

Betts, Roy Lawrence

Private

28th Company

Canadian Forestry Corps

K 72959



Roy Lawrence Betts was born on Wednesday November 10, 1909 in Minto, New Brunswick, Canada. Roy Lawrence was the eldest son of George William Betts and Greta Dora Betts (Miller) who were both born in England. They were married on April 1, 1909 in Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada. The family also consisted of the brothers Oscar, Elmer and Donald Miller and the two sisters Audrey and Patricia. The family lived in Minto, a Canadian village on both sides of the border of Sunbury County and Queens County, New Brunswick. It was located on the north shore of Grand Lake, about 31 miles northeast of Fredericton, the capital of the province of New Brunswick. Their religious conviction was Baptism. Father George William was a men's hairdresser in Minto.

Roy Lawrence went to school up to grade 5 and left school at the age of 13. He still took a course in Diesel Engineering but did not finish it. Roy Lawrence went to work in Vancouver in the tree felling industry. He worked in the Log Bucking, which is the process of cutting a felled and demarcated tree into logs with a saw. Cutting was a complicated process because logs intended for plywood, wood and pulp each had their own price and specifications for length and diameter. He did this work for 10 years until he enlisted in the Canadian Army on May 19, 1941 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Roy Lawrence lived at 139 East Cordova Street in Vancouver at that time.

Roy Lawrence Betts had blue eyes and red hair. He was 5 ft. 11 tall and weighed 157 pounds, and he had a small scar on his right upper lip. He indicated that he had had an ear infection (mastoidectomy) in his left ear, for which he was operated in 1933. His set of teeth was OK.

He was posted to Vancouver at the 11th District Depot and was assigned to the 14th Company Canadian Forestry Corps in Saint Gabriel de Valcatier, Quebec on May 25, 1941. On June 15, 1941, Roy Lawrence was posted to the 10th Canadian Forestry Corps Company in Quebec. Six days later he was assigned to be posted overseas to Scotland, and went by train to Halifax to be embarked on the SS Pasteur to sail to Scotland. On July 2, the men arrived in Scotland in Gourock. Then they took a train to Inverness to go to Camp 13, Duchfour, Inverness by truck. Inverness was considered the capital of the Scottish Highlands.



SS Pasteur Source: Wikipedia

The war caused a crisis in the wood supply for the United Kingdom. Pre-war domestic production accounted for only a small fraction of the wood needed to support the war effort. In addition to civilian needs, it was estimated that each soldier needed five trees: one for accommodation and recreation; one for crates to transport food, ammunition, tanks and so on; and three for explosives, weapon supplies, coffins, ships, factories, and direct or indirect support of the battle line.

The British government turned to Canada to assist in the war effort. Given their impressive track record in World War I, it made sense that they looked to Canada to supply forestry units again. In May 1940, the Canadian government decided to form a Canadian Forestry Corps.

The financial agreement between the two governments was similar to the one in the First World War. Canada would bear the costs of payment, allowances and pensions, all initial personal equipment, and transportation to and from the United Kingdom. The UK Government paid for "all other services concerning equipment, work or maintenance" and certain other ones, including medical services. Canada paid the costs for medical officers and Great Britain paid for hospitalization. In 1941 and 1942, thirty Companies from all regions of Canada, a total of 220 officers and 6,771 soldiers, were deployed in Scotland.

The camps were located on an estate by a road to allow vehicle access. The men were housed in barracks with 14 men each. The camp had a cooking house, a bath house with hot and cold showers, a sergeants' quarters and an officers' canteen, officers' quarters, medical barracks, a quartermaster's shop, a garage and a workshop. Several camps had vegetable gardens to provide the men with fresh vegetables.

Canadian Forestry Corps.



Source: The Canadian Military Engineers Association.

The Companies usually worked in two sections, one cutting in the forest and taking out the wood, the other one sawing using mainly Canadian mechanical equipment. The logging crew consisted of three men: two saws and one trimmer. Handsaws and axes were the most commonly

used tools. On August 1, 1942, Roy Lawrence Betts was promoted to Lance Corporal and a year later on May 19, 1943, he received a Good Conduct Badge. Until March 17, 1944, he remained with the 10th Company and was then transferred to the 28th Company Canadian Forestry Corps on March 18, 1944. On July 21, 1944, he was ordered, along with almost everybody of the 28th Company, to pay 6 pence for vandalism to the barracks.

This was just before Roy Lawrence Betts and his Company went overseas to France on July 26, 1944 and the next day they arrived at their headquarters in Cerisy Forest. They stayed in Normandy until October 12, 1944 and were then ordered to go to Belgium, to Westerlo. There they went in search of suitable wood for the allied armies. At the end of October they went to Zonhoven in the Belgian province of Limburg. There they looked for suitable wood for the Corduroy Roads. A Corduroy Road was a wooden track made by placing logs perpendicular to the direction of the road over a low or swampy area. It was an improvement compared to the impassable, muddy or unpaved roads. On November 17, 1944, the Company received an order to collect wood to build a bridge over the River Maas. Later that month they received another order to cut wood for three bridges. On December 2, 1944, there was a lot of activity by Buzz Bombs (V1). Many were flying over and two came very close to them. It was a cold December month, but work continued and on December 8 they found four suitable locations at a distance of 4 kilometers to cut wood.



On a cold Sunday, December 17, a divine service was held for the Company. The next day, the body of Roy Lawrence Betts was found in the Albert Canal in Hasselt.

His body was taken to the 39th General Hospital in Hasselt. He probably got lost and fell into the cold water and drowned. Two shipmasters heard calls for help, searched the water and took his body out of the water around 8:40 PM. At this point 5 soldiers had already fallen into the water and drowned.

He died at the age of 35 and was temporarily buried in Hasselt, Belgium.
On February 15, 1945.

Roy Lawrence Betts was reburied at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **XX. A. 13.**



Photo : Gijs Krist, May 2020.

Awards for Roy Lawrence Betts:

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



FACES TO GRAVES

*Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek*

Life story: Gijs Krist, Research Team Faces To Graves.

Sources:

- * Commonwealth War Graves
- * Library and Archives Canada
- * Wikipedia
- * Canadian Forestry Corps
- * Sites.rootweb.com