

Burns, Ralph Hammell

Lieutenant

Essex Scottish Regiment

Royal Canadian Infantry Corps

H-8183



Ralph Hammell Burns was born on 26 A 1914 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, to Walter and Maude Annie Burns.

Walter en Maude got four children, three boys and a daughter. The family lived at 528 Sherburn Street, Winnipeg.

Ralph attended High School for three years and continued at the Business College in Winnipeg where he left after one year.

He worked as a retail salesman for ten years and wanted to return to this employment after war.

Ralph was married to Margaret Winniefred from Wadena, Saskatchewan. They lived also in Winnipeg, St 4 Wesley Apmts. When Ralph enlisted Margaret moved to her parents in law and later after Ralph's death she moved to Regina.

From 15 August 1940 to 6 February 1943 Ralph was enlisted according to the National Resources Mobilization Act of 1940 as a Corporal and was posted to the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada in Camp Shilo, Manitoba.

In his medical report his report was written:

Length 5'11.75", weight 148 pounds, brown eyes, black hair, good appearance.

On 15 February 1943 he enlisted for active service at the 10th District Depot Canadian Army as a Private in Winnipeg and two days later he was promoted to A Sergeant for the purpose of becoming a Cadet.

Thereafter he went to Three Rivers, Quebec and was promoted to Cadet Officer.

He attended again a training and was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant Infantry of the Canadian Army on 21 May.

He was transferred back to Shilo and continued his training at the A-15 Infantry Training Centre and on 8 June he was promoted to Lieutenant.

He was granted leave twice in July and August 1943 and on 9 March 1944 and transferred to the Training Base Depot Group in Debert, Canada.



Camp Shilo, Manitoba, Canada

On 10 April 1944 he left for England with the 2nd Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit and arrived on 19 April.

During four weeks he attended the Canadian Military Headquarters Course and successfully completed it and he was posted to the Canadian Military Headquarters Course.



Het onderkomen van de Essex Scottish in het winters landschap rond Groesbeek.

On 23 October 1944 he was posted to the Canadian Infantry Training Regiment and ten days later he left England for France.

After arrival he was posted to the Essex Scottish Regiment.

This regiment set up camp in Groesbeek (near Nijmegen) and stayed here until 8 February 1945 when Operation Veritable started. During this time the regiment went on several patrols to Mook, Boxtel, Vught.

When Operation Veritable started the Essex Scottish Regiment was stationed around Wyler and awaiting further orders. On 14 February they were called up, they had to advance from Nijmegen via Mook-

Gennep-Hekkens through the Reichswald to Cleve and Calcar and with the support of Kangaroos (tanks) they were steadily successful.

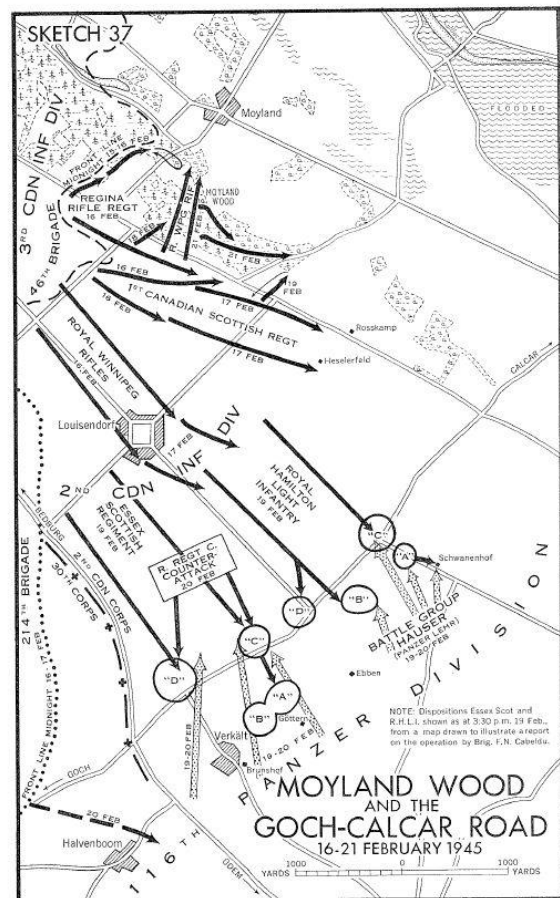
On 18 February they were around Calcar and were ordered to start the attack on Moyland. During the night of 18 to 19 February heavenly rain started, the Essex Scottish Regiment was ordered to capture buildings in Gottern and Brunshof, the mud played tricks on the tanks and they progressed very slowly during the day.

On 19 February at 2.15 pm, the Germans launched a violent counterattack. The Essex Scottish Regiment were under heavy fire from the "Goch Kalkar" road. A fierce battle ensued, at 4.30 pm they were within 200 yard of their goal when German reinforcements.

Their Pantzer Corps was doubled and at 8 p.m. the Germans launched the attack, just as the Essex Scottish Regiment was out of tanks as they were being withdrawn to be re-manned and refueled.

The Essex Scottish Regiment could not withstand this violent attack and they were overrun by the Germans beyond their Head Quarter. Staff and survivors retreated to the basement of a farm. During the night reinforcements arrived, the counterattack was launched and they succeeded in driving the Germans back. Eventually they got hold of the Calcar Road.

The battle on 19th February was the bloodiest of the entire Operation Veritable, the Essex Scottish Regiment left 51 dead (out of a total of 400 dead on 19th and 20th February), 99 wounded and 54 became prisoners of war.



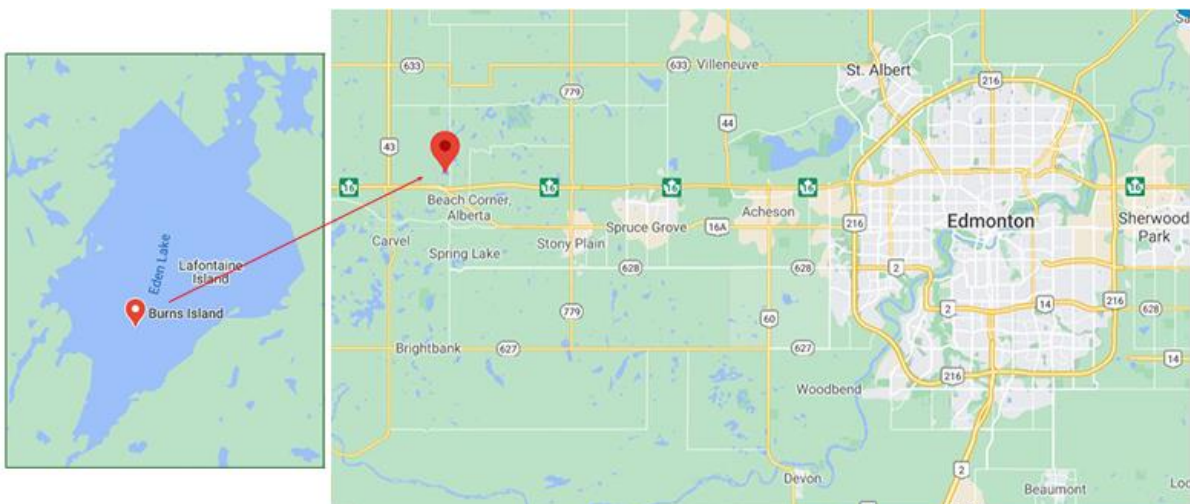
Lieutenant Ralph Hammel Burns was killed in action on 19 February 1945 and was buried in Bedburg, Germany. On 22 November 1946 he was reburied at the Canadian War Cemetery Groesbeek, grave reference **X. A. 7.**

The inscription of his grave marker reads:

EVER REMEMBERED
EVER LOVED

Awards:

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



Ralph Hammell's name is included in the Manitoba Geographical Names Program – 'a place of honour' Manitoba War Dead Commemorated in its Geography and an island is named after him:
"Burns Island (64 C/9) Edén Lake. Named in 1995 after World War II casualty Lieutenant Ralph H. Burns of Winnipeg. He served with the Essex Scottish Regiment."



FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story: Else Schaberg, lid Research Team Faces To Graves.

References:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Library and Archives Canada

Veterans Affairs Canada – Second World War Book of Remembrance
<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/books/page?page=552&book=2&sort=p>

The Essex Scottish Regiment, C. van Beek, Putte, 2004, speciale uitgave
Tijding, periodiek Heemkundekring Het Zuidkwartier

'A Place of Honour' Manitoba War Dead Commemorated in its Geography
Provided by: Manitoba Geographical Names Program
https://gov.mb.ca/forest/pubs/forest_land/cdgnm.pdf

The Canadian Virtual War Memorial (CVWM)
Operation Picture me (OPM) – Winnipeg Evening Tribune
Google Maps

