

**Beers, John Alexander**

**Private**

**Algonquin Regiment**

**Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**

**B55680**



John "Johnnie" Alexander Beers was born in Orillia in Central Ontario on July 11, 1921. His parents were Isabella Sheppard and John Beers Senior. Isabella was born in Birkenhead, Cheshire, England, and came to Canada in 1914. John Beers Senior was born in New Lowell, Ottawa, Ontario. They were married on June 1, 1917, in Orillia, Ontario.

The Beers family consisted of John and his three brothers and one sister: Joseph Elgin, Wilmot Angus, Garfield Truman, and Kathleen (Boyd). They belonged to the United Church. John Beers grew up in Gravenhurst, Ontario.

According to his military documents, John stopped attending school in Grade 8. John then worked as a taxi driver, truck driver and bartender at the Central Hotel in South Porcupine. The documents also said that he had 2 years of farming experience and had started training as a butcher, but he stated that after the war he hoped to become a mechanic.

John's older brother Joseph Elgin Beers and his younger brother Wilmot Angus Beers also served overseas in the Canadian infantry.

Private Beers enlisted on October 30, 1941, in Timmins in Northern Ontario and was taken on strength with The Algonquin Regiment. He had no military experience before enlisting.

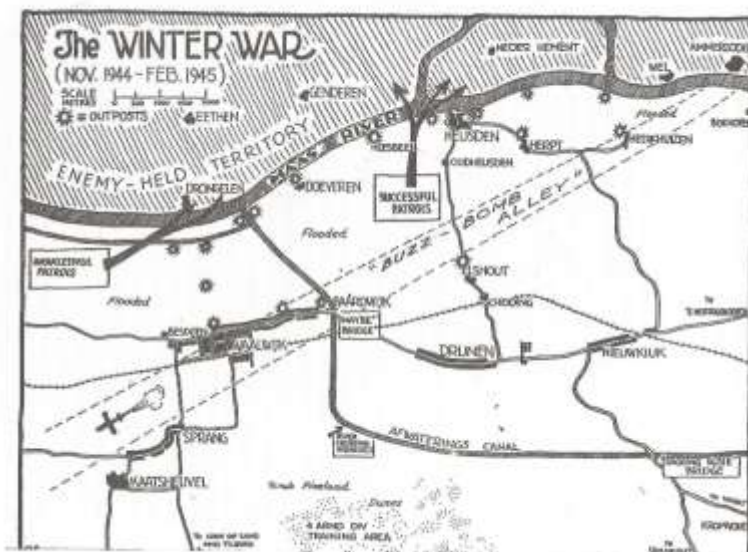
According to his military records, Private Beers stood five foot seven inches tall, and weighed 140 pounds. He had a fair complexion, light brown hair, and blue eyes. He had two ½ inch circular scars on his right hand. According to his family, Private Beers was funny and well-liked.

For one-year, Private Beers served in Newfoundland from February 7, 1942, to February 8, 1943. The Algonquin Regiment was assigned protection duties at the Torbay airport and Cape Spears. He took the regiment's weapons coaching course on March 6, March 26, and April 5 respectively to help train other soldiers to become more proficient on weapons such as rifles, submachine guns, and Bren guns.

Private Beers left for the United Kingdom on June 11, 1943, and arrived on June 19. Private Beers was promoted to Lance Corporal on December 29, 1943 but he requested to revert to Private on October 23, 1944, which was granted on November 22 of that same year. Private Beers was sent into combat arriving with his regiment in France on July 26, 1944.

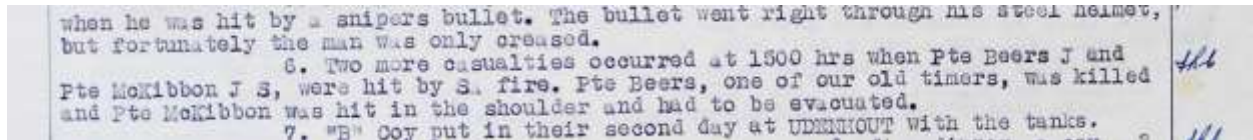
His unit, the Algonquin Regiment, proceeded through France, Belgium and the Netherlands liberating many villages on their advance eastwards towards

Germany. The regiment was stationed in the Netherlands near Waalwijk, starting in November 1944. In January, the regiment was involved in regular patrols along the Maas River as enemy forces were constantly engaging the Allied forces.



*Map above from the book, Warpath: History of the Algonquin Regiment.*

Private Beers was killed in an enemy firefight across the Maas River on January 26, 1945. According to the Algonquin Regimental diary, "Two more casualties occurred at 1500 hrs [hours] when Private Beers J and Private McKibbon J S, were hit by SA [small arms] fire. Privatete Beers, one of our old timers, was killed and Private McKibbon was hit in the shoulder and had to be evacuated."



when he was hit by a snipers bullet. The bullet went right through his steel helmet, but fortunately the man was only creased.  
6. Two more casualties occurred at 1500 hrs when Pte Beers J and Pte McKibbon J S, were hit by S. fire. Pte Beers, one of our old timers, was killed and Pte McKibbon was hit in the shoulder and had to be evacuated.  
7. "B" Coy put in their second day at UDEMIOUT with the tanks.

*Excerpt from February 10, 1945 entry in Algonquin War Diary*

Private John Alexander Beers was 23 years old when he died.

He was temporarily buried at the temporary cemetery, north of the Groenendaal Cemetery at 's-Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands.



*Groenendaal cemetery, now called Orthen Cemetery – photo courtesy Bob van Boekel*

Private John Alexander Beers was moved and reburied in Groesbeek Canadian War cemetery, grave reference **XVI. C. 10.**

The personal inscription on his gravestone reads:

IN LIFE. LOVED AND HONORED;  
IN DEATH. REMEMBERED.  
MOM, DAD AND FAMILY



Private Beers was awarded the:

- 1939-45 Star
- France & Germany Star
- Defence Medal
- War Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp

Private Beers' name was memorialized on The Algonquin Regiment Monument, located on the Rotary Algonquin Regiment Fitness Trail in Parry Sound, Ontario.

Private Beers' name was also memorialized in the Gravenhurst Cenotaph, on 275 Muskoka Road South.



## We remember war dead

*12 hours 11:00 AM 1/13/19*

### A tribute to those who fought to protect us

**By Tom Brooks**

In 1939, for the second time this century, the men of Gravenhurst went to war. No bands played, and no one cheered. It was a solemn, tearful farewell. Of the many who went, 17 never came home again.

Hugh Clemmens died on the bloody beaches of Dieppe. His regiment, The Royal Regiment of Canada, suffered 95 per cent casualties in eight hours on that fateful August 19, 1942.

Edward Myers was killed in the battle for Sicily. Alan McEachern fell in the vicious fighting for Ortona. James Stonehouse perished on the Gothic Line.

In France, Leonard Draper was killed at the Falaise Gap. Private John Beers was killed in the liberation of Holland. Lieutenant John Chambers, of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, perished in the nondescript German village of Steeg. George Jones was killed less than a month before the end of the war in Europe.

The skies over Germany proved to be fatal to six airmen from this town, and a seventh perished in the skies over Burma.

Five-and-a-half years after they marched away, Gravenhurst celebrated the end of the war in Europe. On May 10, 1945, sirens wailed and bells tolled. Bert Duncan and Hugh Clairmont led a monster parade with their trombone and trumpet, the likes of which the town had not seen before.

A Mosquito bomber, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Maurice Briggs,

roared over the celebrants at tree top level. Flags waved, and Adolf Hitler was hung in effigy. All business was suspended. It was, indeed, a time to remember.

Still, there were 17 who would never come home again.

Beers, Private John Alexander, B55680, The Algonquin Regiment, 10th Brigade, 4th Armoured Division. At age 23, he was killed on January 26, 1945. He lies buried in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, in Holland.

Chambers, Lieutenant John James, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, 8th Brigade, 3rd Division. Only 22 years of age, he was killed in action on February 26, 1945. He was interred in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, in Holland.

Clemmens, Private Hugh Reginald, B67542, The Royal Regiment of Canada, 4th Brigade, 2nd Division. Killed in action at Dieppe August 19, 1942, he was only 22. He is buried in the Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery, in France.

Davidson, Trooper Dalton Cyrus, B61742, The Ontario Regiment, 1st Armoured Brigade. He died of disease on September 18, 1941 and was buried in the Port Carlisle Cemetery.

Douglas, Pilot Officer (Air Gunner) William John, J86117, 432 Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Force. At 22 years of age, he was killed over the skies of Germany on January 21, 1944. He is buried in the Hanover War Cemetery, in Germany. It is possible that Doug-

las was an American.

Draper, Private Charles Leonard, B42835, The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, 4th Brigade, 2nd Division. Killed in the fighting for the Falaise Gap, he is buried in the Breneville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery, in France.

Article printed in the local newspaper written by Tom Brooks



## FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian  
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story was written by *A. Correia* and *M. Pegelo*, students from All Saints H.S., Kanata, Canada for Faces to Graves courtesy of Vanessa Kirtz, teacher at All Saints H.S.

Additional research and editing provided by Kurt Johnson

### Sources:

- Canadian Virtual Memorial
- Library and Archives Canada
- Project 44
- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Gravenhurst Archives volunteer Barry Brock provided a photo and information about Private Beers
- Lest We Forget
- Some information regarding Private Beers was provided by his niece, Susie Beers.

\* If you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact [info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl)