

**Campbell, Alexander Henry**  
**Corporal**  
**The Calgary Highlanders**  
**Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**  
**M – 11268**



Alexander Henry Campbell was born on February 19, 1920 in Calgary, Alberta. He was the son of Angus and Christina, both of Scottish descent. Alex had one older brother, William, one older sister, Emily, one brother, Donald, and a half sister, Elizabeth (Bessie). William served in the Air Force and Donald in the Navy. The family attended the Presbyterian Church.

Alex attended school in Calgary until he was 14. After Grade 8 he started to work. His last employer was the Calgary Gas Company where he worked as an apprentice welder.

In September 1939, nine days after the German invasion of Poland, the Canadian parliament declared war on Germany. In the same month, Alex enlisted in Calgary in the Canadian Army for active duty.

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION

I, Alexander Henry Campbell.....do solemnly declare that the above particulars are true, and I hereby engage to serve in the Canadian Active Service Force so long as an emergency, i.e., war, invasion, riot or insurrection, real or apprehended, exists, and for the period of demobilization after said emergency ceases to exist, and in any event for a period of not less than one year, provided His Majesty should so require my services.

Date Sept 26, 1939..... A.H. Campbell (Signature of recruit)

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION

I, Alexander Henry Campbell.....do sincerely promise and swear (or solemnly declare) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty.

A.H. Campbell (Signature of Recruit)

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE, JUSTICE OF THE PEACE OR ATTESTING OFFICER

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answers to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided by law.

The above questions and answers were then read to the recruit in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me,

at Calgary this 26th day of Sept 1939

J.H. Bentley (Signature of Magistrate, Justice or Attesting Officer.)  
**THE CALGARY HIGHLANDERS**  
 (Office or Rank and Unit or appointment)

N.B. - ATTENTION IS DRAWN TO THE FACT THAT ANY PERSON MAKING A FALSE ANSWER TO ANY OF THE ABOVE QUESTIONS IS LIABLE TO A PENALTY OF SIX MONTHS' IMPRISONMENT

RECEIVED  
 SEP 26 1939

OCCUPATIONAL

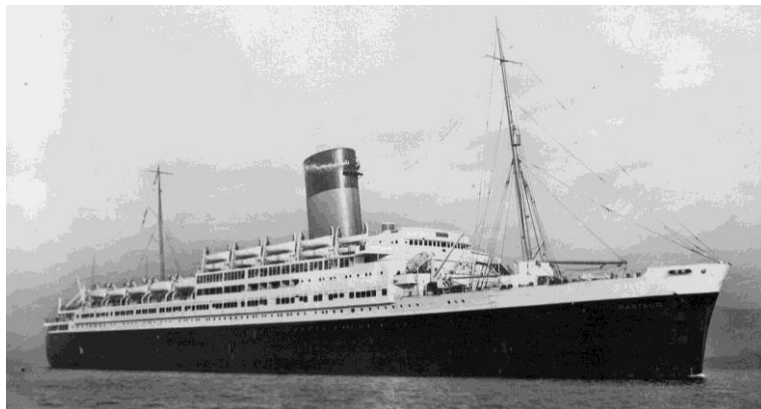
FINGERPRINTED

He was nineteen years old then and lived at 2213 17<sup>th</sup> Street in West Calgary. After his registration, he was medically examined and this showed that he was a healthy young man with grey eyes and light brown hair. He was 5ft9 tall and weighed 147bn.

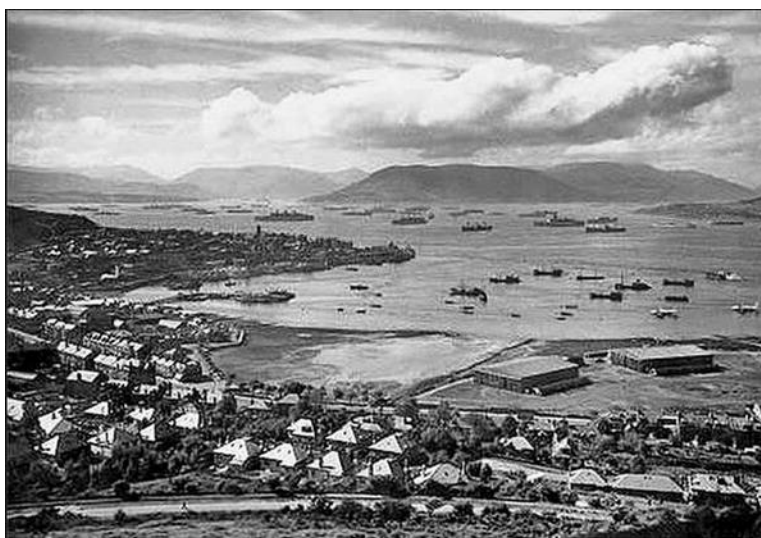
After his registration Alex was assigned to the Calgary Highlanders regiment. At the end of 1939, the Canadian army still had very little equipment to train with. The regiment therefore trained mainly on a physical level. There was a lot of marching and lectures were given. The regiment resided in the Mewata Park in the winter of 1939. They slept in huts next to the Arsenal Mewata. It was cold and damp and due to a lack of proper uniforms many soldiers got sick. Alex also spent six days in the camp hospital in February 1940 with a serious flu. In April he was admitted again, this time with rheumatic pain in the lower back. In July, he was promoted to Lance Corporal.

Alex was part of the first batch of 923 Calgary Highlanders to make the crossing to the United Kingdom. On August 24, 1940, the regiment boarded in Halifax, Nova Scotia. They were lucky. The ship, the SS Pasteur, was not built for the transport of troops, but was equipped with luxuries such as sleeping cabins and even a swimming pool.

On September 4, 1940 they arrived in the harbour of Gourock, Scotland.



*SS Pasteur*



*Convoy in the harbour of Gourock, Scotland*

The regiment was transported by train to the Guillemont Barracks at Camp Aldershot, southwest of London. No sooner had they arrived when the air raid sirens went off. Everyone was so impressed by the flying German bomber that they forgot to look for the air raid shelter. Later that day, they were taught the importance of taking immediate action during an air raid siren.

In England a long period of training in various camps followed and the regiment was deployed in the defence of the English south coast near Brighton.

But the Canadian soldiers were beginning to show signs of boredom. After attending a British 47<sup>th</sup> Division combat exercise demonstration, high ranking officers decided that Canadian soldiers could also benefit from being trained in this way. After the British closed down their Battle Drill School, the Calgary Highlanders established their own school.

Initially in Stansted Park, north of Portsmouth on the English south coast, near the town of Rowlands Castle.



*Battle Drill in Stansted Park*

On August 19, 1942, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon of the Calgary Highlanders was deployed in the Battle of Dieppe, an Allied attack on the German-occupied port city on the French coast. The attack was a tactical disaster, no goal was achieved and thousands of men, mainly Canadians, were killed or taken prisoner of war. The Calgary Highlanders stayed behind in England and knew nothing about the deployment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. They only found out when they had to help disembarking the wounded and fallen in Portsmouth. This will have made a deep impression on everyone.

Because Stansted Park was only suitable for training during the summer months, the last course ended on September 19, 1942. A new location had already been found and the school moved to Windlesham House School, Washington, west of Brighton on the south coast of England. The training was expanded with an anti-gas department. They were also taught how to climb cliffs on the west coast of Scotland. While they were in the area, the Highlanders visited the village of Calgary. Unfortunately, the trip was rather disappointing. There was little to experience there.

Throughout this period, Alex moved back and forth in rank. In December 1941, he voluntarily relinquished his rank of Lance Corporal. On March 1, 1942, he was promoted again, this time to Acting Lance Corporal. In June 1942 he was hospitalized for unknown reasons and a degradation to Private took place. The reason for this was not mentioned. However, on July 10, he was promoted to Acting Lance Corporal again. In August he trained with The Essex Scottish Regiment for two weeks.

(III) RANK and APPOINTMENT

Date	Rank and Appointment	Substantive, Temporary, Acting or Local (with or without pay)	Authority of Part II Orders	Signature of Officer
26-9-39	PTC		#3 26-10-39	
24-7-41	L/Cpl	with pay	#210 24-7-41	
1-6-42	PTC		#30 5-6-42	
10-7-42	L/Cpl	with pay	#40 10-7-42	
6-8-42	A/cpl	" "	#177 8-8-42	
7-11-42	Cpl	" "	#58 7-11-42	
15 Jan 43	L/Cpl	" "	#2 15-1-43	
8 Nov 43	L/Cpl	Cogn. F. 177 p. 4.	No 247 6 Nov 43	
22 July 44	L/Cpl	With Pay	#44 19 Jul 44	

Also in 1943 and 1944 there were several changes in rank.

In the winter of 1943, part of the regiment was sent to North Africa. But Alex stayed in England. On May 22, 1944, his mother died. How and when Alex received this sad message can no longer be retrieved.

A month after D-Day, on July 5, 1944, after years of training, the regiment was embarked on the ship Isle of Guernsey, to be deployed in the liberation of Western Europe. At dusk, the ship left Folkstone harbour while the bagpipes were playing. On board was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division, of which the Calgary Highlanders were part, and part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division. The Calgary Highlanders made the crossing to the European mainland for the first time. The night was clear and calm. As they approached the coast of France the men gathered along the railing to view the impressive array of ships moored at the quay. Early in the afternoon, on July 6, 1944, Alex set foot in Normandy, France.



The Calgary Highlanders spent their first night in the fields around Banville, two miles west of the Juno-Beach. It was relatively quiet, far enough from the front. But that changed a few days later when they left for Abbaye d'Ardenne, on the northwest side of Caen, during the night of July 10.

*Abbaye d'Ardenne 1944*

Here Alex experienced for the first time in his life what it was like to fight at the front. Twenty-four hours a day his regiment was under attack by the Germans. Then it was decided by superior order that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division would be part of Operation Atlantic, and so the Calgary Highlanders left for Vaucelles and the River Orne was crossed. That was not without a fight, but on July 19 the Calgary Highlanders could continue towards La Haute and Fleury-sur-Orne.

After the fall of Caen, the Germans withdrew to the Verrières ridge south of Caen, among other places, and in this way they could keep an eye on all troop movements of the Allies. Likewise on Hill 67.

In their first action of the Normandy campaign, the Calgary Highlanders helped capture this position, known as Point 67, on the evening of 19 July 1944. To the skirl of bagpipes and supported by guns of the 5th Canadian Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery and tanks of the Sherbrooke Fusiliers (27th Canadian Armoured Regiment), they seized the location and dug in under heavy mortar and artillery fire, repelling counter-attacks by enemy tanks and infantry.

Point 67 served as a firm base for attempts to capture Verrières Ridge, 20-21 July (Operation Atlantic) and as the Forming Up Place for the Highlanders' advance to May-sur-Orne in the early hours of 25 July (Operation Spring). Despite undertaking the attack in the confusion of darkness, two Highlander companies were on their objectives before dawn. May-sur-Orne and Verrières Ridge proved to be strongly defended by elements of the 272nd German Infantry Division and 2nd SS Panzer Corps, forcing the Calgary Highlanders to withdraw. On 8 August, the Calgary Highlanders participated in the second phase of Operation Totalize, liberating Bretteville-sur-Laize and advancing south to Clair Tizon.

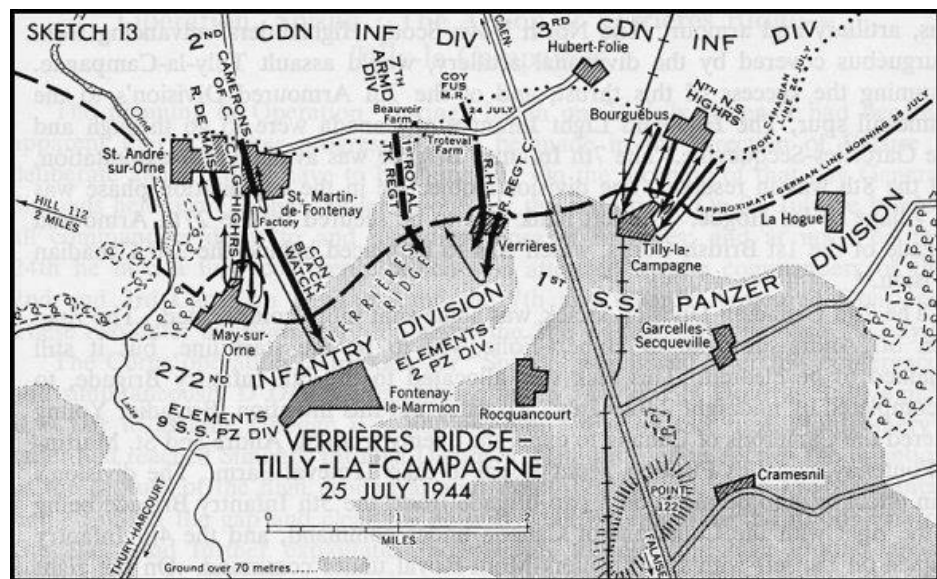
Most of the 185 soldiers of the Calgary Highlanders killed in July and August 1944 are buried at Canadian war cemeteries at Beny-sur-Mer and Bretteville-sur-Laize.



Monument on Hill 67 – Summer 2020

Thirty minutes after the Calgary Highlanders had taken over the hill, the Germans did not appear to surrender so easily. A three-day battle ensued, thirty-one Canadian soldiers were killed on Hill 67. The Calgary Highlanders continued south.

After the necessary days of rest, after the battle of Hill 67, plans were made for Operation Spring, to take the entire ridge of Verrières.



The ridge was also defended by the German 1<sup>st</sup> SS-Panzer-Division Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler, the elite troops of the Waffen-SS. The Highlanders were supposed to continue from there to May-sur-Orne. The attack was launched in the night of July 24, but Operation Spring ended in a disaster. The Calgary Highlanders were too inexperienced compared to the German army and a lot went wrong in the communication between the different army units. 37 Calgary Highlanders were killed. The men who survived were given a few days of rest in Fleury-sur-Orne.

After the rest days in Fleury-sur-Orne, the next target was Tilly-la-Campagne. Twice before British and Canadian troops tried to capture it, but in vain. Now it was the turn of the Calgary Highlanders. They fought for twelve hours in a thick fog. But the Highlanders also encountered great resistance. And although a number of men managed to penetrate the village, the Highlanders also failed to take Tilly. In less than a day, 36 men were killed.

On August 8, 1944, the Calgary Highlanders were deployed in Operation Totalize. Their assignment was to take the bridge over the Laize at Bretteville. Just after midnight, the Ifs regiment left for Verrières, arriving at 1:30 am. All night long, they listened to planes approaching and to the sound of heavy bombing. After about four hours they left their trenches and marched on to Rocqancourt. In the morning light they saw the silhouettes of hundreds of trucks, tanks and other military vehicles. And a lot of men. At 11 am the regiment moved on towards Caillouet, two miles from their target, Bretteville. On the route they saw stranded army vehicles, wreckage from artillery and many fallen German and Canadian soldiers. The road to Bretteville was heavily bombed and barely passable, but the advance was progressing well. There was virtually no German resistance. At 5 pm the Calgary Highlanders, together with the Regiment de Maisonneuve, secured the bridge across the Laize. But the hills around the village were still teeming with German troops and it was not until the next morning that they surrendered, but not without a fight. After twenty-four hours of marching, attacking and waiting for counter-attacks, everyone was tired, hungry and dirty and there was time for a few days of rest. Eleven Calgary Highlanders were killed during Operation Totalize. On August 12, the regiment was deployed at the Battle of Clair-Tison.

Clair-Tison was a village with some stone farmhouses, situated in a valley. After a day of walking, it was very hot, the Highlanders went into the night without sleep. At 1.45 am, it was a dark, misty night, the attack was launched. First, Le Mesnil was taken, a village north of Clair-Tison. On August 13, at 2 pm, the attack on Clair-Tison was launched. The Canadians were under heavy fire from German army units, but in the evening a bridge across the Laize was also taken there.



Clair Tison – August 18, 2020



What followed in August was a long route across Normandy through fields, forests and villages with battles large and small, and with little time for a rest and food, on the way to the River Seine.

After fierce fighting in the Forêt de la Londe, where the Canadians for the first time became acquainted with the tactics of the German forces of firing mortar shells into treetops, causing not only shrapnel flying around, but also burning treetops, the Calgary Highlanders crossed the Seine at Elbeuf on August 28.

After crossing the Seine, the regiment set off, via Rouen, to Dieppe, where they arrived on 3 September. Dieppe is a black page in history for many Canadian fighters. In August 1942, more than 900 Canadian soldiers were killed there. The Calgary Highlanders held a memorial service at the Canadian cemetery, which had been kept by the residents of Dieppe during the occupation all these years.

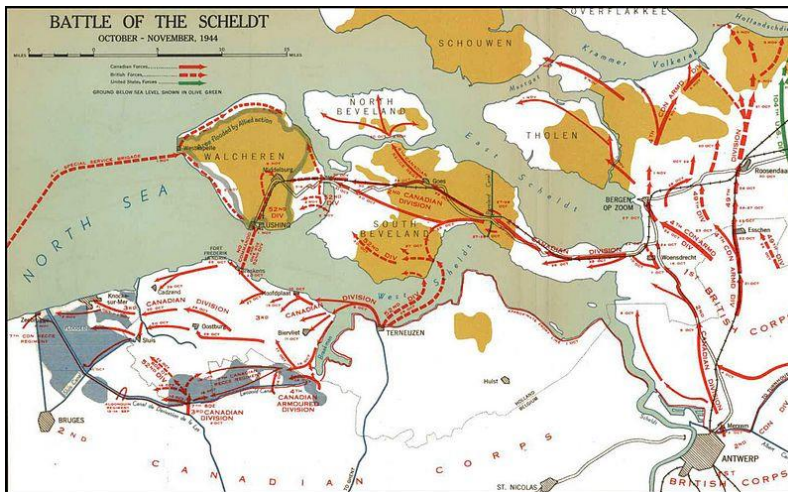
The peace in Dieppe was short-lived. In the early morning of September 5, it was raining cats and dogs and it was cold, and they were transported by truck to Montreuil, 40 miles south of Dunkirk. Dunkirk and its surroundings were heavily defended by the Germans. With Dunkirk in sight, the Calgary Highlanders fought from farm to farm under constant artillery fire. It was dangerous and depressing. In the end, they failed to take Dunkirk.

On September 18, the troops left Loon Plage by truck for Antwerp, occupied by the British on September 4, through the fields of Ypres that clearly still bore the traces of the First World War. Dunkirk remained in the hands of the Germans until the end of the war. Alex was on his way to the Battle of the Scheldt with his regiment.

For three days Alex got some rest. From Antwerp, the Calgary Highlanders then fought over the Albert Canal, the start of the Battle of the Scheldt, to the Turnhout Canal in the direction of Eindhoven, where they stayed until October 3, 1944.

Here Alex was admitted to the No 11 Canadian General Hospital with a severe headache. The doctors thought it was a sinus infection, but this could not be determined. He did have an inflammation of the nasal mucosa. After two weeks, the doctors declared him fit enough to return to his regiment.



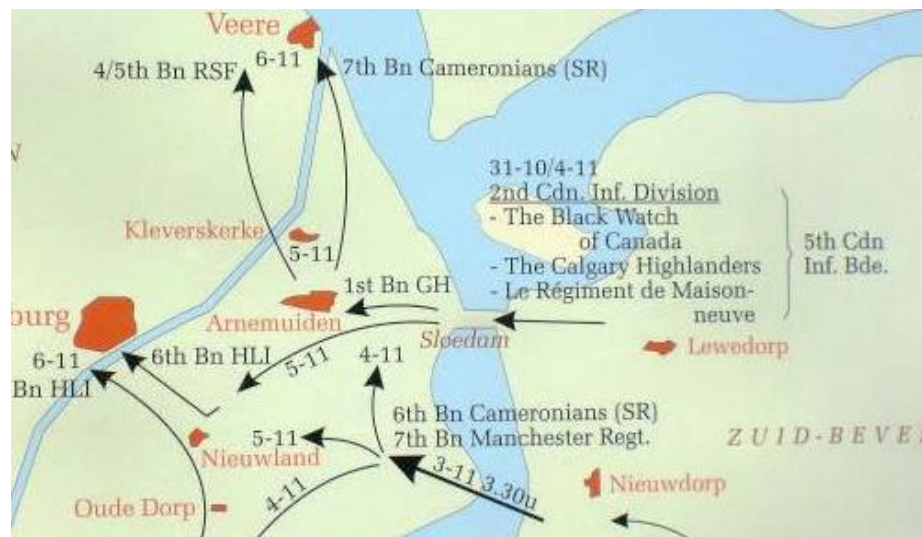


And while a huge force was leaving for Bergen op Zoom on October 23, the Calgary Highlanders were the regiment that was leading the battle towards the Oosterschelde. Their assignment was to conquer from Woensdrecht the terrain

that was bordered by the Oosterschelde and the railway line to Walcheren. Much of the land had been submerged or was extremely wet. It had the shape of a coffin on the map and the battle would later be renamed the "Coffin Show".

In the days that followed it was cold and wet. Alex and his regiment fought their way along the railway track towards Kruiningen. On 29 October they crossed the Zuid-Beveland Channel towards the Sloedam.

The Battle of the Sloedam started on October 31. The Black Watch regiment was the first to attack the dam. They suffered such heavy losses that the Calgary Highlanders were deployed



the next day. They did not get further than halfway up the dam either. The fighting took place at such close range that hand grenades could be thrown back before they exploded.

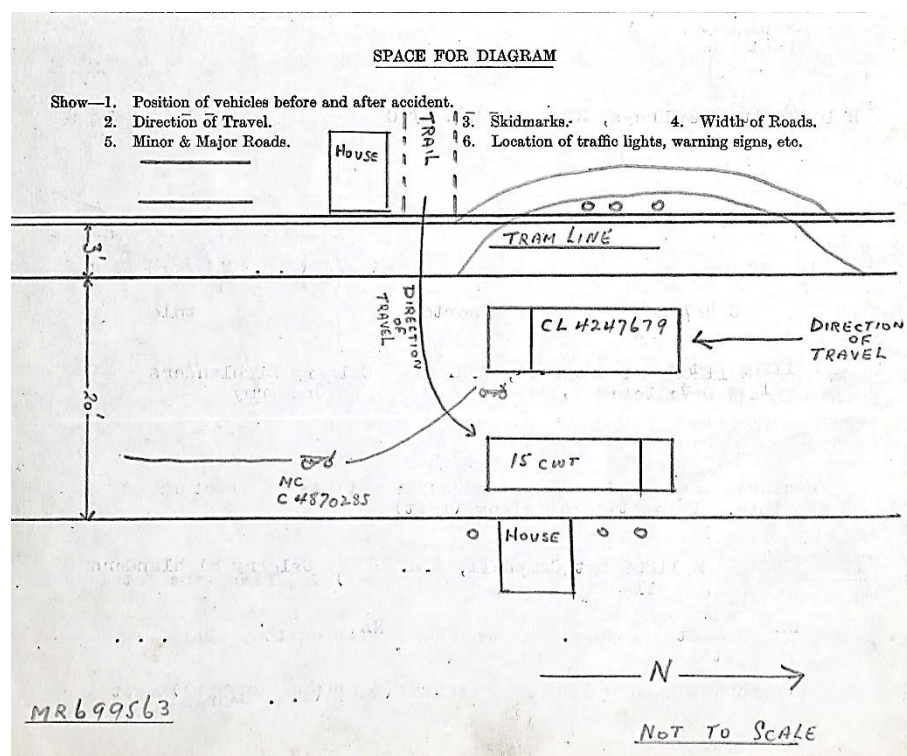
On the morning of November 1 the Highlanders managed to secure the west side of the dam, but on November 2 they failed to advance beyond the bridgehead on Walcheren. Finally British commandos landed on Walcheren and they drove away the Germans. This made the Battle of the Sloedam unnecessary with hindsight. It cost the lives of 107 Calgary Highlanders.

For a few days of rest they were stationed in Lierre, southeast of Antwerp, Belgium from November 4. That afternoon, much to the amusement of the men and the local population, a group of bagpipers played in the market square. In the evening there was time for further relaxation with music and a drink. In the night of November 10 to 11, the entire regiment left for Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

Initially, the Calgary Highlanders were to be stationed there in houses along the Rijksweg in Malden. They were used to guard bridges over the river Maas at the towns of Malden and Grave. There were rest days and there was training with a new weapon, the WASP flamethrower. Throughout the entire winter, the regiment was deployed to guard the border at Groesbeek. Two weeks on, one week off.

A month after arriving in Nijmegen, a terrible accident took place on December 10, 1944. Alex was the regiment's Despatch Rider, motorcycle courier, that day. That morning Alex was ordered by Captain Kerfoot to collect technical equipment for the regiment. He went on his way. The roads were wet, it had rained. At around 11.30 am he was riding on the road between Nijmegen and Malden. From the left hand side a Canadian Army truck, a CWT15, turned onto the road ahead of him. Alex tried to overtake the truck, but had not seen that a Canadian army truck, a CWT60, was also approaching from the opposite direction. Alex and the truck slammed on the brakes. But Alex's motorbike slipped under him and he crashed into the left front of the CWT60. The driver of the CWT15 apparently did not notice what was happening and continued driving. However, the

driver of the CWT60 pulled his truck aside. His co-driver, Private Humphreys of the Royal Regiment of Canada, got out to provide first aid. The driver stopped a passing jeep. The driver of the jeep took Alex to a hospital.



But Corporal Alexander Henry Campbell's injuries were too serious. He died that day at noon, twenty-three years old.

A lawsuit followed. Although the CWT15 should have been more careful when entering the road, no one was blamed for the accident.

Alex was buried at the Jonkerbosch military cemetery in Nijmegen. On July 31, 1945 he was reburied at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **V. C. 12**.

On his tombstone is the following text:

HE IS GONE  
BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Alex received the following awards:

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



**FACES TO GRAVES**

Stichting Faces to Canadian  
War Graves Groesbeek

Life Story by Sigrid Norde: Research Team Faces to Graves.

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

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

David. J. Bercuson, Battalion of Heroes–The Calgary Highlanders in World War II, The Calgary Highlanders Regimental Foundation, 1994

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