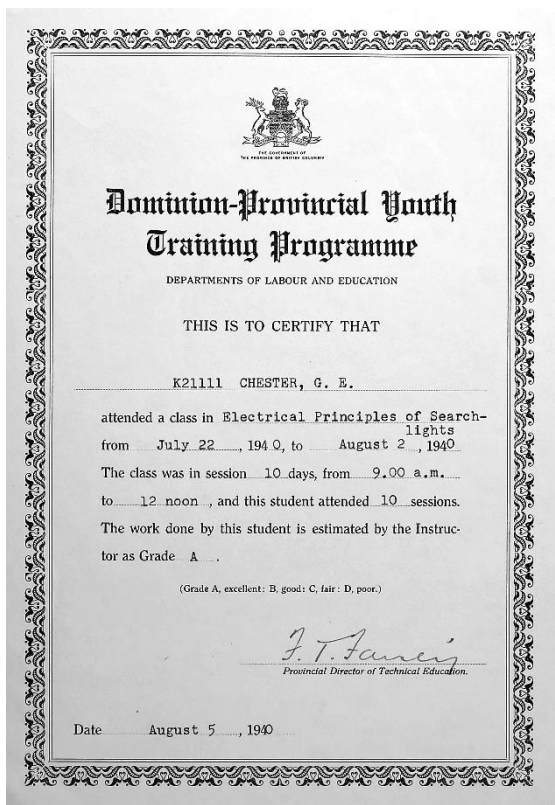


Chester, George Edward
Lieutenant
Essex Scottish Regiment
Royal Canadian Infantry Corps
K 21111



George Edward Chester was born in Ottawa, Ontario on 30 August 1915 to Edward Charles and Elizabeth Wilhelmina Chester, Honolulu, Hawaii. The family lived in 2036 Haro Street, Vancouver, and attended the Church of England.

George worked as an electrician before enlisting in Vancouver on 19 September 1939. He was posted to the 1st Searchlight Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery as Gunner.



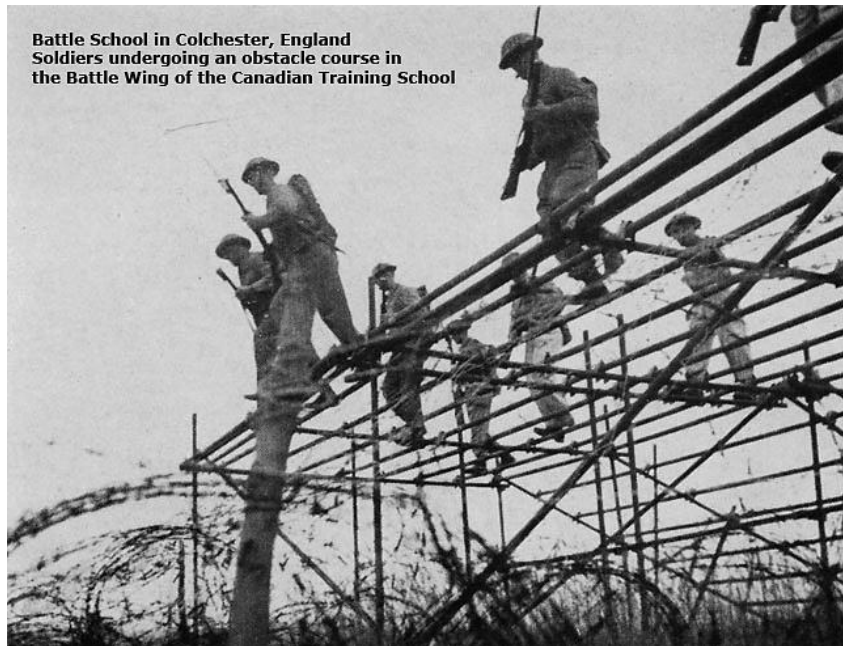
He stayed here for one year and then was transferred to the 16th Light Battery where he was promoted to the rank of Lance Bombardier.

George attended a class in Electrical Principles of Search-lights in July / August 1940 and finished successfully with Grade A.

On 5 April 1941 he embarked in Halifax and arrived in the UK on 19 April with the 16th Light Battery as a Bombardier.

Five days later he was sent to Colchester, Essex to continue his training.

First day of 1942 George was promoted and got the rank of A Sergeant with the 3 Light Anti-Aircraft. Three months later he became a Sergeant.



On 12 September he was transferred to the 3 Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit where he stayed for two months after which he went back to the 3 Light Anti-Aircraft.

In April 1943 George got injured during a training and was hospitalized in the Bognor Hospital for two weeks.



In November he was a Qualified Driver I/C and went back to the 3 Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit.

At the end of 1943 his superiors sent him to the Officers Cadet Training Unit and by the end of January 1944 he got the rank of Cadet.

His commanding Officers were very satisfied with him. George improved his knowledge, had made quite satisfactory progress but they could not help feeling that George had the ability to attain a higher category. George left a strong impression that a more definite and positive attitude would enable him to deserve better than his present good average grading. Once he has "found his feet" he will do better. He had attained average grading and was fit to be commissioned. George had the knowledge and ability and now need to develop confidence.

George continued his training and in July 1944 he got the rank of Lieutenant with the 2 Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit. He attended a course No 3 Battle Wing at the Canadian Training School.

As a leader he carried out ordinary assignments satisfactorily. He was responsible and conscientious, had an average self-restraint and his mood was fairly consistent. He was fairly alert and an average learner. He showed a good tactical knowledge and had a fair physical condition. He had plenty of guts. But George as an officer lacked enthusiasm but when placed in responsible position allowed himself quite capable of handling men. He needed more experience in Infantry tactics. George got the qualification Q2 which meant 'Good to Fair'.

On 3 November 1944 he embarked with the 1 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit and upon arrival was posted to the Essex Scottish Regiment (ESR).

On 6 November 1944 the ESR got new orders for advancing into the Nijmegen area. In the night of 8 to 9 November the ESR arrived in the area and went on foot to Groesbeek.

Now a period of patrolling and waiting began for the ESR. Two weeks later they moved to Mook, here their daily schedule was filled with training, reorganizing and relaxing. They did not stay in air-raid shelters and could go



"Colonel," mascot of the Essex Scottish, dons a tartan uniform supplied by Bartlet, Macdonald & Gow.

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wherever they wanted, so November was the easiest month for ESR in the war.

On 1 December the ESR had to move two miles and the men were given less comfortable quarters, sitting in foxholes while it was freezing cold and muddy. They stayed there for a fortnight before returning to Mook.

Concern about German advances in the Ardennes and indications of increasing enemy activity on the Nijmegen front caused ESR to return to the front position near Groesbeek. For the time being, the tasks appeared to be mainly limited to guard duty and reconnaissance patrols.

Christmas was celebrated and on 26 December a reconnaissance was carried out in the area around 's-Hertogenbosch in preparation for a move to this area. Three days later the ESR moved to Boxtel and celebrated the last day of the year with a church service dedicated by Chaplain Joe Cardy.



Gunners of the Essex Scottish Regiment, taking rations to their dug-out on a sleigh. Groesbeek, Netherlands, 24 Jan. 1945

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On 5 January, the ESR left for Vught, but two days later they were ordered to return to Nijmegen and the reconnaissance patrols and guard duty began again.

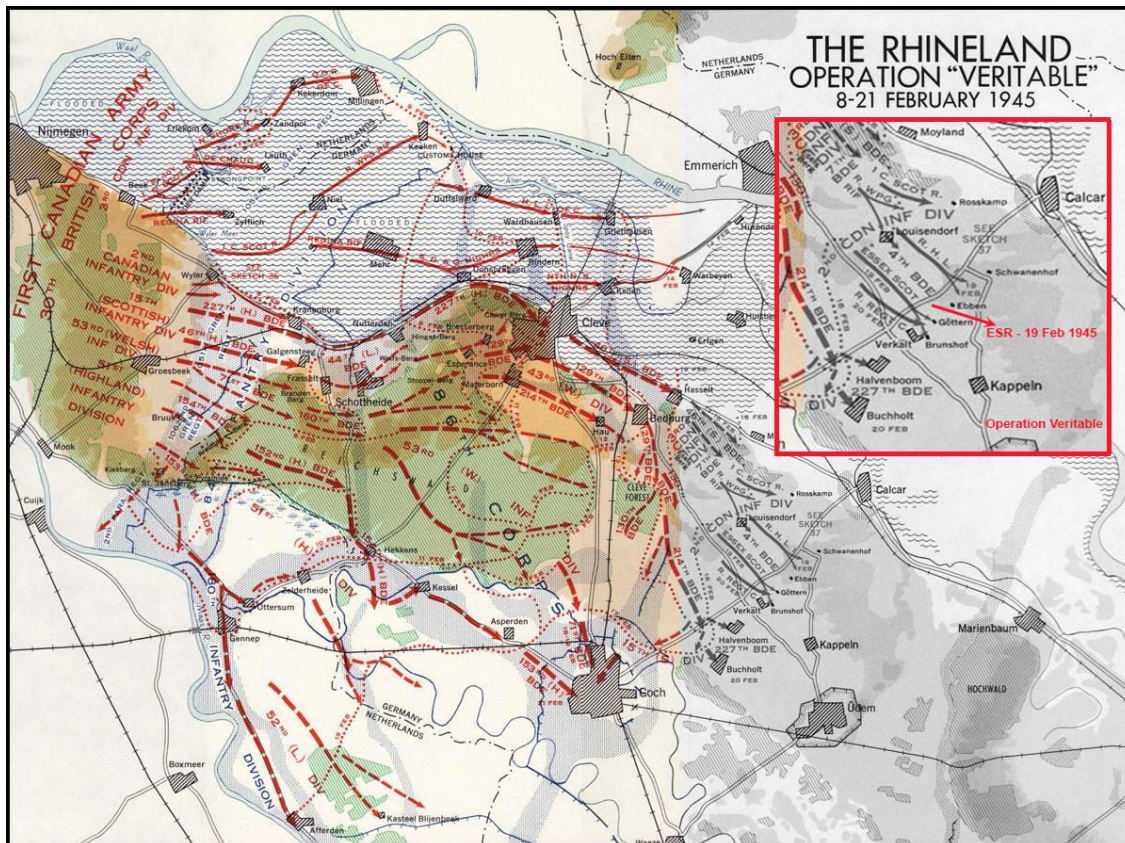
In the ESR War diary of 23 January 1945 was written:

"A fighting patrol with Lt Chester in charge, to houses 92-1, an enemy haunt, proved to be fruitless as Jerry was not there. The patrol commander, disgusted, lined his patrol up and beat his way across the 500 yards of open space, back to the starting point. No results".

In January the Allied launched a new plan: the Rhineland Offensive. The Rhineland Offensive consisted of several large-scale offensives designed to break through the German defence line in Western Europe. Operation Veritable was an important part of this because of the famous

'pincer movement' which aimed to drive the German forces out of the area between the Maas and the Rhine, a front only twelve kilometres wide.

After a force of over 500,000 soldiers had been assembled in the east, around Groesbeek and Nijmegen, including the First Canadian Army under General Crerar and the British 30th Army Corps under Lieutenant General Horrocks, Operation Veritable began on 8 February 1945. The British and



Canadian forces were to advance from the north, while the American Allies were to close the gap from the south, closing in on the Germans.

When Operation Veritable started the Essex Scottish Regiment was stationed around Wyler and awaiting further orders. The soldiers were eager to go to Germany, finally beat the enemy in their own country!

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 was 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 arrived. 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 19 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 George Edward Chester died on 19 February and was buried in Bedburg, Germany.

Later He was reburied and the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **XI. H. 10.**

Text on his headstone:

AT THE GOING DOWN
OF THE SUN
AND IN THE MORNING
WE WILL REMEMBER HIM

Awards:

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





FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek

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

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

Sources:

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