

Carruthers, William James
Private
Highland Light Infantry of Canada
Royal Canadian Infantry Corps
B 162525



William was born on 16 June 1919 in Cayuga, Halsiman County, Ontario, Canada; he was one of thirteen children in a Baptist family. Their father, James, was from Scotland and Mildred Leona Laws, their mother, was a Canadian. Three sisters and a brother died before William was born. The family moved to Smithville, where William went to school from the age of seven until he was thirteen. Then he left school in order to help his father on the farm. For the next twelve years, he worked on three different farms and was always on good terms with his boss. In the two years before he joined the army, he worked on the Patterson farm in Smithville; he was still a single man.

In 1940, he completed his thirty days compulsory military service in Brantford, Ontario and two years later, he applied to join the army but was turned down; the vision in his left eye was reduced because of an operation when he was seven years old. On 23 June 1944, he applied again in Hamilton, Ontario and was accepted. He was described as a friendly, well built young man, trustworthy and stable, 5' ft. 10½' in. tall, weighing 163 lbs, with light blue eyes and brown hair. He found learning difficult, but this was compensated by his keen interest in the material before him. Now and then he liked to read a Western or a detective story. He played honkball and ice hockey and sometimes went hunting small game.

After his training in Ipperwash, Ontario, William was transferred to Nova Scotia and placed with the Highland Light Infantry of Canada. On 18 December 1944, he boarded ship and left for England, arriving ten days later. Two months later, he reached the European mainland by boat, on 17 February 1945 with his Regiment, and was transported through Belgium, the Netherlands and finally, Germany.

Operation Plunder, began on 24 March, and a battle took place round the German villages of Speldorp and Bienen, just across the Rhein. Although the attack went well, there was fierce opposition from the enemy, who were defending these villages. Many soldiers died, both German and Canadian. Only after repeated attempts were the Canadians and Scots able to drive the Germans back. On 26 March, the Highlanders were ordered to clear Bienen of enemy soldiers.

They moved from house to house and here William lost his life. As he opened the front door of a house, a booby trap exploded; he was hit by shrapnel and died immediately. He was 25 years old.

William was temporarily buried near Bienen and later reburied in the Netherlands at the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek, grave reference **XIX. A.15**

Inscription on his headstone:

'GOD GIVETH HIS BELOVED REST'

For his services to the Canadian Army, William is awarded the following awards:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France & Germany Star
- War Medal 1939-1945
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp



Life story: Sylvia Thuis, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Consulted sources:

- With thanks to Bev Packham, daughter of Ivan Carruthers
- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Library and Archives Canada
- Valour in the Victory Campaign: The 3rd Canadian Infantry Division Gallantry Decorations 1945. T. Robert Fowler
- Operation Plunder and Varsity: The British and Canadian Rhine Crossing, Tim Saunders



STUDENT FINDS FAMILY GRAVE AT WWII CEMETARY IN HOLLAND

Student finds family grave at WWII cemetery in Holland. Report of the Silent March on 4 May 2010, from the city hall to the Canadian War Cemetery, during the 65th anniversary of the Liberation: <https://youtu.be/mQ-nRvk9mvI>

There is a plaque on the wall near the church in Bienen in memory of those who lost their lives in the heavy fighting here.



Photo Kim Huvenaars.

In the church in Bienen, there is a Roll of Honour containing the names of the fallen in the Bienen battle: British, Canadian and German.

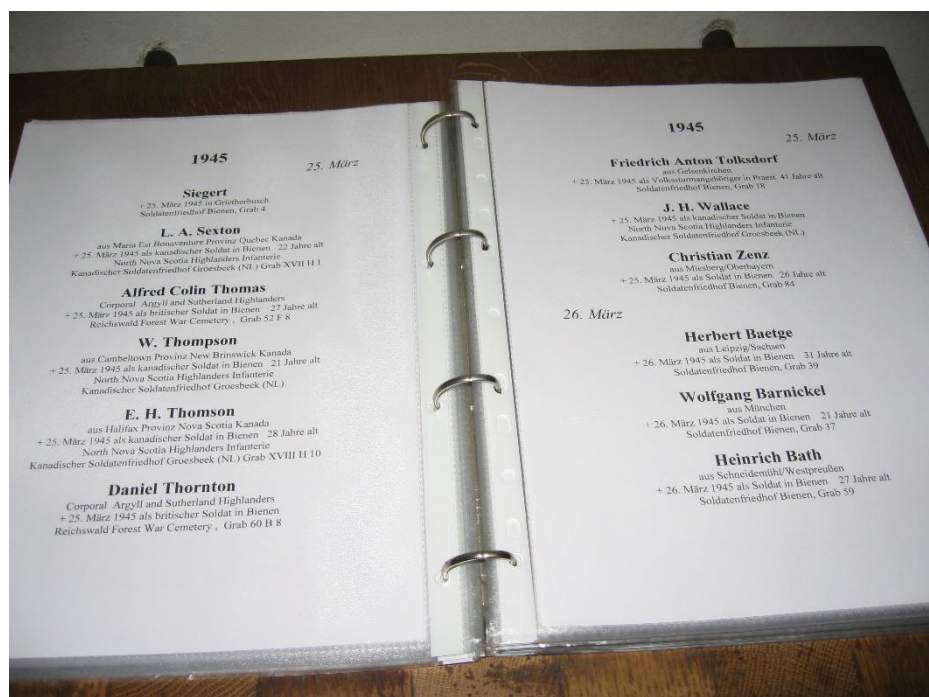


Photo Alice van Bekkum

William's brother, Ivan has a granddaughter, Laura Ecker, who at the age of 12, wrote the following words in memory of William. She read it to her class in school on Remembrance Day.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

He'll never forget the calling he had in his heart to go defend his country.

He'll never forget his 17th birthday.

He'll never forget going to sign up at the local headquarters.

He'll never forget the training where he learned to kill another person.

He'll never forget the train ride with his friends to Halifax.

He'll never forget the long, sea sickening journey across the Atlantic Ocean.

He'll never forget his first view of England.

He'll never forget the excitement of finally getting to go into battle.

He'll never forget the first person he shot.

He'll never forget all the blood, the pain and the suffering that he saw.

He'll never forget how thankful the Dutch people were.

He'll never forget the last front door he ever opened.

He'll never forget the booby-trap bomb on the other side of that door.

We will NEVER forget my Grandpa's brother William.

We will NEVER forget my Dad's Uncle Bill.

WE WILL NEVER FORGET