

Beaton, John Gordon

Lance Corporal

Royal Canadian Engineers

20th Field Company

L.91616



John Gordon Beaton was born on the 15th of December, 1914 in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada. He was the son of Jonathan and Grace Beaton and lived on a farm with a large family with five brothers and three sisters. His brothers were: Russell, Frank, Robert, Kenneth and William. His sisters were Jean, Doris and Florence. The family belonged to the United Church; later they moved to Prince, Saskatchewan. When his mother died, all the children took their part to help their father run the farm and the household.

His brother Robert was also in the army with 45th Transport Company, Royal Canadian Army Service Corps.

John left school after Grade VIII when he was 15. He was a truck driver for a year and after that he became a grain buyer with Serle Grain Company for four years before he enlisted in the Army.

John was 27 when he enlisted; single, no children and he was 5.8½ ft. tall, weighed 148 pounds, had with grey eyes and brown hair. He enlisted in Saskatoon on the 6th of May, 1942 and was assigned to 22nd Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers. He was soon dispatched to the Basic Training Centre in Dundurn, Saskatchewan. After eight weeks of training he was qualified as a Pioneer. He was promoted to Acting Lance Corporal in late August and a month later he was transferred to 20th Field Company. John remained a member of that unit throughout the rest of the war.

John continued his training in Canada with 20th Field Company and the company moved to Camp Aldershot, Nova Scotia at the end of April 1943 for their final phase of unit training. On 17 July 1943, the company embarked for England from Halifax, Nova Scotia. In England, their training continued in preparation for the Invasion of Europe.

After D-Day, John was a member of the lead platoon of the 20th Field Company that arrived in the Normandy bridgehead on 17 June. His unit soon achieved some considerable recognition with their construction of the famous 'Monty' Bailey Bridge at Caen. After supporting the Allied advance through France and Belgium, the 20th Field Company was part of an Allied combined engineer effort of thousands of sappers to support a final drive into Germany. With their bridging, rafting and boating skills, they supported the attacking forces by bridging and rafting the three rivers that barred the way to Arnhem in The Netherlands.

The company was also involved in Op BERLIN, one of two Canadian Engineer companies (the other being the 23rd Field Company) that participated in the rescue of trapped 1st Airborne Division troops from the Arnhem bridgehead on the night of 25-26 Sep 1944. Later in the war, as part of Operation DUCK his company made a heroic assault crossing of the Ems River near Leek, The Netherlands. John also participated in the Rhineland Operation in the final days of the war.

John was promoted to Lance Corporal on the 11th of March 1945. After the end of hostilities 20th Field Company remained in Europe while awaiting repatriation to Canada. During this period John died from accidental poisoning, on 25th of June 1945, 30 years of age.

John's five medals were delivered to his sister Jean:

- 1939-45 Star
- France-Germany Star
- Defence Medal
- War Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp

Lance Corporal John Gordon Beaton is buried in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery near Nijmegen, grave reference **III. A. 5.**

This is his last resting place.

The inscription on his headstone reads:

EVER REMEMBERED,
EVER LOVED

His father received a letter by air mail, on 12 July, 1945:

H.Q. 405-B-27,885
D.R. 2(b)

AIR MAIL

12th July, 1945.

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Further to our telegram dated the 30th of June, 1945, information has now been received from Canadian Military Headquarters Overseas that your son, L.91616 Lance Corporal John Gordon Beaton, died on the 25th of June, and not the 26th of June as previously reported to you.

It is also indicated that his untimely death was the result of poisoning the facts of which are not yet diagnosed.

I sincerely regret I have to make known to you such distressing details, however, it is the policy of the Canadian Army to advise the next-of-kin of all known facts surrounding a fatal casualty.

In closing may I offer my sincere and heartfelt sympathy for the irreparable loss you have suffered.

Yours sincerely,



(C.L. Laurin) Colonel,
Director of Records,
for Adjutant-General,

Mr. John Beaton,
R.R. #1,
Prince Sask.

FDB/RC

14



FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek

Life Story: by LCol Ken Holmes (Ret'd) based on the Life Story by:
Florence Klein Wolterink & Robin van Ravenstein, Canisius College,
Nijmegen.

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

Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Library and Archives Canada
- "The History of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers - Vol II" - Kerry & McDill/ 1966



Photo: Frans van Cappellen.