

Chilton, Alfred Thomas George
Lance Corporal
Royal Canadian Engineers
6th Field Company
K-42319



Alfred Thomas George Chilton was born on 16 November 1916 to Alfred and Flora Chilton in Stone, Staffordshire England. He had three brothers; William, Horace, and John and two sisters; Elizabeth and Edna. The family arrived in Canada in 1924, first settling in Saskatchewan and eventually moving to the Revelstoke area of British Columbia where they established a farm. After leaving school, Alfred worked as a farmhand to save enough to buy a homestead of his own. That he did, just three months before his enlistment.



Alfred enlisted in the Canadian Army in Revelstoke on 22 June 1940 and became a member of the 1st Battalion, Rocky Mountain Rangers. On 21 December 1940 he was married to Adeline Alice Marlow and his son Alfred, was born to them on 30 December 1941.

After receiving his basic infantry training with the Rocky Mountain Rangers, Alfred was transferred to 6th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, on 8 June 1941. After more training in Canada, he proceeded overseas with 6th Field Company when the unit sailed from Halifax on 18 June 1941. His unit disembarked in Gourrock, Scotland and moved to a new Canadian Army camp outside Aldershot, England. While in this location, Alfred's time was spent in training (where he qualified as a Pioneer and a Carpenter) and working on constructing the buildings and facilities for the camp. On 25 May 1943, he was appointed Acting Lance Corporal and was confirmed as a Lance Corporal on 31 August 1943. During this time he received the Good Conduct Badge.



On 6 June 1944, Alfred was part of Operation OVERLORD, the Normandy Invasion. On D-Day, his company was responsible for disarming underwater mines and removing obstacles during the assault. After Normandy, 6th Field Company continued to support the advance of the Allies through France and on to Belgium and Holland. The unit was involved in major engagements in Caen, Bourguebus Ridge, Falais, Boulogne, Calais, Breskens Pocket, Waal Flats, and Moyland Wood.



During early March 1945, 6th Field Company continued with their support taskings of road clearing and maintenance. Bailey bridges were constructed where required. About 11 March, the unit was ordered to the Reichwald Forest area for a much-needed rest. While they were there, they were tasked with improving a

"scrambling course" for training the infantry how to fight through obstacles. In order that the infantry units using it would not be able to easily by-pass the obstacles, the sappers were going to blow additional craters. To expedite the cratering, it was decided to use some German mines that had been unearthed previously.

Unfortunately, on 16 March 1945, while carrying these mines to the site, Lance Corporal Chilton and three others were killed when one of the mines accidentally exploded. No evidence was found to indicate why this happened.

Lance Corporal Alfred Thomas George Chilton was Killed in Action on 16 March 1945 at the age of 28.

The other soldiers that were killed in this accident were:

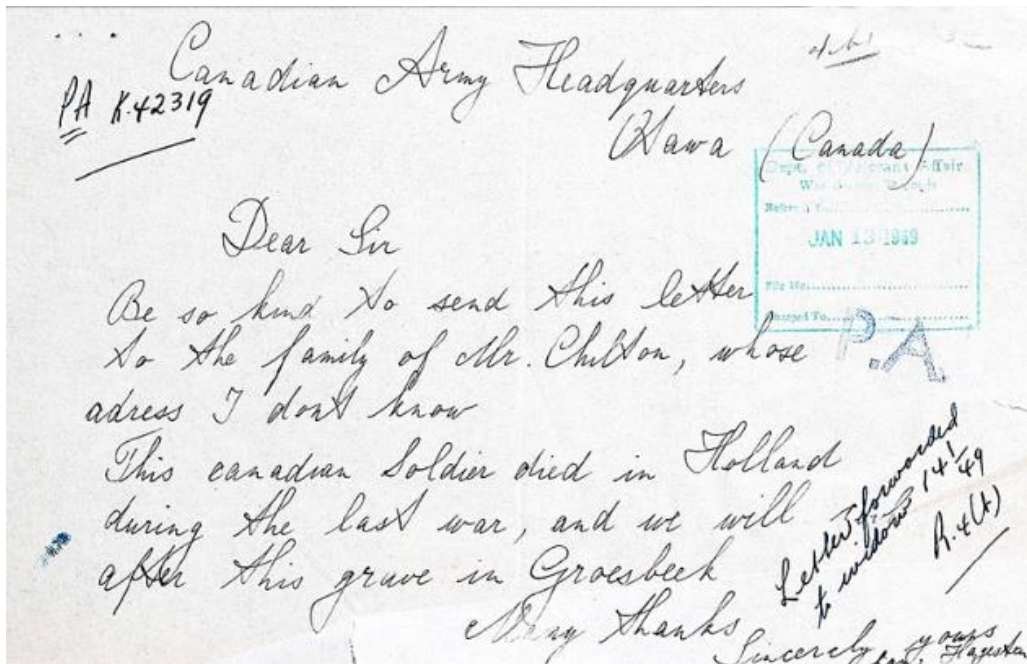
Sapper Leonard Alfred Miller	grave reference V. H. 16.
Corporal William Levi Froats	grave reference V. G. 7.
Lance Sergeant Stuart Alan Spiers	grave reference V. G. 5.

Alfred Chilton was buried in a temporary grave in the Canadian Cemetery in Bedberg, Germany and was finally laid to rest in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **V. G. 6.**

For his service to Canada, Lance Corporal Chilton was awarded the:

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





A Dutch family called Hagestein promised to take care of his grave.



Biography by Robert Swingle for Faces to Graves.

References:

War Service Record. Library and Archives Canada

6th Field Company War Diary

39 Combat Engineer Regiment Museum archives. <http://39cer-museum.net>

The Canadian Virtual War Memorial

The History of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers: Volume II by Kerry and McDill

* Do you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact info@facestograves.nl

Accident on the Scrambling Course – 1615 Hours 16 March 1945

By mid March 1945 the 6th had withdrawn from the front and one job they were given was to prepare a scrambling course for the training of assault pioneers in the Reichwald Forest near the German city of Cleve.

The project went to 3 platoon under the command of Lt William A. Moore. The first part of the 16th proceeded uneventfully, with the platoon blowing either 15 or 19 craters (the witness statements varied). These craters were arranged so as the assault pioneers couldn't bypass a felled tree obstacle. After the last crater it was discovered that they needed to blow 2 or 3 more to complete the obstacle and that they had used up all the explosives in their halftrack. Lt Moore left to pick up more explosives and placed Sgt Stuart Allen Spiers in charge.

On his arrival at the site Sgt Spiers noted that there was a partially built German dugout nearby. He also remembered that there were four unused German tellermines (Anti-tank mines) on the surface near the dugout. After Lt Moore left Sgt Spiers discussed it with Cpl William Levi Froats and they decided to use the German mines. Cpl Froats asked for two volunteers to pick up the mines and L/Cpl Alfred Chilton and Spr Leonard Alfred Miller volunteered. Chilton and Miller went to the German dugout and picked up two mines apiece. Spiers and Froat then walked across the field to meet them. Miller put his two mines on the ground. As Chilton was putting his down the explosion occurred. The rest of the platoon ran to their aid but all four were dead. A few minutes later Lt Moore returned to the site.

The next day Maj J.F. McDougall ordered a Court of Inquiry. It was chaired by Capt John Neil Mustard. Statements were taken from Lt Moore and a number of the Cpls and Sprs who had been on-site. One eyewitness stated that: *"Cpl Froats entered and asked for two men to go to get some tellermines. L/Cpl Chilton and Spr Miller L.A. volunteered and Cpl Froats showed them where they were. The two men returned in about 15 minutes carrying two mines each. As they appeared with the mines L/Sgt Spiers and Cpl Froats left the switch house and walked over to the job. When L/Sgt Spiers and Cpl Froats were about 6 feet from the two men carrying the mines (they were standing on opposite sides of a small crater about 4 feet in diameter) L/Cpl Chilton bent over to put down his two mines and I saw a flash. As soon as I saw the flash I ran out of the door of the switch house and saw the body of L/Sgt Spiers flying towards me. I examined all of the bodies and found them to be dead. There was one unexploded tellermine lying beside Spr Miller L.A."*

Statement by K29003 Cpl Greenwood H.J.

At that time the drill for disposing of an enemy anti-tank mine was to leave the fuse inside the mine, carry it to a safe place and destroy it by using a small explosive charge. This was exactly what they tried to do. What Capt Mustard believed was that either the shear wires for one of the mines had been weakened by the blast effects from localized shelling and/or corrosion. This made one of the mine fuses sensitive and caused a mine to explode.

It was therefore the decision of the court that all of the men were on duty when the accident occurred and that there was no contributing negligence on the part of either Sgt Spiers or any others.