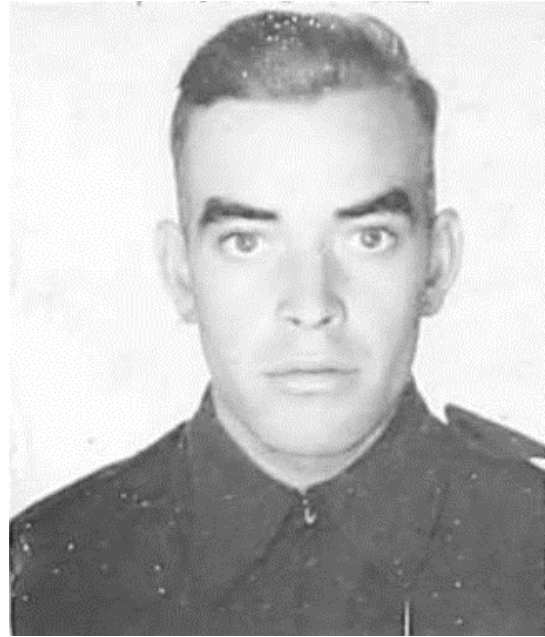


Bates, William Dale
Private
Calgary Highlanders
Royal Canadian Infantry Corps
E-101274



William Dale Bates was born on February 13th, 1924 in Cookshire, Quebec, the son of Clayton and Pearle Bates. There were two sisters, Marion and Charlotte, and one half-sister, Doreen. The family were members of the Church of England.

William left primary education at a young age. After Grade 5, aged 9, he went to work on his parents' farm in Cookshire.

On May 26th, 1943, William enlisted in Quebec for active service in the Canadian Army.

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION

I, WILLIAM DALE BATES, do solemnly declare that the above particulars are true, and I hereby engage to serve in any Active Formation or Unit of The Canadian Army so long as an emergency, i.e., war, invasion, riot or insurrection, real or apprehended, exists, and for the period of demobilization after said emergency ceases to exist, and in any event for a period of not less than one year, provided His Majesty should so require my services.

Date: 26th. May 1943. William Dale Bates
(Signature of recruit)

He was just 19 at the time, of slight build with blue eyes and blond hair. It was his intention, upon return from Europe, to return to work on his father's farm.

In June, 1943 basic training started in Lauzon and Montmagny (both in Quebec), to be followed by advanced training in Petawawa, Ontario and Debert, Nova Scotia. William suffered a minor hand injury while in Petawawa.

On April 11th, 1944, his formal training in Canada was concluded and William boarded one of the troop ships taking him to England.

Following his arrival on April 18th, William spent the next few months at various training centers. It was on July 13th, 1944 that he once again stepped on board a ship, this time heading for France.

Here, on July 17th, he was taken on strength with the regiment of The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. They were deployed for Operation Atlantic and located near Fontenay-le-Marmion, a village located in the Verrieres hills between Caen and Falaise in Normandy. The force of the German artillery proved too strong there and then and the attack on Fontenay-le-Marmion was called off. New plans were made and on July 24th, the Cameron Highlanders would be part of Operation Spring in the next attack. Again, things did not go according to plan. German Panzer divisions employed heavy artillery. It was not until the evening of August 8th that the Cameron Highlanders reached Fontenay-le-Marmion. William, not even one month on the frontline, suffered serious shrapnel injuries to his left leg, left arm and chest during the bombings and, as a result, was repatriated to England.

In Crowthorne, he was admitted to the #17 Canadian General Hospital and was in a leg and arm cast for some eight weeks. On September 8th, he was transferred to the Roman Way Convalescent Hospital in Colchester. His leg and chest were healing nicely. His left arm, however, remained paralyzed for a lengthy period with residual shrapnel to the radial bone. On specialist advice, the shrapnel was not removed. On October 18th, 1944, William was at last considered fit for transfer to a rehabilitation center where he could start to regain his strength. He remained there until November 8th when he was cleared for active duty and a return to the front.

On December 12th, he embarked a ship bound for Italy and, once ashore, was assigned to the Perth Regiment.

Ever since their first combat near Arielli, on February 17th, 1944, this regiment had seen active duty on the Italian front and in August, 1944 it was part of the forces on the Gothic Line. The Perth Regiment was the first Canadian regiment to see success. The Canadian army advanced north at a slow pace and the regiment was called off active duty for a month during November. In December, just before William's arrival, the troops set up camp near Ravenna.



Where exactly William was added to the Perth Regiment as part of the general reinforcements has proved difficult to determine. It must have been on the east coast of Italy near Ravenna. In the months that followed, his regiment was involved in heavy combat in the north of Italy. Due to the winter weather and the mountainous area, the troops advanced slowly and with great difficulty. The Canadians, who had been traveling from south to north Italy since July, 1943, were not involved in the final battles in Italy. In February, 1945, the 1st Canadian Corps, as part of Operation Coldflake, is was shipped out from Livorno on the Italian west coast to Marseille in the south of France, with the British 5th Infantry Division. The plan was to join the First Canadian Army in northwestern Europe. After two months in Italy, William once again found himself in France and on his way to the Netherlands.

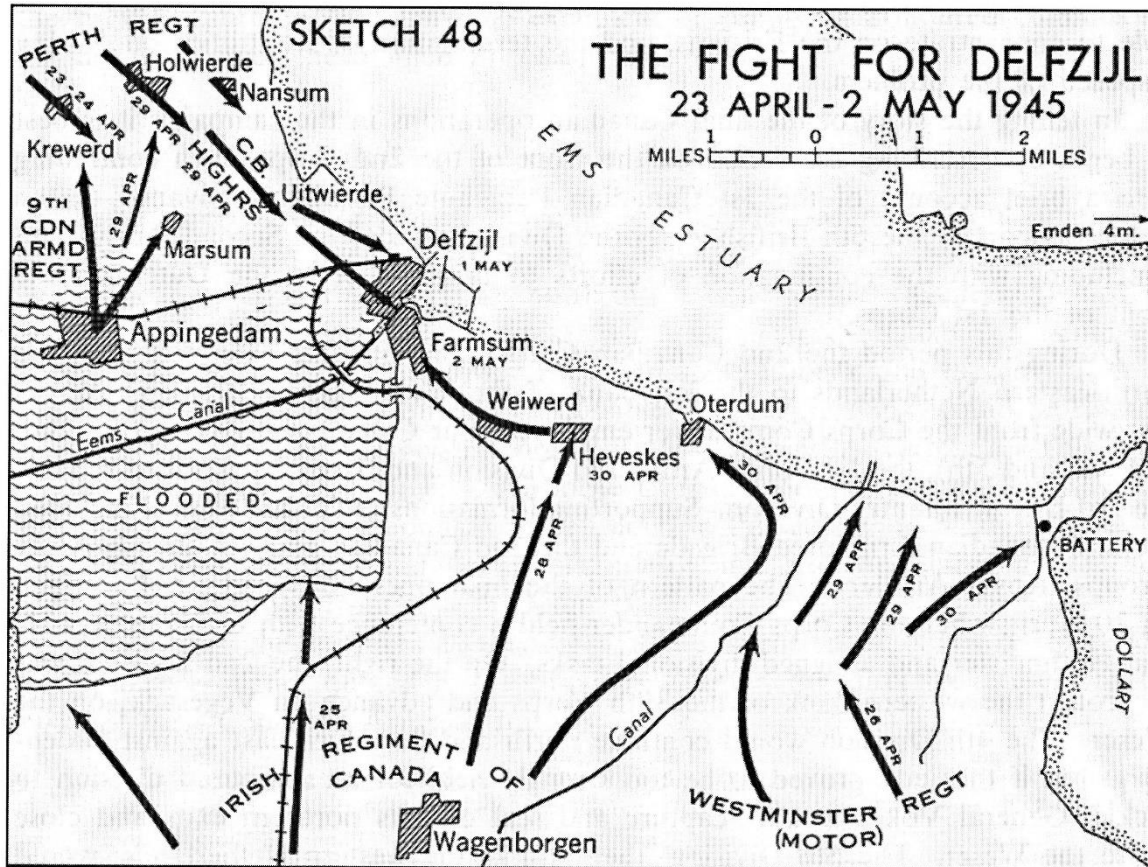
From Marseille, it took five days to reach the Belgian border. Here, William’s regiment added to the First Canadian Army. It was now early March with Operation Veritable still in full swing. The Battle of the Rhineland would last until March 11th. On March 24th, it was possible to cross the river Rhine and the Perth Regiment left for Arnhem.

On April 2nd, the town of Driel was liberated by the Perth Regiment. The next day, the regiment came under attacked and William was again injured as machine gun bullets scraped his lower back. After treatment in a field hospital he returned to his regiment on April 15th which by now, upon the liberation of Arnhem, was on its way to Otterlo and Barneve

Perth Regiment – In de forest north of Arnhem



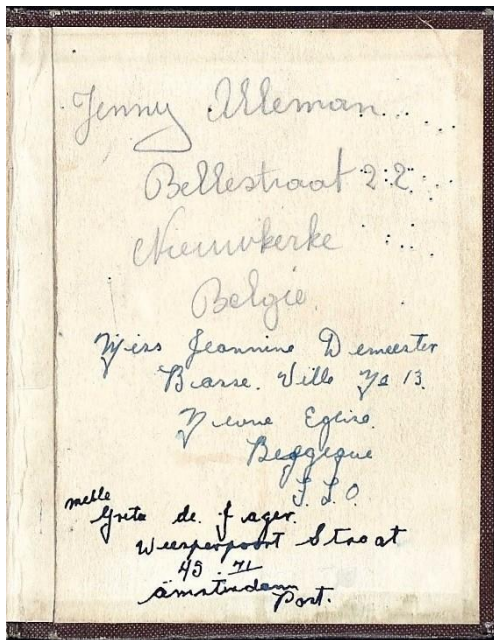
Two days later, on April 17th, William was among the liberators of Otterlo. General Eisenhower then gave the order to defend the Grebbe Line. The Perth regiment would not be there for long. While a large force stayed to defend this line, they continued north. William was one of the many involved in the liberation of Sneek and Delfzijl.



Overzichtskaartje van de opmars route van de Canadezen richting Delfzijl 23 april - 2 mei 1945.

The fight for the liberation of Delfzijl lasted ten days until May 2nd, 1945. Two days later the German troops capitulated and the Perth Regiment moved to the west of the Netherlands to carry out support duties. However, William left early, on April 29th, on private leave to England in order to seek medical assistance. It did not become clear from his service file whether he had suffered further injuries once more.

William returned to the Netherlands on May 9th and was reunited with his regiment on May 18th. However, two days later, he was added to the Calgary Highlanders regiment, "A" Company, stationed in the Apeldoorn area at the time. The Canadians stayed behind in the Netherlands for some time after Liberation Day, mainly as the result of a lack of transport capacity. They helped out with clearing debris and rebuilding, sometimes visiting friends.

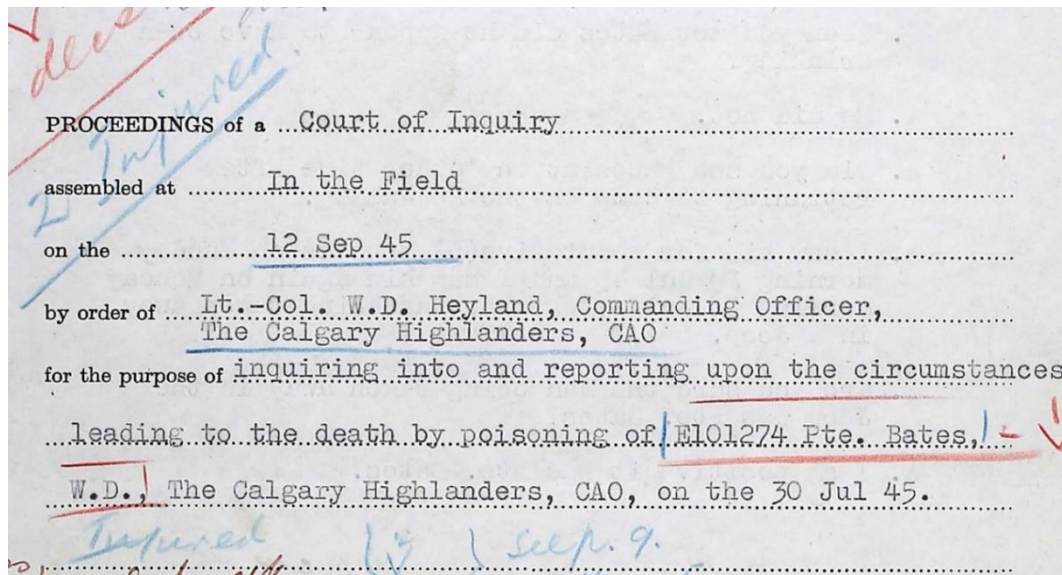


William's soldier's booklet contained various names and addresses in Belgium and the Netherlands. In the end, this supposedly more relaxed phase turned into William's very sad demise.

On Saturday, July 28th, 1945, twenty-five young men of "A" Company set off for an organized outing to Apeldoorn. Around two o'clock William met two of his comrades in the Stationsstraat. The two boys had just bought a bottle of liquor (cognac) from a Dutchman. This despite strong warnings from the army leadership not to buy bootleg liquor. The boys enjoyed an evening out dancing in the Canada Club in Apeldoorn, returning to camp around 10:30 PM, where they drank the bottle of cognac. This bottle was not the only illegal liquor sold in Apeldoorn that weekend. On Friday night of the 27th, three Canadians bought two bottles of illegal cognac, paid for with tobacco, cigarettes, chocolate, a T-shirt and 25 guilders. On Saturday, a further three bottles were purchased by Canadian soldiers for 500 cigarettes. It is unclear whether William was one of those buyers. However and unfortunately, it has become clear is that the drink proved fatal to William. On Monday, July 30th, he was found in his tent by one of his comrades miserable and feeling very unwell. Immediate medical assistance was called for and ten minutes later William was rushed to a first aid post by jeep. Sadly, there was nothing anyone could do to help him anymore. According to the autopsy report, William Bates died of alcohol poisoning at the age of 21.

William was not the only alcohol-related fatality that weekend. Private Comeau of the Regiment de Maisonneuve was another victim of this toxic liquor. In addition, three soldiers were taken to hospital showing symptoms of poisoning. One of them would remain blind for the rest of his life.

Extensive research was conducted into William's death. His comrades and superiors were interrogated, the Apeldoorn bootleggers looked into by local police. There were extensive reports, but it remains unclear whether anyone was ever convicted.



In Canada the news must have been received with great sadness. William was now never to return to his parents' farm.

William was temporarily buried in Nijmegen, from where he was transferred for reburial to the Canadian War Cemetery Groesbeek, grave reference **III. E. 13.**

William Dale Bates was awarded the following medals:

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



Life story: Sigrid Norde, Research Team Faces To Graves

Sources:

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