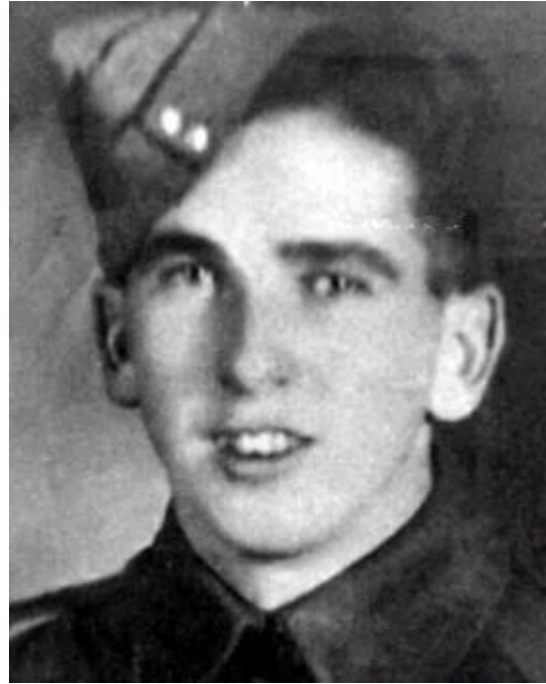


**Burrough, Ashford Herbert**  
**Rifleman**  
**Royal Winnipeg Rifles**  
**Regiment**  
**Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**  
**A/104565**



Ashford Herbert Burrough was born in Wallace Township in Southwest Ontario 23 June 1923. His father Herbert William was from Devon, England, arriving in Ontario, Canada in 1910. He married Ashford's mother Emma Jane Reddon, also of English heritage, in 1916 and they farmed their own land. Ashford had two older sisters and was raised in a Presbyterian household. His first given name was his paternal grandmother's surname.

Ashford was just fourteen when his father died and he quit school early to help support his widowed mother. They moved into the small town of Palmerston, Ontario where Ashford became a truck driver.



Ashford attested with the Canadian Army in London, Ontario 21 September 1942 at age 19. He had previously served in the Army Reserves with the Royal Canadian Artillery for seventeen months. His medical record had him as 5'8" tall, 132 lbs with good development. Ashford did his basic training in Kitchener, then was sent to Camp Ipperwash, built on

land the Department of National Defense had expropriated from the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation in 1941.

Ashford was allocated to the Nova Scotia Highlanders in February 1943, then shipped out to the U.K. the next month where he was taken on strength with the Canadian Infantry Reserve Unit. He was hospitalized for five days in July that year, then again for a week at Aldershot Military Hospital in April 1944.

Private Ashford Burrough was held in reserve in the U.K. during the Allied D-Day invasion of Normandy, then sent to France 14 June 1944 as a reinforcement for the badly depleted Royal Winnipeg Rifles (RWR), also known as the Little Black Devils. Ashford was redesignated as a Rifleman with that regiment and assigned to their pioneer platoon.

The Winnipeg Rifles along with the other 7 Brigade battalions (Regina Rifles and Canadian Scottish) of 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division were among the first Commonwealth infantry units to land at Juno Beach (Courseulles-sur-Mer) and suffered heavy casualties 6 June 1944, estimated at about 130 men. The next two days were even worse for the Little Black Devils, experiencing another 300 casualties at the small village of Putot-en-Bessin, almost half of the battalion's combat strength. The RWR withdrew in the aftermath of Putot and gradually rebuilt their strength with additional reinforcements such as Ashford. They were on the move again in early July, with their next mission to seize the airport near the village of Carpiquet. That bloody battle turned out to be another costly one with 132 RWR casualties.

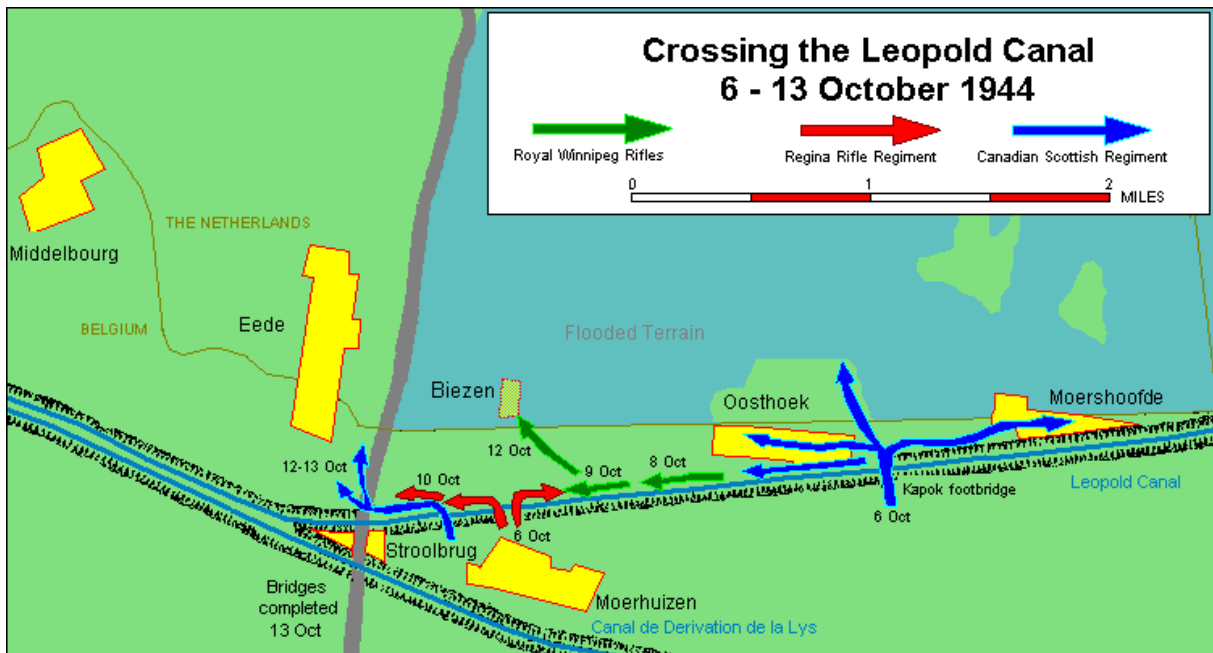
*Winnipeg Rifles – Normandy July 1944*

By August 1944 the Germans were in retreat, fighting delaying actions as the Allied forces pursued them. Falaise was captured later that month with many German prisoners taken. The RWR and 7 Brigade played a key role in securing the Channel port of Calais, France in September 1944.



The RWR moved on to Belgium and participated in the battle at Leopold Canal 6-13 October 1944 along the Dutch border. Much of the Scheldt areas of Belgium and Holland had been flooded by the Germans, making it

very difficult terrain to fight in. 7 Brigade led the attack without armour support.



Major Lockie Fulton was placed in command of the Winnipeg Rifles upon return from his leave and after meeting with the 7 Brigade General, found his regiment to be in a bad way, down to about fifty fighting men in A Company. Some of the men were stranded on the other side of the canal, under enemy fire and without support. "I got the pioneer officer and told him we simply had to have another bridge across the canal to give us an opportunity to get more (men) across so we could try to get inland. I sent the pioneer officer to get another bridge across, though he protested a little bit because it was under (enemy) shellfire. Any time you crossed on the one we had across, the Germans immediately would fire onto it with mortars and machine gun fire, so you picked your time to cross, and you'd cross as fast as you could go. And hope that you could find a slit trench or something to jump into when you got across." These were often the

conditions that Ashford and his pioneer platoon mates worked under.



*Area where the 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade made their assault crossing 6 October, photographed in 1946. The bridge in background is near Oosthoek. (From Official History of the Canadian Army)*

After three hellish days of fighting, the Canadians launched an amphibious assault across the Leopold Canal and shattered the German defence. The three separate battalions were able to link up and form an unbroken 7 Brigade front on the north side of the canal, leapfrogging each other into Holland and forcing the Germans to retreat. As they began liberating the Dutch towns and villages, they couldn't believe the condition of the citizens there who were starving. The Canadians shared their rations with them. By the end of their ordeal 13 October, 7 Brigade's three battalions suffered 553 casualties over seven days of fighting at Leopold Canal.

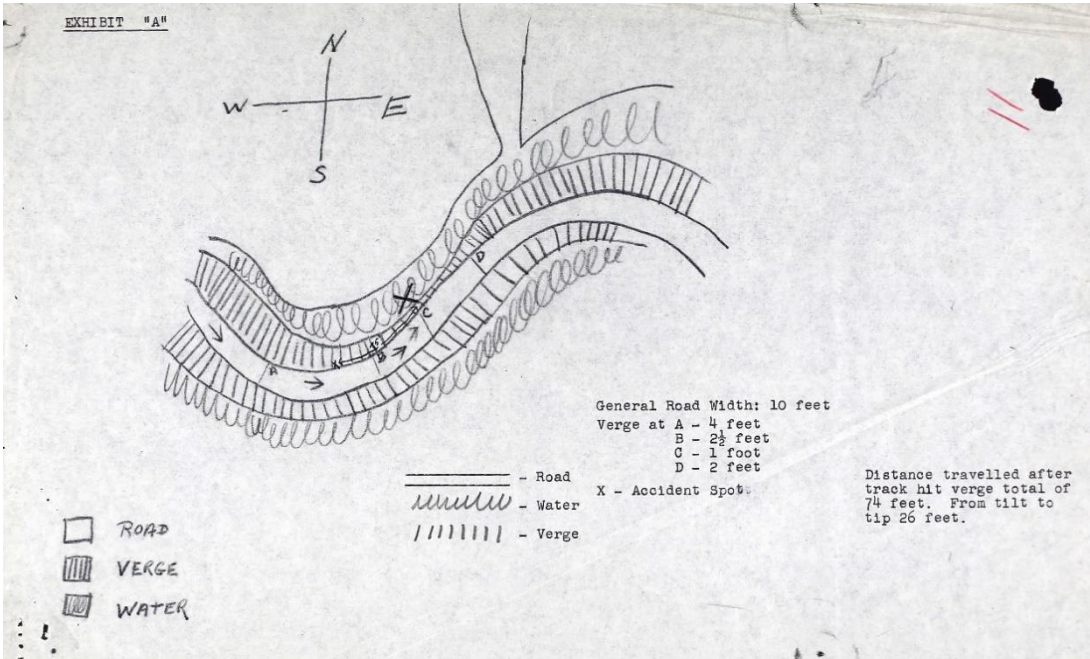
The Winnipeg Rifles fought in some lesser skirmishes in the Scheldt that month before relieving a US regiment near Nijmegen, Netherlands on 11 November 1944. There they remained in static operations, with their pioneers often having to do road repairs using universal carriers to transport their crews and equipment.



On 12 December 1944, Lieutenant D.C. MacKenzie along with a crew of twelve RWR pioneers left their command post in a universal carrier pulling a small trailer loaded with picks and shovels to perform road repairs from the railway bridge back to regimental headquarters. Their vehicle had difficulty making the turn out of the gate, having to move back and forth a couple of times to do so. The intent was to drop men off along the damaged road to carry out repairs, but for some unknown reason the carrier suddenly moved to the verge (shoulder) on the north side of the road, and despite the driver braking and trying to steer back onto the roadway, it slid down into the ditch and rolled over. MacKenzie gave the command to jump and he along with five others managed to get clear of the carrier before it came to rest upside down in a few feet of water with a soft, muddy base below. MacKenzie dove under the water trying to find anyone who may be trapped and felt one body, but it was pinned underneath the vehicle. Ashford Burrough was one of seven men who drowned that day in this terrible accident.

An investigation was conducted with the survivors interviewed, in an attempt to determine the cause of the incident causing multiple fatalities. While not conclusive, the findings seem to indicate it was more likely a

mechanical issue as opposed to driver error. Lieutenant MacKenzie drew a map of the road and dike it was built on as Exhibit "A" in the investigation report.



Jim Parks of the RWR later recalled this tragedy. "The roads were always getting smashed up... and so on one particular time they sent out a crew of the pioneer platoon to repair it. On the way out... the fellow lost control of his carrier and it went into the side where all the water was and it tipped over. They lost seven people. I was part of the group that helped to retrieve them. We buried them the next day. There were two padres – a United Church padre and a priest from our brigade for the seven people. It didn't really matter who you were, denomination didn't mean a thing, the fact was there was some respect given."

Rifleman A.H. Burrough was temporarily buried at Nijmegen, Netherlands and later relocated to nearby Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **I. H. 10.**





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

Camp Ipperwash picture <https://alchetron.com/Camp-Ipperwash>

Royal Winnipeg Rifles <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/military-history/history-heritage/official-military-history-lineages/lineages/infantry-regiments/royal-winnipeg-rifles.html>

Reid, Brian (2010). *Named by the Enemy – A History of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles*

Leopold Canal map and picture

<https://www.canadiansoldiers.com/history/battlehonours/northwesteurope/leopoldcanal.htm>

Goddard, Lance (2005). *Canada And The Liberation Of The Netherlands, May 1945*

\* Do you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact [info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl)