

Ball, John Alfred

Lance Corporal

Royal Hamilton Light Infantry

2nd Canadian Infantry Division

B 38071



John Alfred Ball was born on 4 January 1914, in Paris, Ontario, Canada. He lived with his parents, John William (Jack) Ball and Lillian Maud Hastings, his brother, Clarence, and his two sisters, Lillian and Phyllis. His parents got married in Leicester, England on 18 April 1908. After their marriage they to Canada, where they settled down. They were a Christian family and attended the St. James Anglican Church. John William Ball died at the age of fifty-two and Lillian Maud Hastings at the age of seventy-one. They were buried together at the Paris Cemetery, in Ontario.

In his youth, John attended school for eight years and dropped out at the



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age of fourteen, then he started to work. He worked for twelve years in the textile industry at the Penman Ltd factory where he operated knitting machines. Over the years, he developed numerous hobbies. He enjoyed playing Lacrosse (he played for the Paris, Ontario team), hockey and baseball. Besides all these sports, he also very much enjoyed hunting,

fishing and reading crime and western stories.

John was married to Mabel Ball, they got two children. A daughter, Eileen Jean, born in 1939 and a son, John Francis born on 15 September 1941. They lived with John's mother in 13 Willow Street, Paris, Ontario.

John was a healthy young man, with good vision and hearing. He only spoke English, but he was pretty technical. He was a hardworking, likeable youth who could be trusted to execute his duties. He was also a good soldier and an enthusiastic man. John was a man of average height, about 5 foot and 7 inches tall and he weighed 125 pounds. John had a fair skin, beautiful blue eyes and blond hair.

John Bell enlisted on 8 July 1940 according to the National Resources Mobilization Act in Brantford, Ontario, and was posted to the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry as a Private.

A month later he served with the Dufferin and Haldimand Rifles, with whom he moved to Niagara and Chippawa.

On 9 July 1941 John joined the active forces and stayed with the Dufferin and Haldimand Rifles.

By the end of the year John was serving in Colwood and after following his training he became an Ambulance Assistant, Class C, First Aid.

In April 1942, he was stationed in Nanaimo and promoted to A Corporal, spending the rest of the year in Sussex, New Brunswick.

He was following training and got promoted to Corporal and in April 1943



he became qualified both as Driver M/C Class III and as Q.II Bush Warfare.

A month later he embarked and left for England where he arrived on 22 May 1943 and was posted to the 4th Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit.

At the end of August he was transferred back to the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry and at his own request reverted to Private.

At the start of 1944 he followed a course to become a Sniper and again promoted to A Corporal. On 5 July he left for France and a month after arrival he was posted to the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit.

In August 1944, John got wounded and admitted to the 24 Canadian General Hospital in England with injuries to his right leg, left foot, face and left hand and arm from shell injuries. He stayed in hospital for a month and on 29 December 1944 he left again for France with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. In January 1945, he promoted again to Lance Corporal.



From November 1944 on, the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (RHLI) stayed in an area around the Dutch-German border, on a ridge between Nijmegen and Arnhem. They took up positions on the cold, wet earth. Shelters were built in the ground, as if they were badgers or moles, and torn pieces of nylon fabric (from the abandoned gliders of the US airborne landing) served as a roof for their shelters.

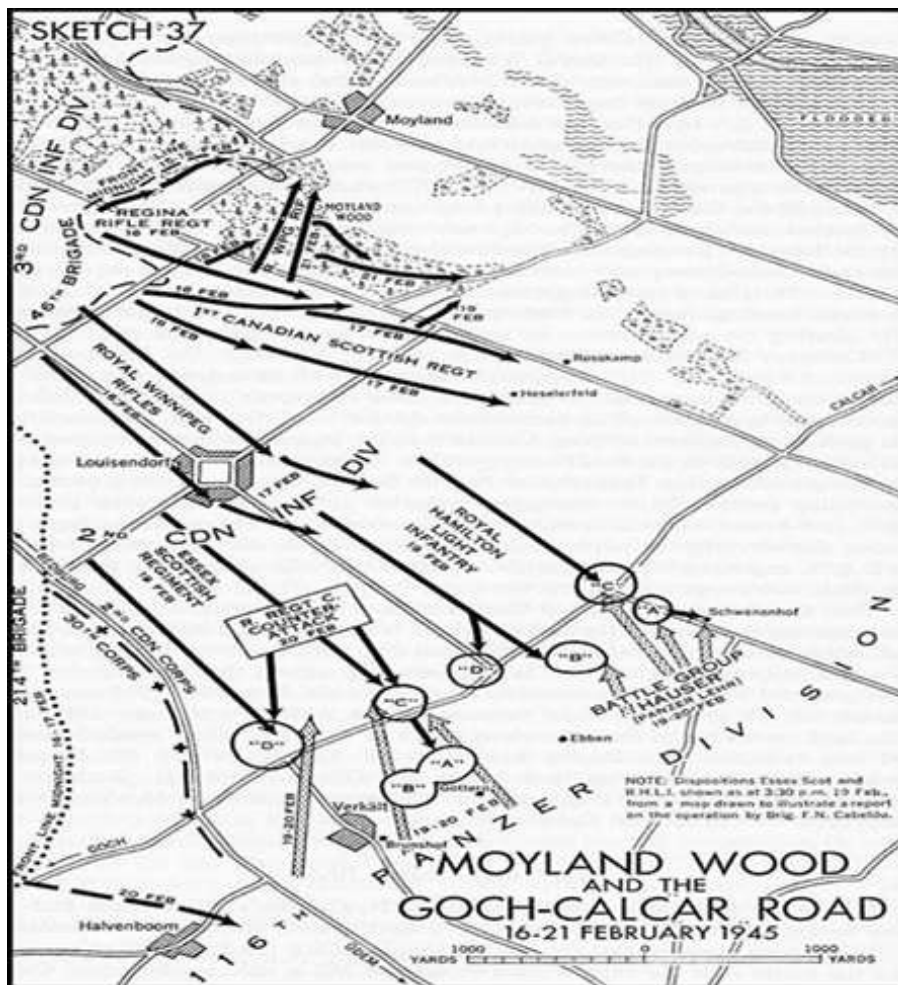
The months in the 'Waal Flats' were a dull, cold and miserable experience. They stayed here until the new offensive - the Rhineland Offensive - which started on 8 February with Operation Veritable.

Operation Veritable started with the 3rd Canadian Division and three British Divisions advancing across the flooded left bank of the river Waal. The old town of Kleve was completely bombed flat and the heaviest artillery bombardment of the war came down on the enemy positions. The Materborn Gap was the key to success for the offensive; it was 3,300 metres of open terrain and it extended from Kleve and the forests of the Hochwald to the south.

On 10 February 1945, the RHLI arrived at the assembly point around Keeken, their first objective was the capture of Duffelward. The attack started at 6.30 pm and the RHLI advanced, they were stopped by enemy machine-gun fire just outside Duffelward in the only access area to the village. Here they dug in for the night.

The next morning the RHLI advanced to Duffelward, captured it and in the afternoon they occupied Wardhausen. In the evening they dominated together with the Stormont, Dunas & Glengarry Highlanders the entire area up to the Spoy Canal.

On 14 February, the RHLI had to cross the border and headed for Kalkar and Xanten. They were delayed by rising water and shell and mortar fire for eighty-four hours.



During the week in which John Ball died weather was unstable. Some days it was cloudy with rain, which made it hard to have clear vision for the soldiers and the other days the weather was fair which meant that the soldiers had clear vision.

On the morning of 19 February 1945 the weather was very bad in Kleef, Germany. It was quite cold with a lot of heavy clouds, which probably indicated it was going to rain. The road conditions were very bad because of this gloomy weather, so vehicle movement was very slow. The road and the weather made it hard to perform the planned attack well.

At 11.00 pm the attack was launched with Kangaroos tanks, companies on foot and a platoon of Carriers provided support on the flanks with Bren machine guns and flamethrowers. The attack was successful despite the loss of a large number of soldiers.

Also Lance Corporal John Alfred Ball was killed in action, only thirty-one years old. He was buried at the Canadian Military Cemetery in Calcar, Germany, and later reburied at the Canadian War Cemetery Groesbeek, **XI. G. 11.**

Text on his tombstone:

GOD TOOK HIM HOME,
IT WAS HIS WILL
BUT IN OUR HEARTS
HE LIVETH STILL



John received the following awards:

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



Life story written by:

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

Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Library and Archives Canada
- https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=480
- supplied by Project '44 - the Road to Liberation" - <https://www.project44.ca>



Cpl. John A. Ball

Cpl. John A. Ball was killed in action at Kleve, Germany, February 19, 1945, after nearly four years of service with the Canadian forces. Seriously wounded in August, 1944, he was hospitalized five months in England and had just returned to the field of battle when he lost his life. Enlisting with the 1st Battalion, Dufferin and Haldimand Rifles, June, 1940, he received his military training

at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Nanaimo and Victoria, B.C., and was later transferred to the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, with which he served in Europe. He was born in Paris, January 4, 1914, attended school there and St. James Anglican Church. During his boyhood years he developed a keen interest in the game of lacrosse and later played for the Paris team. He was married to the former Mabel Holmes and left a small son, John, and daughter, Eileen.