred fighters. To them the only good Boche was a dead one. We became the group's firearms experts, cleaning and testing weapons captured from the Germans or delivered by parachute. We went on raids with the underground. The way they did it really made a guy feel good. Girls on bicycles often surveyed occupied towns before an attack. When we hit them, nothing was left? The group sought Germans and collaborators. We didn't take too many prisoners. I remained with the resistance group for several months then joined with General de Gaulle's Free French Army. In March 1945, I flipped my Jeep to avoid hitting an old man and ended up in the hospital with a broken wrist. An RCAF officer in the area heard my story, reviewed my papers and arranged for my trip home the next day. The war ended before I could rejoin my regiment.



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Night Message	N M
Night Letter	N L

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Notification of capture, Tony Hubert, The Memory Project

## **Escape From the Prison Train**

Wes Lebarr (H-62661)

After being loaded on the train, we had to travel at night and in an indirect route. We were all jammed like cattle into those horse cars. What little food we did have, was not fit for pigs.

In the boxcar, the Germans had cut 45-gallon drums in half and use them for our latrines. Every day the drums had to be carried out and emptied in the farmer's fields. An American from the 82nd Airborne and I decided we would volunteer to empty those. So, after several times, we obtained a short iron bar from one of the farmers and hid it in the bottom of one of the drums. Of course, the Germans wouldn't come within a hundred feet of those drums, due to the horrible stench. At night, while the train was moving, we pried some of the boards off the sides of the car with the bar and I, along with two Americans, managed to escape.

After a short time, a connection was made with a group of Free French freedom fighters who were commanded by a captain Legros of the French Foreign Legion. He warned us that the Germans no longer considered us prisoners of war, but we were classed as evaders. I spent four months with the underground until liberated by an American reconnaissance unit near the French city of Tours. My time with the French underground was a real experience which I will never forget. I arrived back in Canada in the fall of 1946.

**Murdered at Putot, June 8, 1944: Rifleman David Gold of Pine Falls  
Manitoba (H-16928)**



Canadian Virtual War Museum

Nov. 1944  
To: Cpl. Bennett H 42115  
R.W.R. France

Pine Falls  
Man. Canada

Dear Friend, thank you for your kind sympathetic letter and sending us our son's photos. It was very hard to know he is not coming back when his brothers return but I know there are many having greater losses to bear. I hope you will have a safe return to your family if you have one thank you again.

Yours sincerely

Beatrice Gold

(Mrs. E.S. Gold)

Mother of H16928 Rfn. D.S. Gold

Nov. 1944 Pine Falls  
Man. Canada  
To Cpl. W. Bennett. H 412 #5  
R. M. R. France.

Dear Friend, thank you for  
your kind sympathetic letter  
and sending us our Son's  
photo's, it was very hard to  
know he is not coming back  
when his brothers return, but  
I know there are many have  
greater losses to bear, I hope  
you will have a safe return  
to your family. if you have one  
thank you again

Yours sincerely  
Beatrice Gold

Mother of (Mrs E. S. Gold)  
H. 16928 Pfn. D. S. Gold

### **Captured June 8, 1944**

Peter Hladysh (H-77095)

I was at Caen, where every night we took the airport and every morning the Germans took it back.

Finally, I was hit by shrapnel and taken prisoner. A medic removed the metal from my hip.

Many of us were force marched across France (after they took our boots) and into Germany. We also were transported by cattle cars and lived on a bowl of pumpkin soup and a slice of bread a day. I was beaten when I was too ill to fill bomb craters with the rest of the prisoners.

I'm alive today because a Red Cross Observer found me dying with diphtheria and ordered the Germans to treat me. I was transferred from one Stalag to another until my release by the Americans at Buchenwald where we were being held for further transfer.

How many other veterans have stories like mine, or worse? These stories need to be part of our history and never forgotten.

## **Captured June 8, 1944**

Jim Bage

The Germans had our camp lit up like a Christmas tree with so many flares. Some heavy mortar fire was used. We eventually heard that some of our outfit turned back toward the beach, but we stayed because we had not received any orders to do likewise. Near the railway, a German tank was blown up on the tracks.

Even so, the next day around noon, June 8<sup>th</sup>, we were taken prisoner. All morning we had been firing at the Germans. In fact, I had just taken the pin from a grenade ready to throw when we were surrounded, so I had to scramble down, find the pin, jamb it back into the grenade and bury it in the corner before leaving the foxhole for capture.

We formed a group of 200 prisoners. We were force marched through France. Sebastian was strafed by Allied planes and was wounded. A plane was shot down, and the German crew, forced to march with us, thought we'd kill them for firing at us. Our group was separated then put into boxcars where we stayed almost 23 days. We had no food since our capture, so we were very hungry indeed. The Germans ate in front of us hoping we would fight for food. We eventually arrived at Stalag 4B. We were given two Red Cross Parcels to share amongst all of us. It was too good to last. After about three weeks we were shipped to Czechoslovakia. Sebastian had to work in the coal mines, and I was surface mining.

Conditions in Camp were bad:

12 hour working day

Rations were:

Breakfast 5 a.m.- one cup of coffee

Lunch: 12:00 p.m.- 1 bowl of soup (potato peelings and water)

Dinner 6:00 p.m.- 1 bowl of soup (not too bad), and 1 kilo loaf of black bread for five men

Sunday: one bottle of beer for a treat.

Rations were meager.

I never heard what happened to Sebastian or to Robert McKinnon. Another friend, Corporal Rutledge, I heard drowned in Holland. Anyhow, we remained in this German camp to nearly the end of the war. One British guy escaped to be brought back to camp by the Hitler Youth, schoolboys. They had cut him up so badly he did not survive. We were paraded around to view the body because the Hitler Youth were so proud of this murder.

We had no shoes in prison camp. They were taken away by the Germans. We were given wooden clogs. One day I was so cold, I held my feet towards the fire outside, but when I stood up in the snow, I burned my feet. My shoes were so hot, luckily the snow cooled them fast. Most of the guards in the camp tried to be okay, but one I swore, once I left camp, that I would kill him with my bare hands. He was always laying his pistol on my nose, with the gun cocked, ready to shoot.

The Russian prisoners were treated even worse than we were. The Germans would throw scraps of food into the garbage can and the Russian

men would scramble for it, fighting over it like wild animals. It was awful. I figured I would sooner die than fight for scraps of food. When we heard the Americans were nearby, our camp was forced marched away, but an Australian and me stayed out of the way and we hid in a barn nearby. The farmer and his wife who fed us would have been killed if they had been caught.

Anyhow, we really looked like a pitiful sight the day the American troops came on May 1945. We were deloused and given a new uniform. I could have been sent to Canada from France, but I said I wanted to go to Newcastle, England, to be married. They told me that would be a mistake because she probably would have married someone else by now. But I was going.

I was in hospital in England for a couple of months to try and regain my health. I had lost a lot of weight. I was around 160 lbs. when taken prisoner, and less than 90 lbs. on my release. Anyhow, I did end up going to Newcastle and was married July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

For the longest time I could not shake the feeling that I was a coward for having been taken prisoner of war. I cannot begin to describe the feelings I had on my return to England. I left for Canada in August of 1945 and was discharged in December of 1945. I eventually returned to farming, which turned out to be a mistake.



## John Wolpe: The Royal Winnipeg Rifles Unofficial Soldier



On the morning of 30 September 1944, a lone man waving a white flag skirted his way across an enemy minefield towards soldiers of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. The Rifles had just captured Fort Nieulay in Normandy, on the Allies drive across Europe towards Germany.

The man was Hans Wolpe, a German Jew made stateless under the Nazis. Wolpe wanted to help the Rifles kill German soldiers in order to avenge his family, who were murdered at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Given the unusual circumstances, the Rifles were suspicious that Wolpe was a spy. To dispel doubts regarding his intentions, he guided the Rifles into Calais to the German defenses. Wolpe led them to pill boxes and was responsible for the surrender of 40 German soldiers.

The Rifles invited Wolpe to fight with them. As a civilian wearing a uniform, however, he was afforded no protect under International laws. If captured by the Germans, he would be executed.

On 17 April 1945, as the Rifles were fighting towards Deventer in the Netherlands, Volpe was seriously wounded by a German machine-gun. He was rushed to a Canadian hospital in England and needed several surgeries to save his leg. The problem was that our unofficial soldier was not enlisted in the Canadian Army--he was not even a Canadian citizen! Reporters wrote about Volpe's situation in newspapers across Canada and the world. Behind the scenes, officers in the Royal Winnipeg Rifles urged Canadian authorities to permit Volpe to immigrate to Canada. In Winnipeg, the Jewish General Monash branch of the Canadian Legion offered to sponsor will be in Canada.

Efforts paid off and Volpe was eventually notified that he had become a naturalized Canadian citizen. On 31st October 1945, the unofficial soldier became an official member of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. By the end of the war Wolpe was responsible for killing 28 German soldiers and capturing hundreds of prisoners.

The 1946 he moved to Winnipeg and attended the University of Manitoba where he received his bachelor's degree. He continued his education at Harvard University where he received a Masters and a PhD degree. Wolpe became a professor at Stanford University and eventually had a family. His remarkable life came to a tragic end when he committed suicide in 1963.



#7 Platoon, A Company Reichwald Forest, 1945

Top Row: A. Richardson, J. Webb, W. Hopcraft, W. Kalcsits, D. Rahilly, J. Cowan

Middle Row: B. Gilchrist, A Finnimore, J. Bird, E. Baskerville

Bottom Row: G. Cowling, \_\_\_ Durvisset, J. Wolpe (with German M43 machine gun), H. Morton, T. Johnston (with PIAT), P. Callen

## A Story About John Wolpe

George Cowling M-8884



Rifleman George Cowling

John talked of having been born in Poland. He had one brother and one sister. John acquired a Bachelor of Arts degree in Belgium. He told me that he was the light heavyweight boxing champion of Belgium and that his brother was a champion wrestler. After the Germans occupied Belgium, upon his way home one night, he was told by some friends, or neighbours, that all his family had been taken away and was warned by them not to return to his home.

He moved on into France where he laboured as a Frenchman and helped install some of the fortifications around Calais. It was here, after the invasion, that he talked with the Canadian Army and after some discussions was accepted into the R.W.R.s. Due to his knowledge of the

area, he was instrumental in the surrendering of many Germans and no doubt saved many lives on both sides.

I joined the R.W.R. in Leopold Barracks in Ghent and was posted to 9 Platoon A Company in the Groesbeck area, where the gliders and airborne units landed in the hopes of taking the bridge at Nijmegen. This is where I first met John and I was paired with him for guard duty in the holding positions, in and around Nijmegen.... We became quite friendly and had many talks together. I was taught Paris French in school and I would have little talks with him. He couldn't understand how I was able to relate to him in French and yet he couldn't understand the French Canadians...

We used to get an issue of the *Maple Leaf* quite regularly and of course we always looked forward to reading "Little Abner" and getting a good laugh. John couldn't understand why we always looked at the comic part first and after explaining to him that it was a serial type thing, he wasn't long and catching on to the gist of it and was always one of the first to ask for a copy. He would be quite disappointed when the *Maple Leaf* didn't show up.

Corporal Barry was always telling him that his equipment was not worn the right way. His tin mug and his mess tins always seem to be clanging and he often reminded us of a bell cow going out to pasture. Try as he might he still somehow couldn't keep from being a bit noisy when we are on the go. It didn't seem to bother him in the least.

When the push to the Rhine began, he thought it was his right to be up near the head of the section. He wore his Jewish star quite prominently on

the outside of his leather jerkin. After in rest in the Reichwald forest and into Cleve, he interrogated a prisoner with Major Robertson. The result was that the prisoner only wanted to see our automatic artillery and then wanted to be let go back to his own lines.... John was responsible for capturing quite a few Germans....

After crossing the Rhine and in the Emmerich area we ran into quite a minefield. One of our boys stepped on a schu-mine, resulting in the loss of his lower leg. A prisoner was taken, and Major Robertson wanted to question him as to the extent of the minefield. John stepped forward and said he would help and proceeded to question the prisoner.

There was no cooperation from the prisoner, so with the Major's permission, John got serious. He informed the prisoner what had happened to his family and told the prisoner to talk or else. The prisoner still refused. John, speaking German, told him he would count to three and no more. If no information was given John would shoot him. John counted 1,2,3, BOOM, game over for the prisoner. The Major was quite upset at what happened, but John just said that a German life meant nothing to him after what they had done to his family....

I went to visit him in 1951 and asked him what he intended to do. He said he was going to further his education and then return to Germany and teach them a much better way than what they had been used to.

## War Wounds: Cliff Baxter

Mary Anne McLean



Killed: Clifford Baxter, *Winnipeg Tribune* November 2, 1944

When my father transferred to the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, one of the men who became his friend was Cliff Baxter. Cliff was older than the others, at least 28. In the minds of the other men in the company, Cliff was an “old guy”.

Cliff had lived in Sifton and Brandon. When he was in Sifton, my grandmother had been his elementary school teacher. My father had grown up on a farm near the tiny hamlet of Birch River. He thought that Cliff was very cosmopolitan, having come from a real town, almost a city. The Rifles were stationed in England and Cliff was more capable of finding

his way around in the English towns, so my father was glad to have him as a guide when they had leave.

After my father met and married my mother, Cliff treated the two of them like a younger brother and sister. If they had the opportunity to spend time together Cliff would check to see if they needed a loan to go out, or sometimes the three of them would explore London together.

Cliff was a quiet, private man, gentle in his manner. When all the other young soldiers would talk about their plans after the war, he would say little. If they asked him about his plans, he would say, "I haven't thought about it much." The others would look at each other and look away.

When the D-Day Landing came, both Cliff and my father landed on Juno Beach and both were seriously wounded but not disabled. After they were evacuated, they were in the same hospital in England and my mother could visit the two of them. As the two men healed, they were hurried to return to active duty, "the action". My father valued Cliff's friendship even more, for he had, by then, heard the news that none of the boys in his platoon, his pals and workmates, had survived the two days following the Normandy landing. Most of them had been captured and murdered by the 12th SS division.

By this time the Canadian casualties were very heavy and experienced replacements or at a premium. Cliff and my father were sent back over to fight in the drive north through Belgium and Holland. As the weather cooled in the autumn, they moved into the heavy fighting in the Leopold



Canal area of Belgium and the Scheldt of Holland. The battles had turned the land into a waste of salt mud. The houses, trees and farms were bomb blasted shells.

My father said that since then he has believed that Hell is not hot. It is cold and wet, stinking of the dead immersed in the oozing mud of a sea-soaked land. Each day was a long and terrifying prelude to a longer and more horrifying night.

The life expectancy of an infantryman in combat was relatively short. My father and Cliff had survived the D-Day landing and gone into heavy fighting in Belgium. That made them combat veterans. They could go on patrol with the terribly inexperienced replacements and keep at least some of them alive as they carried out the terrible task of liberating Belgium.

Late one afternoon the patrol approached a small town. The road was high with flooded polder land around it. In the flooded land, the mud and the brackish water partially concealed the bodies of the farm animals and German soldiers, all of them victims of the previous weeks.

The town had been cleared the day before and the patrol was cleaning up what should have been the last holdouts of the enemy. As the patrol came to the edge of the village, a sniper opened fire and began killing them. Everyone dived into the mud and they held a hurried discussion. The Bren gun my father carried was jammed and the approach to the town was

open, with no cover of any significance. It was obvious that the wise course would be to go for reinforcements and more fire power.

But Cliff disagreed with the others. "I saw the flashes I know where he is. I can get him, Jack."

They argued but Cliff was like an older brother. My father was used to looking up to him and listening to his opinions. Against his own gut feeling, he reluctantly agreed to take the rest of the patrol back to get the reinforcements. Cliff said he would get the sniper and join them as soon as he could.

My father never saw him again.

In a desperate surge, the enemy fought back into the town and more reinforcements and fire power were called in. When my father at last worked his way forward, he asked each of the rifleman if they had seen Baxter. With each denial his fear grew. Then someone said that Cliff had "got it". They had seen his body in the town square. It was not a surprise. He was not the first friend my father lost in the war, nor was he the last, but the pain of that loss did not heal well.

All through my childhood, I heard my parents talk about Cliff. They both spoke as though he were family. But they never spoke of how he died. When I asked my mother, she did not know for sure.

Forty years later, on a cold Remembrance Day afternoon, my father told me this story. As he spoke, he leaned forward, his elbows on his knees and

his hands dangling loosely, occasionally clasping together. He looked away studying the snow and the wild birds feeding in the farmyard.

At the end he turned and looked at my mother in me. His hands clenched together, and he said very gently, "I keep thinking that if I had stayed, he might have made it."



Young girl placing flowers on Cliff Baxter's grave, Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Belgium, 1946. Library & Archives Canada

## **A Bridge to Normandy**

Major Rupert Fultz

In Town there were two roads, one North to Winnipeg and one to the West. Where the roads met, that's Town. Then there was a river like a creek that ran through Town. Sometimes it was a river and sometimes it was a creek, depending on the rainfall. If you had good eyes for distance, you could see a grain elevator in the next town, on a clear day.

These were the landmarks, the things we were sure of; and when two or three of us overstayed our weekend leave from Camp Shilo the summer of 1940, we felt like walking up the road and looking out over the fields and saying to ourselves, "Nothing has happened. Everything's the same." But it wasn't the same, for there was a war on.

Or we would take off our heavy army boots to wade in the creek, as though we were ten years instead of eighteen or nineteen. (The creek had been there all my life and now I wanted to walk in it for the first time.)

I used to want to leave Town to see the world, but now I'd like to go around and kiss every building in it and all the people too.

Couldn't we pretend that what had happened hadn't happened, that we were all going to school again or doing chores or going to dances?

I guess we were all thinking of dying and it wouldn't be the same as dying at home. People have died in town, plenty of them. But to face death

without relatives or friends----maybe with lots of people but all of them strangers----that is what we feared.

But by the time there was any danger of us dying we had made lots of friends. And it was pretty well friendships where you would think of the other fellow as much as you would think of yourself. Sometimes you would think for him and you would know what he was going to do before he did it himself.

When it did come time to die, and some fellows died in Normandy and some in Belgium and some in Holland and some even got to Germany before it was their turn to die. But it wasn't like dying amongst strangers, because we had friends by that time---- friends from all over Canada whom we knew as well as we knew our own Mothers and Fathers.

And we used to think of town quite a bit, and we would pray a lot and we would feel terribly close to God and we wouldn't double-cross Him in any way.

When the war was over and the time for death ended, we left our dead comrades there in a foreign country.

If the people in town could see one of their boys, frightened and tired, walking into danger and feelings that he was doing it for them, they would make a bridge of love that would reach right over to Normandy and it would be a landmark like the road to Winnipeg and the road West. And when we stood at the crossroads in Town today, we would have a better idea of what direction to take, if that bridge was standing plainly

there. We would know too that we had lots of friends who took the difficult course when it was necessary and, once they made up their mind to take it, they were never really alone.

## Rifles' Elogy



D-Day men at Canadian Vimy Ridge National Memorial, 1945. S.B.H. Ketchen Collection, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum & Archives.

While in Utrecht, Holland, after the war the 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade arranged to have tours for the D-Day men to return to the battlefields they had fought in. There were about 30 and it was quickly arranged...

One night, we stayed in a P.O.W. camp near Bayeux. The HUN thought the Rifles were a 1st class unit. Also, in Paris we stayed the night at a large P.O.W camp and they thought the Rifles were a good outfit, as most of the Canadians are.

**LONG COCK, NO MONEY and DIRTY UNDERWEAR**

Captain S.B.H. Ketchen - D-Day Veteran



## **Appendix:**

### **General Information**

#### **Organization (1939):**

The Regiment--approx. 36 officers and 820+ other ranks.

Lieutenant-Colonel--Commanding Officer of the Regiment.

Major—Company Commander (125 soldiers).

Captain—assists Major and may have command of a Company.

Lieutenant—typically would command a Platoon (36 soldiers).

Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM)--the senior non-commissioned soldier in the Regiment and adviser to the unit's commanding officer.

Company Sergeant Major (CSM)-- is the senior non-commissioned soldier of a company.

Sargent- senior non-commissioned soldier in a Platoon.

Corporal-- leader of a Section (approx. 8 soldiers).

Lance Corporal-- lowest rank of Non-Commissioned Officers.

Rifleman-- equivalent to a Private.

Battalion Headquarters: Orderly Room, Intelligence, Provost and Medical Sections

Support Company: 1(Signals), 2(Anti-aircraft), 3(Mortar), 4(Carrier), 5 (Pioneer),

6 (Administrative) Platoon.

Rifle Companies:

“A” Company: 7, 8 and 9 Platoon.

“B” Company 10, 11 and 12 Platoon.

“C” Company: 13, 14 and 15 Platoon.

“D” Company: 16, 17 and 18 Platoon.

Equipment mentioned in the narratives:

**Canadian:**

Bangalore Torpedo--a long plastic hose filled with explosive, which was to be thrown over or shoved through the wire and then blown up.

Bren gun-- a light machine gun (30 round mag.) issued to each platoon section.

Buffalo- amphibious tracked carrier used during Battle of the Scheldt.

Hand Grenade – the 36M hand grenade used in all theatres of war by Canadian soldiers.

Kangaroo- a modified Churchill tank used as a troop carrier.

Lee-Enfield Rifle—the 10 round .303 bolt action rifle was the standard shoulder arm of Canadian infantrymen.

PIAT (Projector Infantry Anti-Tank) -- a hand-held anti-tank weapon that filled the same function as the United States' bazooka.

Six-pound anti-tank gun-- a relatively small gun towed by a Universal Carrier and could be brought into action quickly.

Sten gun— a built in Canada inexpensive submachine gun.

Universal Carrier—the common name of a family of light armoured tracked vehicles. Also known as a Bren Gun Carrier or a Wasp, if fitted with a flame thrower.

**German:**

88mm— German 88 mm anti-aircraft and anti-tank artillery gun.

Luger—semi-automatic pistol much prized as a souvenir by Allied troops.

Potato masher- distinctly shaped German hand grenade.

75mm--anti-tank gun.

Schmeisser --MP 40 machine pistol.

Schu- anti-personnel mine.

Nebelwerfer-- multi-barreled rocket launcher known as a “Moaning Minnie”.

**Suggested Readings:**

Boileau John, *Too Young to Die*, Lorimer & Co, 2016

Cook Tim, *The Necessary War*, Penguin, 2014

*Fight to the Finish*, Penguin, 2015

Goddard, Lance, *Canada and the Liberation of the Netherlands*, Dundurn Pr., 2005

Granatstein Jack, *The Best Little Army in the World*, Harper Collins, 2015

Reid, Brian, *Named By the Enemy*, Royal Winnipeg Rifles, 2010



