

Brydges , Thomas Edwin
Gunner
Royal Canadian Artillery
4th Field Regiment
A/28400



Thomas Edwin Brydges was born on 2 January 1918 in Plympton Township, Lambton County, Ontario, the oldest of twelve children. His father, Thomas Bertie worked at the Mueller factory in Sarnia, his mother was Elizabeth. Thomas had three sisters: Frances Dorothy, born 1919, Kathleen Pearl, 1922 and Blanche Elizabeth, 1931.

He had eight brothers: Alvin Bertie, 1921, Arthur Beebe, 1924, Charles Vincent, 1925, Allen Ross, 1927, James Ralph, 1928, Eldon Wesley, 1933 and John Dalton, 1936, Lorne Elmer, 1939.

Thomas attended school until he was thirteen years old and then went to work on a farm. Later he worked as a driver for an oil supplier in Petrolia, Lambton county where he stayed until he joined the army. He registered for military service on 7 January, 1941 in London, Ontario and his basis training began in Woodstock and lasted until 7 April.

He then sailed from Halifax to England and trained as a gunner with the 4th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery; this continued until 3 July 1944.

During this period, when he was given leave, Thomas travelled to Scotland to visit his brother, Alvin who worked there at a field hospital.

On 7 July 1944, a month after the D-day landing, Thomas Edwin was sent to France with the 4th Field Regiment which then journeyed northwards to Ossendrecht in Belgium and then to the Nijmegen area in the Netherlands. In a relatively quiet winter period, November 1944-February 1945, preparations were made for Operation Veritable, which was launched on 8 February.

In early March, Thomas was able to meet his brother, Arthur, who was also stationed in the Netherlands at that time and was working in a field hospital.

At the age of 27, Thomas Edwin was killed by a land mine on 12 March 1945 in the Reichswald forest in Germany. Three brothers of Thomas were in the Netherlands at the time he was killed.

During his funeral, at the Jonkerbos Military Cemetery, Nijmegen, the chaplain, Captain A. Marshall Laverty praised Thomas as a *'faithful, diligent member of his crew.'* And Captain Marshall's friend Troop Sergeant Major Urie spoke of his great loss. Saying that he knew "Slim" better than anyone in the battery. *"He was on my gun crew for over three years and I can safely say he was the best gunner in our troop."*

The funeral service was attended by the second in command, the acting battery Commander, and a great number of his friends.

On 27 July, Thomas Edwin Brydges was reburied in the Canadian War Cemetery, Groesbeek, grave reference **IV. A. 2.**

Thomas Edwin Brydges awards:

- 1935 -1945 Star
- France -Germany Star
- Defence Medal
- War Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service
- Medal with Clasp

Inscribed on his headstone:

'NOBLY HE FELL WHILE FIGHTING FOR LIBERTY'

About a month after Thomas was killed, Thomas Bertie and Elizabeth heard that their son Charles Vincent was missing. A few weeks later, they heard that Charles was safe. He had become a prisoner of war and was repatriated to England in a prisoner exchange.

Unfortunately, not all sons of Thomas Bertie and Elizabeth returned home to Canada.



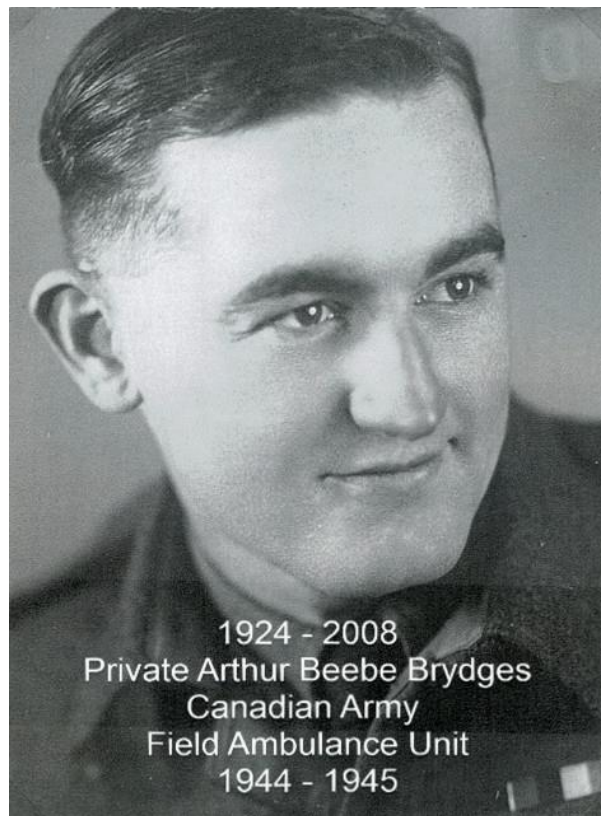
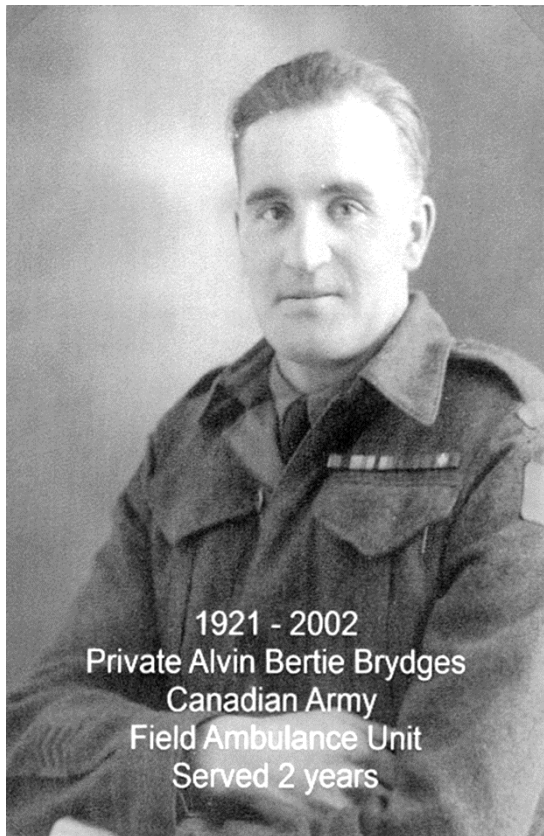
Life story Fred Hulsman, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Library and Archives Canada
- Helen & Michael O`Leary, Sarnia, Ontario
- Turney (Teuntje) Zylstra, Sarnia, Ontario
- City of Sarnia War Remembrance Project



Helen Brydges O'Leary and Mike O'Leary visit the grave of uncle Thomas, July 2019.



The four brothers of Thomas Edwin Brydges who returned safely home to Canada from Europe; Eldon returned from the Korean War.

