

Black, Francis Kenneth

Craftsman

**Royal Canadian Electrical and
Mechanical Engineers**

D/129387



Arte et Marte- 'By skill and by fighting'

Francis Kenneth Black was born in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on Sunday February 6, 1916, son of (Frank) Joseph Black and Mary (Minnie) Isabella Gordon – Black. They got married in Lachute, situated in the south-west of the Province of Quebec, Canada on July 13, 1876. Father Francis was Irish by birth and mother Mary was of Scottish origin. Besides Francis Kenneth the family consisted of two sisters, Eunice and Mae Black. Francis Kenneth was the youngest of the family. Unfortunately, two children died at a young age, Francis Gordon Black in December 1907 and Leslie Gordon Black in November 1904. The Black family belonged to the Church of Canada, the greatest Protestant-Christian religion in Canada. The family lived 3801 Melrose Avenue, Notre Dame de Grace, Montreal, Quebec.

Francis Kenneth attended Public School for seven years and West Hill High School in Montreal, Quebec for two years.

At the age of 18 he left school and took a course to become a metal-working machinist for two days a week.

During this two-year programme he had practical training working with machinist tools, among which lathes, grinding machines, milling machines and such. He also learned how to read blueprints, studied technical mathematics and workshop technology to prepare for work in a machinist workshop. Francis Kenneth also learned how to construct or change spare parts, tools or pieces of equipment (mainly metal). He started working as

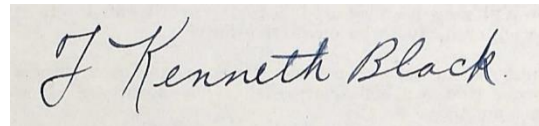
a metal-working machinist and was later given the opportunity to become an instructor at William Lunn Arts Crafts School on Ann Street in Montreal. He did this for a period of one year and three months.

Francis Kenneth had blue eyes and brown hair, was 5 feet, 8.5 inches tall and weighed 144 pounds.

During his childhood he suffered from rheumatic fever and wore glasses since 1932. Francis Kenneth had well-maintained teeth, had stomach and intestinal problems in the past and had surgery on the appendix, which left him with a scar. He was able to drive a car, he had had his driving licence since 1932 and he was able to carry out small repairs. As a hobby he played tennis and practised hunting. Photography was one of Francis Kenneth's hobbies as well.

In 1940 he married his great love Louise Marguerite Bailey and on December 21, 1941 their first son Steven Frank Black was born.

Francis started his military career with the 6th Duke of Connaught's Royal Canadian Hussars, a reserve unit.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in blue ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "F Kenneth Black" in a cursive script.

After having worked as a metal-working machinist for eight years, he signed up with the Canadian army, in Montreal South, Depot 4 on July 1, 1942. On July 14, 1942 he was admitted to Longueuil Military Hospital with flu and on July 20, he was released from hospital. On July 31 Francis Kenneth was assigned to No 41 Canadian Army Training Centre in Huntingdon, Quebec, situated 15

kilometres from the American border. During an interview on August 21, 1942 Francis Kenneth indicated that he would like to stay with the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps because he thought that he could be of more use in his trade than anywhere else. He was promised that he would be sent to Hamilton as a machinist instructor. After the war he intended to be a metal-working machinist again.

On September 30 Francis went to the A 21 Canadian Ordnance Corps Training Centre in Farnham, Quebec. He took a training course as a fitter/metal fitter/mechanic, which he successfully followed until November 30, 1942. On December 1 he was assigned to A-21 Camp Barriefield, Ontario, but the following day he went to the Canadian Army Training School in Hamilton, also situated in the Province of Ontario.

On March 13, 1943 Francis Kenneth returned from a course to become a fitter/metal fitter/mechanic, which he successfully concluded and was qualified as a Fitter Group A Grade II on Camp A-21 Barriefield, Ontario.

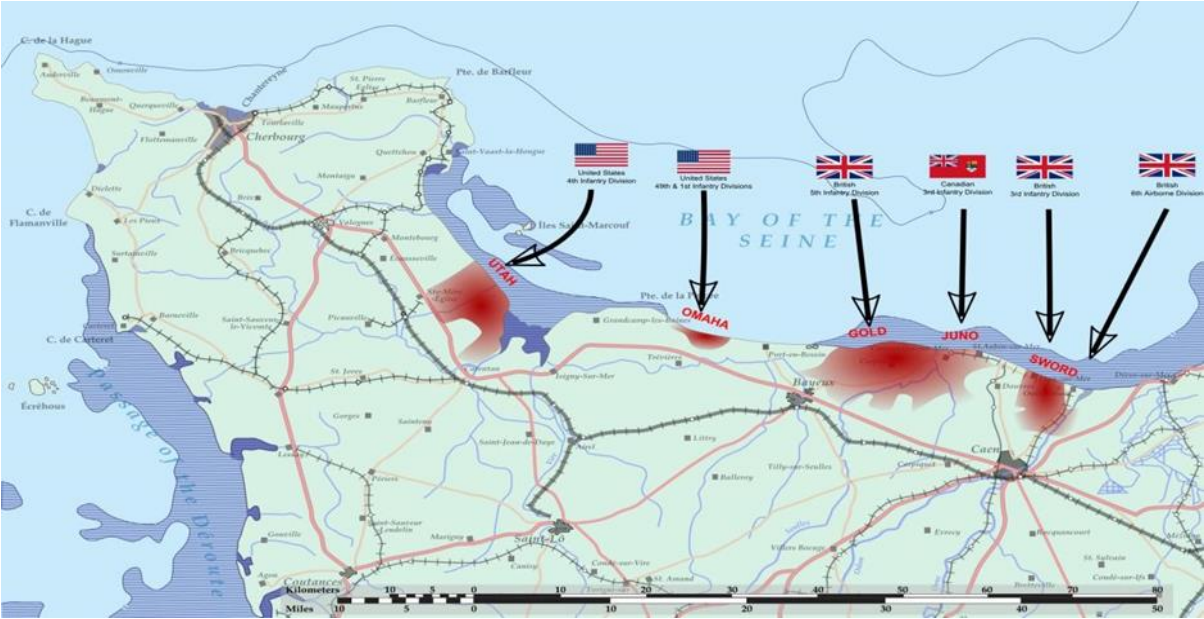
On April 24, 1943 he was promoted to Lance Corporal. Francis Kenneth and his wife Louise Marguerite Bailey had their second son, Kenneth Royden Black, on June 9, 1943, in Montreal, Quebec. The following day, June 10, 1943, he went overseas to England via No 2 Transit Camp, Owen Sound, in the south-west of Ontario.

On June 19 he set foot on English soil and was assigned to No 1 Canadian Ordnance Reinforcement Unit. On August 27, 1943 Francis Kenneth was assigned to the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders, also called the 'Glengarrians' or 'The Glens', where he operated as a Fitter Group B, serving in the rank of Private. As a vehicle mechanic he had to make sure that all mechanical vehicles remained deployable. However, he belonged to the Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in the rank of Private. The Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers were officially set up on May 15, 1944, as a merger of various parts of the Royal Canadian Engineers, Royal Canadian Army Service Corps and Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps. On May 15, he also belonged to this regiment but was assigned to the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders.



Dileas gu bas (Faithful unto death)

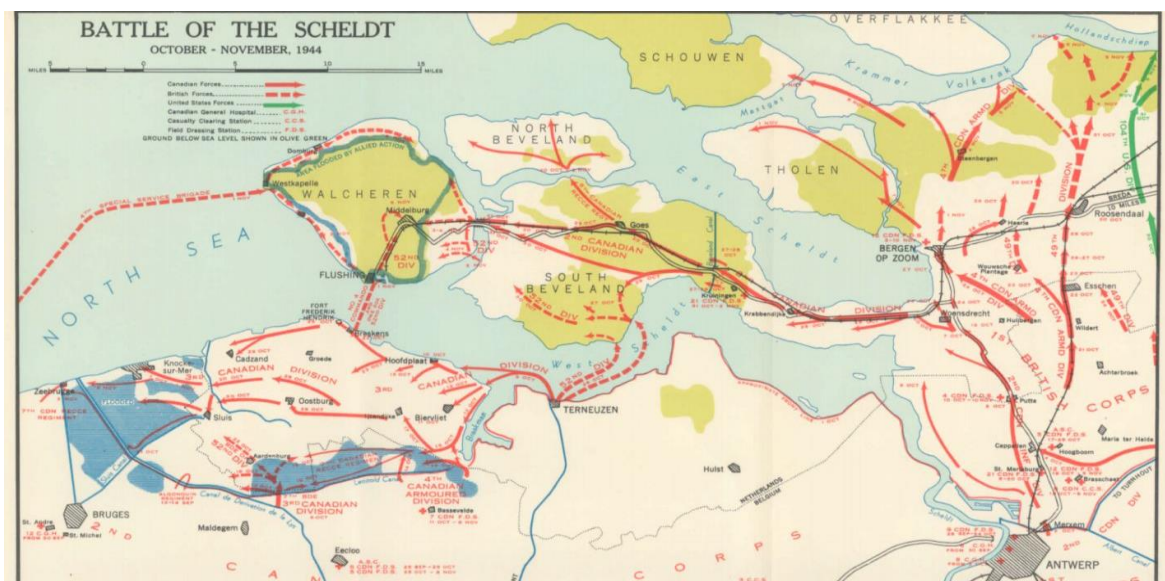
At 12.20 hours on Tuesday June 6, 1944, D-Day, the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders landed on Juno Beach near Bernières-sur-Mer in Normandy.



Map:Wikimedia.org

The soldiers were faced with strong resistance from the German 12. SS-Panzer-Division Hitlerjugend. Both the Canadians and the Germans lost a lot of tanks and men during these combats. On July 11, more than a month after D-Day, the city of Caen was in Allied hands, and the regiment was one of the first to enter Caen on July 9, 1944 reaching the centre of the city at 13.00 hours. Fifty-five days after D-Day, 112 Glengarrians had died and 312 had got wounded. Via the north-west coast of France they went to Belgium and the Netherlands.

The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders took part in the Battles of Falaise, Boulogne, De Schelde and the Breskens Pocket. The battalion played an important role in liberating the Breskens Pocket in the Netherlands.



On October 8, 1944, protected by a smoke screen, they arrived at Terneuzen by water in amphibious vehicles, named 'Buffaloes', and landed on the dike east of Hoofdplaat. From there they advanced and on October 10, 1944 Hoofdplaat was conquered. The attack on the second defence line started on October 21. The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders attacked Breskens and the town was liberated on October 24. On November 9 the battalion moved from Gent to Grave.

In Gent the soldiers of the regiment were given some rest. The battalion of the 9th Infantry Brigade went into the direction of its ultimate destination: Nijmegen at 21.00 hours on November 10.

At 23.00 hours on Saturday November 11, the Americans of the 2nd Battalion, 505 Paratroop Infantry Regiment of the US Army, were relieved.

The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders went to Nijmegen to relieve the air landing troops and to help guard the bridge while the Rhine

crossing was being prepared (Operation Veritable). The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders encamped in Persingen and Groenendaal. Their aim was to guard, defend and secure the Waal bridge near Nijmegen and its surrounding area.

A short while after the unit had settled in its new environment, headquarters decided to change the brigades every seven days, with two active brigades and one spare one, the latter receiving training in order to maintain their level. During the night of Saturday November 18 to Sunday November 19, 1944 the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders relieved the Highland Light Infantry of Canada near the village of Ooij.

On November 22, 1944 the regiment was in the surroundings of Beek for a seven-day practise period and inspections of their equipment.

On Sunday November 26, 1944 a bomb or grenade fell on the corner of Johannaweg and Kwakkenbergweg in Nijmegen. This happened while Canadian men were lining up for a church service in Nijmegen.



Photo: oorlogsdodennijmegen.nl

The projectile damaged a house in the vicinity and caused all windows of the battalion's headquarters and other buildings to break. Two soldiers were killed and fifteen got wounded, one of whom was Douglas Reginald Schofield who died at the age of 19. Unfortunately, there were also Dutch victims. Two little girls died and a number of civilians got wounded.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information
736601 Sheet 6 SW	26 Nov 44	0950	Sunday. Sun shows signs of being out for awhile today. Mild. Church Services: Protestant 0915 (Rifle Coys) 0945 (Sp Coy); RC 1000 hours. Bn troops were falling in for first in Church Parade, disaster struck. Conflicting reports as to exact missile were received but it is thought either a rocket or bomb struck. It demolished a house across rd and broke all windows in Bn bldg. A/A was active some ten minutes ago so it's quite likely a plane was responsible for this. One observer reports having seen 4 Fock Wolfs, one of which dropped a parachute, prior to the explosion. Exact casualties not yet known but two little girls were killed. The Bn casualties are 2 killed and 13 wounded.

War Diaries 26 November 1944

Later that day another two Canadian soldiers died of their injuries: Sergeant Lyle Laverne Boice, and Francis Kenneth Black. Francis died at the age of 28.

That same day Francis Kenneth Black was temporarily buried in Nijmegen at the Jonkerbos Cemetery, plot 1, row 1, grave 16, and was later, on August 8, 1945, reburied at the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek, grave reference **II. F. 15**.



At the grave is a Glen Memorial

photo: Alice van Bekkum

Source: *Wigger van der Horst*



Grave of parents Francis Joseph Black and Minnie Isabella Gordon

Awards Francis Kenneth Black:

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



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

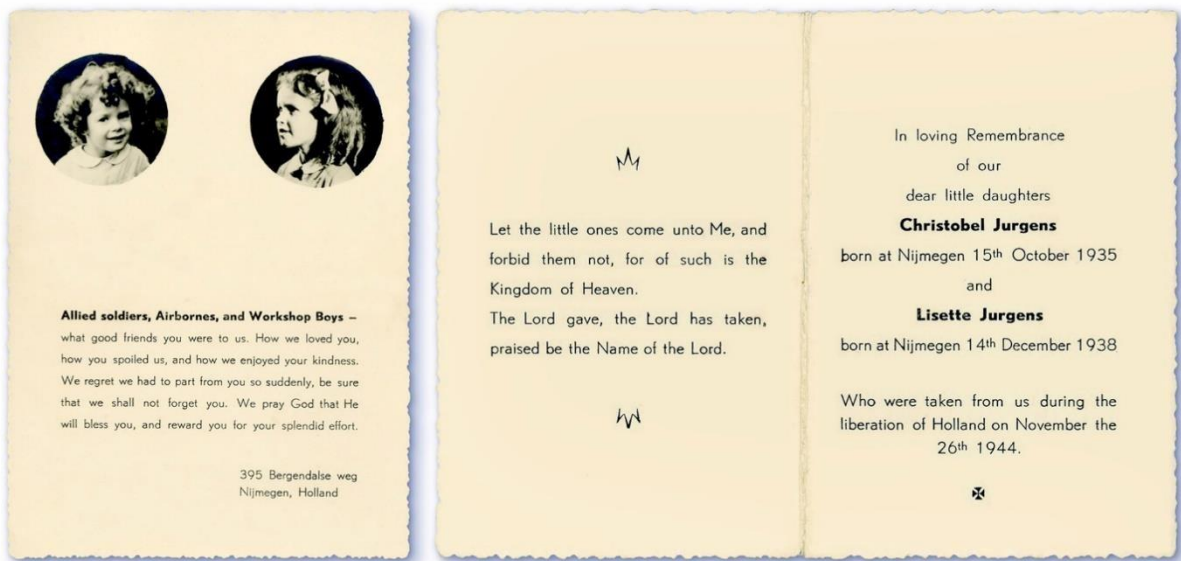
* Do you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact info@facestograves.nl

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves

Library and Archives Canada
www.oorlogsdodennijmegen.nl
Wigger van der Horst
Tom van den Berg
Ken Holmes

Source: <http://www.oorlogsdodennijmegen.nl/persoon/jurgens/37dfe24f-9307-4fc1-8801-f7668319a68a>



Netherlands - Nijmegen - On Sunday November 26th 1944. According the History of the SD&G-Highlanders "Up The Glens": "As the troops were forming up for the Church Parade, a rocket or parachute bomb fell in the Battalion area. It demolished a house near the parade ground and broke all windows in the Battalion Headquarters and nearby buildings SD&G Privates George E Mahar and Douglas R Schofield were killed and fifteen men were wounded. Sergeant Lyle L Boice and Private Francis K Black later died of wounds received at this time. There were a number of civilian casualties - among them two little girls killed" > *Daughters of Jan Jurgens and Joy Anderson: Christobel and Lisette.*

PhotoCollection Mr M Jurgens - The Hague - Netherlands

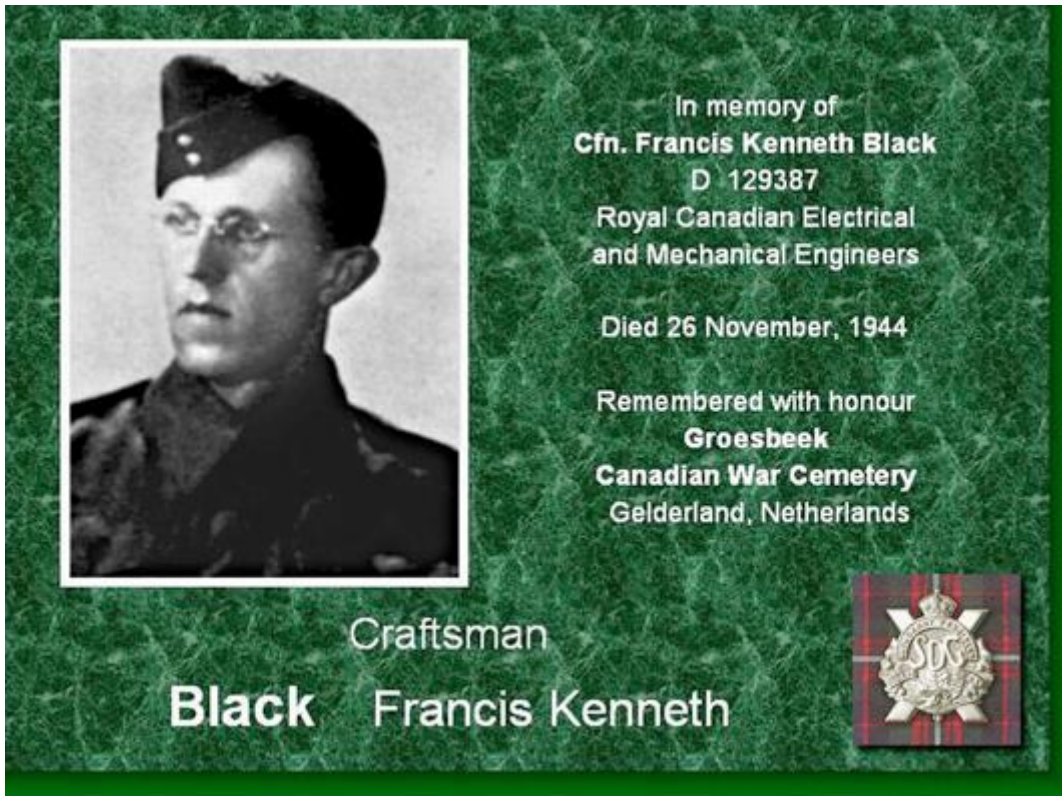
The little girls' parents (Dutch father and British mother) were parents of four children before this tragic event took the lives of their two youngest children.

In the Memorial card for their children they honoured the Allied soldiers.

The text read as follows:

'Allied soldiers, Airbornes, and Workshop Boys -

What good friends you were to us. How we loved you, how you spoiled us, and how we enjoyed your kindness. We regret we had to part from you so suddenly, be sure that we shall not forget you. We pray God that He will bless you, and reward you for your splendid effort.



Glen Memorial – Wigger van der Horst