

**Bentham, Ronald Albert (Ron)**

**Private**

**Leicestershire Regiment England**

**1<sup>st</sup> Battalion**

**4860566**



Ronald Albert Bentham was born on the 3rd of August 1919 in Aylestone, Leicester, England. His parents were Frank Bentham (1879-1941) and Elizabeth Anne Iliffe (1880-1948). Ron was the youngest of seven children, four boys and three girls (Hilda, Frank, Elsie, George, Leonard who died just before he became two years old, Gladys). Frank and George survived and came home from the War. Frank passes in 1982 and George in 2003.



*Ron with the scouts*

Ron had a love of Scouting and that is how the family thinks he met his to be wife Margaret. He was working as a professional Machine operator at a printing office when he joined the army on December 15, 1939.



Ron married his childhood sweetheart Margaret Cooper on September 27, 1941, it was her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.



Ron was in England for the biggest part of the war, preparing for the WOII battle in North-Western Europe. On September 22, 1944 Ron came ashore in Antwerpen, Belgium to fight as private in the first Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment in order to liberate Belgium and The Netherlands. Through Roosendaal they arrived in Nijmegen to be part of the mopping up operation after operation Market Garden there.



*Ron on the right*

Ron's Regiment was not involved in Operation Veritable which began on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945. They were in Andelst and Zetten to patrol there. The Leicestershire Regiment relieved divers Canadian and British regiments, such as the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, which probably answers the question why Ron is buried at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery. Ron Bentham was killed in action on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, 1945. He was 25 years old.

Sergeant Dean, sergeant of Ron's Regiment, describes how Ron finds his death in his private diary that he wrote just after the War:

" On Saturday 17 March we moved again to Haalderen where we relieved the Duke of Wellington's Regiment. Progress to our positions was made along a rough road off the beaten track as the main road was under observation by the enemy. Here also the water had gone and the place looked more deadly. The enemy was able to bring us under observation and movement by day was cut to the minimum. One bug bear here was the position of a Spandau post on the raised road overlooking our positions. The gunner would occasionally "pop up" and spray our area with Spandau fire. This position was so placed that it could not be reached by infantry attack so it was attempted to displace him by artillery fire. When this failed Typhoons attacked his position but they could not dislodge him. It was obvious that his position was dug so deep that when attacked he went to ground and then popped up again when our attack was over. During one of his early morning "sprayings" Pte. Bentham received a bullet through the head and was killed instantly. This Spandau gunner remained a thorn in our sides until we eventually cleared the Island during the attack on Arnhem."



When Ron died, his father had already passed away. Frank Bentham died of a heartcondition on December 3, 1941. Ron's wife Margaret recieved the message of his passing and first burrial at the war cementary Jonkerbos in Nijmegen. Ron was later reburried at the Canadian War Cemetary in Groesbeek, grave **VI. A. 12.**



Form E.2.

Tel. No. 1 Victoria 2244, Ext. 884.  
Any further correspondence  
on this subject should be  
addressed to—  
The Director,  
Graves Registration and  
Funerary  
as opposite  
and the following number  
quoted—

**THE WAR OFFICE, (A.G.13),**  
32, Grosvenor Gardens,  
London, S.W.1.

HOLLAND 13-58/ 5th December, 1945  
A. G. 13

Dear Madam,

I have to inform you that your husband,  
4860566, Private R. A. Bentham, 1st Bn  
The Leicestershire Regiment,  
is buried in Nijmegen (Jonkers Bosch)  
British Cemetery, HOLLAND. Plot 2,  
Row 2, Grave No. 17.

Yours faithfully,  
*W. J. J.*  
For Director  
GRAVES REGISTRATION AND FUNERARY

Mrs. Bentham.  
W. 2400 1541 10/200. 1743 W. & J. J. Co. 29-30-G.  
W. 2400 1541 10/200. 1743 W. & J. J. Co. 29-30-G.

18  
J.M.E.L.

Margaret remarried in 1947 to Clarence Thomas (Tom) German. They had a son and a daughter together, both of whom felt like their mother never really recovered from Ron Bentham's passing. She did have a good life with her second husband and her children. Sadly, Tom passed away in 1963, making Margaret a widow for the second time.

Margaret first visited Ron's grave in Groesbeek in 1967.





Margaret passed away in Milton Keynes, England on Februari 5, 1999. For her children the grave of Ron has a very special place in their hearts. Quoting her daughter:

*"I feel that Mum is in the right place there with Ron as there always seems to be something going on and she would have appreciated that!"*



Life story by Marian Leusink-Straatman, Research Team Faces to Graves

Sources:

With thanks to Jo Smekens, daughter of Margaret, also for the photographs and the Diary of Sergeant Dean  
Commonwealth War Graves Commission



*Candle Evening December 24th, 2017  
photo taken by Eveline van Elk for the local paper, De Gelderlander*



*Candle Evening December 24th, 2018  
Photo: Diana Venis-Kerkhoven*