

Brooker, Joseph George
Lance Corporal
South Saskatchewan Regiment
Royal Canadian Infantry Corps
B/158487



Joseph George Brooker was born 28 February 1915 at Toronto, Ontario. His parents Henry and Rose Annie Brooker were married in 1898 and then emigrated from England to Canada. Joseph was the youngest of their three children, with sister Rose Ann and brother Henry each named after a parent.

Joseph participated in sports like baseball, basketball and tennis when he was younger. When the advent of the Great Depression, Joseph's family experienced financial difficulties like many others, and he quit school in 1930 after completing grade 8 to go to work at age fifteen.

Joseph trained as a butcher's apprentice for the next few years and eventually took employment as a butcher for a Loblaw Groceteria in Toronto. As an adult, the activities Joseph enjoyed were bowling, swimming and playing the piano. He married Margaret Munro in 1940, who was two years older than him and went by the name of Pearl. The couple had a normal home life but did not have any children. Joseph had been working at Loblaw as a butcher for 8 years and was the meat manager when he decided to join the Army, with a job assured there after the war ended.



Interior of Loblaw Groceteria, Toronto 1930s



BUYING Your MEATS



Wrapped in Cellophane

AT A LOBLAW GROCETERIA!



View of a SHINY SIDE OF MEATETERIA

A Real Pleasure Buying Meats the LOBLAW Way

For many years, the public has sought a better method of buying their fresh meats. Now, thanks to the foresight of the Loblaws, the ideal has been achieved. The Loblaws, through the efficient operation of its meat departments, has made it possible for you to buy your meats in a way that is both convenient and economical.

AFTER MANY MONTHS OF SEARCHING for a method which would combine the best of both worlds, the Loblaws has developed a new and revolutionary way of buying your meats. This new method, known as MEATETERIA, has been developed by the Loblaws and is now being used in all Loblaws Groceries.

SO THAT RATHER THAN BE APPOINTED you customers in a grocery store, you can now buy your meats in a MEATETERIA, a temporary shop

that has been arranged where you may be delighted to see the Loblaws Groceries and you will be informed as to the meat that you will receive at the store. All meat will be freshly packed with customer's name, address and total value, and will be placed in boxes and checked through to the meat counter.

To insure absolute freshness, we have arranged for special daily deliveries from our own meat processing departments, at our Plant in Scarborough and the store. The above applies to ALL City Stores.



Interior View of LOBLAW'S Meat Counter Dept.

MEATETERIAS have been installed in the following stores—Others will follow.

- 1470 Queen St. W., Pickering
- 288 Spadina St., Toronto Hill
- 700 Woodbine, at Gerrard
- 167 Bloor, at Bloor West
- 411 Church St., at Midland
- 2701 Yonge St., at Congress

Now These Attractive "Quality First" Meat Specials!

SPECIAL—Choice Quality
SOMELESS BILDING
ROASTS BEEF
Lb. **25c**

SPECIAL—New Season's
FRESH SPRING
LEGS LAMB
Duck Oil
Lb. **30c**

SPECIAL—Fancy Milk Fed
SOMELESS AND ROLLED
FILLETS VEAL
Lb. **14c**

SPECIAL—Choice, Tender
Blade Roasts BEEF
Lb. **12c**

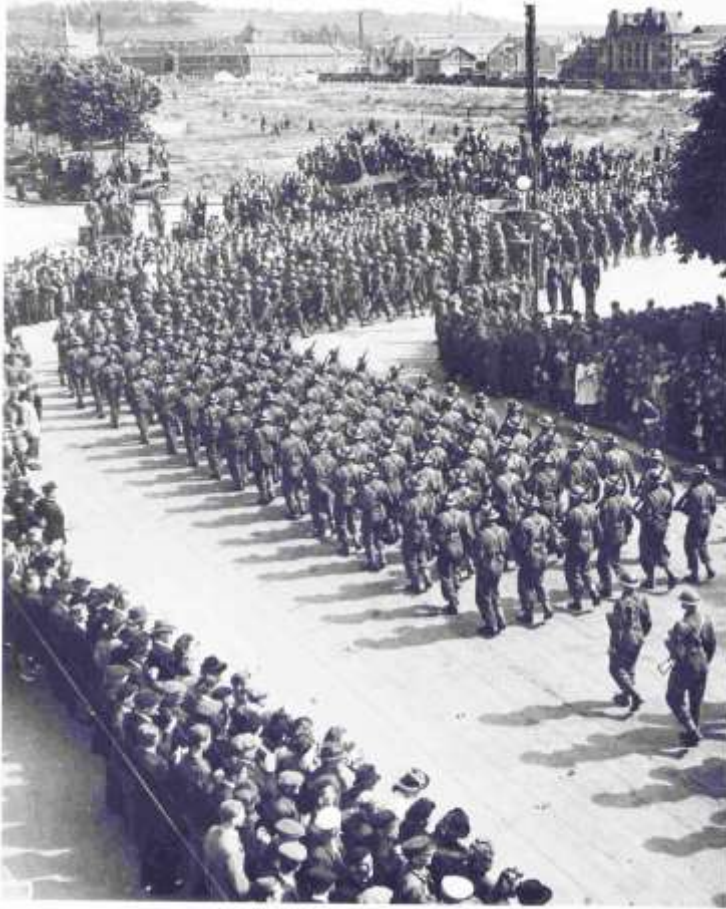


Interior View of our Meat Wrapping Dept.

Joseph attested 20 January 1944 at Toronto, age 28. He was described on his medical examination as being 5'7" tall, 154 lbs with blue eyes and brown hair. His interviewing officer commented in his personnel file: "Brooker is open, pleasant and intelligent. Expresses the desire to become a butcher in the Army. It is felt that due to Booker's abilities and experience, he should prove satisfactory in the R.C.A.S.C Catering".

Joseph was allocated to the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (R.C.A.S.C.) and sent to Orillia, Ontario for basic training. The Army changed its mind afterward, transferring Joseph to serve with the Canadian Infantry Corps. Joseph spent the month of May 1944 at Camp Borden, with his next stop at the Canadian Infantry Training Centre at Farnham, Quebec in June. He was deemed suitable for overseas service and given a few days embarkation leave in July before landing in the U.K. 11 August 1944 where he was assigned to the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit.

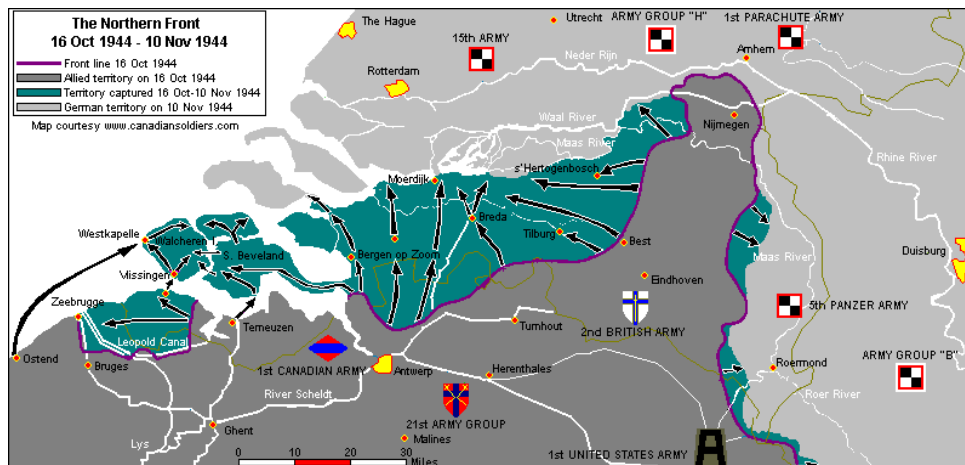
Three weeks later Private Brooker found himself in France, where he was taken on strength by the South Saskatchewan Regiment (SSR) 1 September 1944.



2. Ein Märsch Puz—Dieppe, 3rd September, 1944

The SSR fell under 2nd Canadian Infantry Division and had participated in the disastrous Dieppe raid in 1942. They landed in France 8 July 1944 as part of 6th Brigade, which included the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada and Les Fusiliers Mont Royal battalions. After helping the Allies force the Germans to retreat from Normandy, the SSR worked to clear Channel ports, including liberating Dieppe. The SSR were stationed near Dieppe when Joseph joined them as a replacement soldier and had experienced 742 casualties in less than two months since arriving on the continent.

Following a reorganization period, the SSR made their way towards the Belgium border. Joseph saw his first action with the liberation of Dunkirk before his battalion moved on for a rest period near Antwerp. The Allies had gained control of the port of Antwerp but could not ship vital supplies there until neutralizing German artillery fortifications on the Walcheren Peninsula that had been impervious to air attack. It fell largely to the Canadians to clear them out in the Battle for the Scheldt.



On 26 October 1944 the SSR and 2nd Division brigades advanced on the heavily mined Zuid-Beveland Peninsula. The SSR were the first to cross the canal at Vlakte, creating a bridgehead and repulsing German counterattacks on 28 October. Joseph distinguished himself and was made Lance Corporal, "D" Company on 1 November 1944.

Canal at Zuid-Beveland, Netherlands

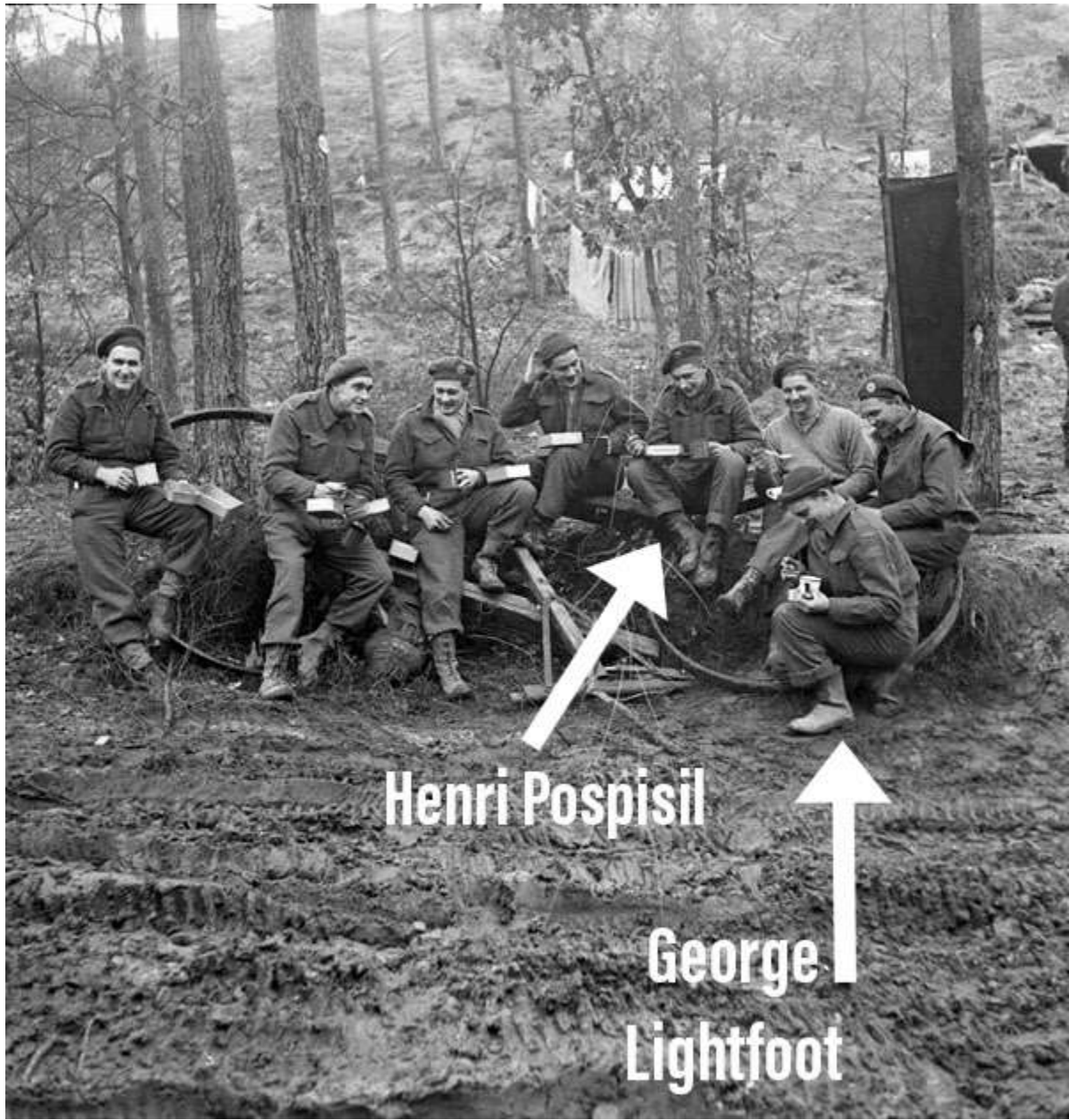


2nd Canadian Division was moved into static operations around Nijmegen, Netherlands 8 November 1944. Most of the activity in the area consisted of patrolling and sniping, with the SSR stationed at Mook. They settled into a routine of daily patrols, to be back at their base each night by 23:30 hours before the enemy started their artillery bombardment at midnight.

SSR soldier on patrol duty

The regiment was pulled back to Nijmegen for a two week reserve period and then moved into a forward position around Groesbeek 8 December 1944. Numerous patrols were sent out to get prisoners but were without success. The enemy had been there for months and had constructed a complete defensive position, interlined with communication trenches.

On the night of 19/20 December, Operation DYNAMITE was conducted against enemy positions, with the objective of the raid to get information needed in planning the expected big push. The operation was carried out by "D" Company and supported by the Queens Own Camerons. The attack was successful and a German staff driver was taken prisoner. A miscalculation by one platoon left an enemy machine-gun post in action, which along with German artillery fire caused numerous SSR casualties. Four soldiers died and another twenty were wounded. Joseph Brooker, age 29, along with Henry Pospisil, George Lightfoot and Norman Pegelow were killed in action that night.



Canadian soldiers from "D" Company, South Saskatchewan Regiment in the woods of Mook, Netherlands on 30 November 1944. Photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

Lance Corporal J.G. Brooker was temporarily buried at Jonkers Bosch Cemetery by Nijmegen, Netherlands and later relocated to nearby Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **IV. C. 13**.

The inscription on Joseph's headstone reads:

PRAY GOD HIS SACRIFICE
BE NOT IN VAIN.
ALWAYS IN MY HEART.
WIFE PEARL, TORONTO



Photo credit Frans van Cappellen

Joseph Brooker's campaign medals:

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



Biography by Jim Little, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources Consulted:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Veteran Affairs Canada – Canadian Virtual War Memorial

Ancestry public trees

Loblaws Groceteria picture and advertisement <https://www.tvo.org/article/how-a-radical-idea-turned-loblaws-into-a-supermarket-empire>

South Saskatchewan Regiment cap badge, war diary, images and information
<http://www.saskatchewanmilitarymuseum.ca/SSR/>

Buchanan, G.B. (1957). The March of the Prairie Men. Digital version:
<http://www.saskatchewanmilitarymuseum.ca/SSR/history/mpm.html>

Northern Front Map October/November 1944
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Canadian_Division_during_World_War_II

Zuid-Beveland Canal map https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canal_through_Zuid-Beveland

Operation Dynamite information and South Saskatchewan Regiment soldiers picture
<https://www.battlefieldtours.nu/blog/2022/12/19/the-dutch-military-order-of-william-for-major-falloon/?lang=en>

George Lightfoot, South Saskatchewan Regiment biography
<https://www.facestograves.nl/LifeStories/LIGHTFOOT%20George%20Joseph-FHN-bio-EN.pdf>

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