

**Ash, Private William Kenneth**

**Private**

**Essex Scottish Regiment**

**Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**

**A 109161**



William Kenneth Ash was born on 24 July 1917 in Percival, Saskatchewan, Canada, the son of Edward James Ash (born in Edmonton, Canada) and Alice Jane Ash (born in Oklahoma, USA).

William Kenneth (Ken) had four brothers and two sisters. His youngest sister was Ruth and during his enlistment they wrote letters to each other. Two of his brothers served also in the Canadian Army, with the 9<sup>th</sup> Royal Canadian Engineers, Canadian Army. The family attended the Church of England.

William didn't start school until 10 when the family moved off the farm to Winnipeg, 248 Beacon Street. He completed grade 8 in Winnipeg and left school at seventeen to work to help support the family.

He got several jobs, he worked for 2,5 years at a sawmill, cut wood and drove a truck in winter. In summer he was a landscape gardener. Then he worked for seven months at Sudbury mines, worked underground, five months at Midland Lumber as well at Ford's Windsor as truck driver. For 1,5 years he worked as a stock man at Chrysler Corp. of Canada, Ltd, Windsor, Ontario. This company promised to keep a job for him after his service in the army.

In 1939 his mother died of cancer and two years later his father died.

On 10 January 1941 he enlisted according to the National Resources Mobilization Act of 1940 as Private and was posted in London, Ontario. He would like to serve in the Air Force.

On 21 December 1943 he enlisted, in his medical report was written: "blue eyes, blond hair, height 5ft6inch, weight 157 pounds, wears glasses, chronic nasal mucosal inflammation. He is in good health, a moderate smoker and occasional drinker. He likes sports: sandlot baseball and snooker. He collects coins as a hobby, owns a 35 Dodge, knowledge of car machines. He lives in a boarding house. A well-built blonde haired young man with a cheerful outlook on life. Has average learning ability and is quite friendly, easy to make friends with. Has driven tractors, trucks, bulldozer, has a good knowledge of engines and is a good driver. He likes the sound of a good motor, should make a good soldier and as a driver will likely prove worthy of up-grading".

William was posted to the Canadian Infantry Corps, No. 12 Basic Training Centre in Chatham as Private. From 24 to 28 December he was granted Christmas leave.

After six weeks training in his military report was written: "average progress. His attitude is fairly good but he is inclined to be stubborn and argumentative at times. He is in good physical condition and should be suitable for driving duties. Would like automotive training, is above average prospect for driving if quota allows inclusion".

In February 1944 he is posted to the 5<sup>th</sup> Company of the A 29 Canadian Infantry Corps in Ipperwash, Ontario.

His military report after eight weeks: "hospitalized for 1 week due to allergies, he will likely have to be reposted".

After twelve weeks:

"quite good soldier, tries his best, rather voluble. Foot condition not good. Leg muscles tighten up on runs, pain in his groin. Suitable for Overseas in Canadian Infantry Corps".

On 17 April 1944 he left for England and arrived eight days later. He was posted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit. For five months he attended courses and training and on 8 October 1944 he left for France and one week later he was posted to the Essex Scottish Regiment.

In October 1944 the Essex Scottish Regiment was involved in the liberation of Zuid-Beveland.

On 8 November 1944 the regiment set up camp in Groesbeek (near Nijmegen) and stayed here until 8 February 1945 when Operation Veritable started. During this time the regiment went on several patrols to Mook, Boxtel, Vught.

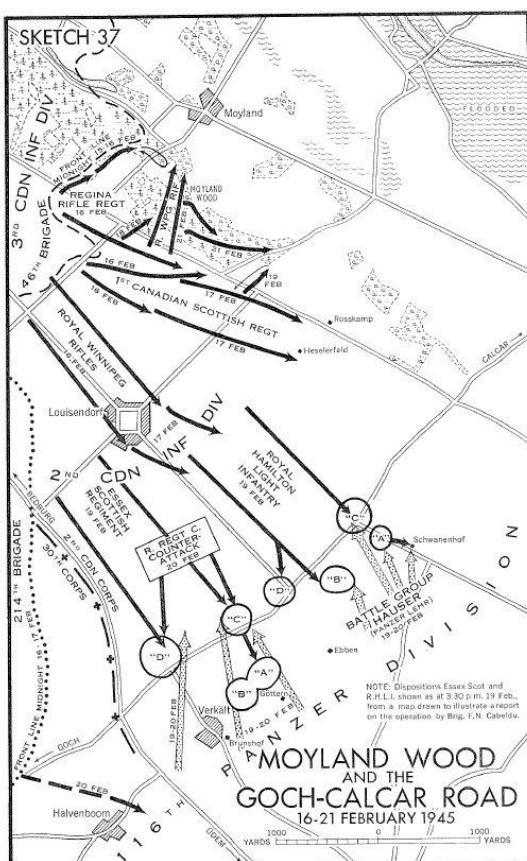
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When Operation Veritable started the Essex Scottish Regiment was stationed around Wyler and awaiting further orders. On 14 February they were called up, they had to advance from Nijmegen via Mook-Gennep-Hekkens through the Reichswald to Cleve and Calcar and with the support of Kangaroos (tanks) they were steadily successful.



*Het onderkomen van de Essex Scottish in het winters landschap rond Groesbeek.*

On 18 February they were around Calcar and were ordered to start the attack on Moyland. During the night of 18 to 19 February heavenly rain started, the Essex Scottish Regiment was ordered to capture buildings in Gottern and Brunshof, the mud played tricks on the tanks and they progressed very slowly during the day.



On 19 February at 2.15 pm, the Germans launched a violent counterattack. The Essex Scottish Regiment were under heavy fire from the "Goch Kalkar" road. A fierce battle ensued, at 4.30 pm they had almost reached their goal (another 200 yards) when just then reinforcement arrived for the Germans. Their Panzer Corps was doubled and at 8 p.m. the Germans launched the attack, just as the Essex Scottish Regiment was out of tanks as they were being withdrawn to be re-manned and refueled.

The Essex Scottish Regiment could not withstand this violent attack and they were overrun by the Germans beyond their Head Quarter. Staff and survivors retreated to the basement of a farm. During the night reinforcements arrived, the counterattack was launched and they succeeded in driving the Germans back. Eventually they got hold of the Calcar Road.

The battle on 19th February was the bloodiest of the entire Operation Veritable, the Essex Scottish Regiment left 51 dead (out of a total of 400 dead on 19th and 20th February), 99 wounded and 54 became prisoners of war.

On 19 February Private William Kenneth was killed in action at the age of 27. He was buried in Bedburg, Germany and later reburied at the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek, the Netherlands, grave reference **IX. E. 3.**

The inscription on his gravestone:

WELL DONE, BROTHER  
REST IN PEACE  
THE FAMILY



Awards:

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

William Kenneth Ash is commemorated in 'A Place of Honour' Manitoba War Dead Commemorated in its Geography. Provided by: Manitoba Geographical Names Program, Provincial. To commemorate the sacrifices of over 4,000 Manitobans in World War II, the province has named

various types of geographic features after those who died William Ash's geographic location is 'Ash Lake', Southwest of Ransom Lake. His sister recalls (7 November 2001):\*

*"In the early years, his parents farmed in Saskatchewan and Alberta. He was born in Percival, Saskatchewan and moved to Winnipeg in 1926 and would have been nine years old. They lived in central Winnipeg and he liked fishing and baseball and was a lot of fun. There were five boys and two girls in the family. He was the youngest boy. He enlisted in Winnipeg and had two older brothers in the Forces, Leo Edmund and Walter Raymond, both Engineers and at one point in the war they were coming from Italy to Holland and just missed their brother Ken by a couple of weeks. Had they met up with him, he may have survived the war".*



In a letter from Holland to his sister he wrote:\*

*"Dear Ruth: I have received two letters from you, but I haven't had [time] to answer them for we have moved to a place and were told that we would be here for some time. No fighting or even looking for a Jerry, so I got to work and made me a home. It took me a week to do the most important part of it, but I have the best place of them all now, and most comfortable too. The first day there was only myself and another fellow in it. Now there is five of us. If I had of made it bigger, there would be more in it, but the more the merrier. At least I can sit down and write a letter in comfort. That's more than a lot of them can do. I'm glad to hear you're feeling good and I hope it is all over by the time you get this letter, that you are back home in the best of health. It better be a girl too, and give her a good name, one like her mother. But you more than likely had it named six months ago, boy or girl. Well I'm not going to say much more tonight for I have a lot of letters to write. This is the first letter that I have wrote in two weeks. Some of the letters that I have to answer are a month old. So I will close for now. Wish the best of luck to you. Yours truly, Ken" (30 January 1945).*

His last letter was written only eight days before his death:\*

*"Dear Ruth: I received the telegram today, but I'm not showing [illegible]. But nevertheless, I'm glad to hear all's well. And I'm hoping that you will be home by the time this letter gets there and feeling fine. I don't mean that you should rush things. Do what is best for you, even if it does take a little longer. We are doing good over here. Sometimes we have a tough break. Other times we get it easy. Not too bad. You will be reading some big news shortly. I hope that it will be better than I think it will. But I give*

*Jerry a short time, then it will be all over. So until later, I will close for now. Yours truly, Ken" (11 February 1945).*

\* From:

'A Place of Honour' Manitoba War Dead Commemorated in its Geography. Provided by: Manitoba Geographical Names Program, Provincial Toponymist – Des Kappel, Manitoba Sustainable Development, Province of Manitoba



## FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian  
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story by Else Schaberg, Research Team Faces To Graves.

### References:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission  
Library and Archives Canada

The Essex Scottish Regiment, C. van Beek, Putte, 2004,  
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'A Place of Honour' Manitoba War Dead Commemorated in its Geography.

Provided by: Manitoba Geographical Names Program, Provincial  
Toponymist – Des Kappel, Manitoba Sustainable  
Development, Province of Manitoba



**PTE. W. K. ASH**

previously reported missing, is now reported killed in action, according to word received by his sister, Mrs. Ruth Rosin, of 857 Alexander avenue. Born in Saskatchewan, he received his education at the Hugh John and Victoria Albert schools in Winnipeg. He enlisted with an Ontario regiment in 1943, went overseas in 1944, and was later transferred to the tank corps. He is survived by four brothers, CQMS, Leo, in Italy; Alfred, of 474 Stella avenue, and George, of Windsor, Ontario; also one sister, Mrs. C. Bridges, of Flin Flou.

### PTE. ASH

Pte Ash was killed in action on the western front on February 19, according to word received by his brother, George Ash, 1141 Chatham street east

A native of Percival Sask. he worked at the Ford and Chrysler plants before enlisting.

Surviving are four brothers, William of Windsor, Alfred of Winnipeg and Leo and Walter serving overseas, and two sisters, Mrs. Herman Rosin of Winnipeg and Mrs. C. Bridges of Le Pas, Manitoba.



**Pte. Ash**