

**Chomyn, John Peter**

**Private**

**Essex Scottish Regiment**

**Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**

**L 107903**



John Peter Chomyn was born in Carpenter, Saskatchewan, Canada, on 29 November 1924 to Peter M. and Molly Chomyn. His father came from Ukraine and his mother was born in Saskatchewan, Canada. The family lived on a farm in Carpenter and attended the United Church of Canada.



General Delivery, Carpenter, Saskatchewan, Canada

John had four brothers, Ernest, Steve, Robert, Eugene and three sisters, Mary, Annie and Elsie.

John Peter went to a rural school and completed grade 10, he spoke English and Ukrainian. He enjoyed reading light stories and magazines.

John liked ball sports and in general outdoor sports, occasionally he went skiing. He did some shooting with his .22 rifle and trapped in winter months. He liked to take part in community plays and other forms of local social life.

John worked for three years as a farm labourer with Victor Byaf in Zelma, Saskatchewan where he drove tractors, trucks and cars. He had no mechanical experience, he would like to go in carpentry.

On 21 December 1943 John Peter enlisted in Regina, Saskatchewan and was posted to the 12<sup>th</sup> District Depot Canadian Army.

Three weeks later he was transferred tot the A27 Canadian Reconnaissance Training Centre in Dundurn as a Trooper.

In Dundurn he got an interview with an officer who wrote a report about John: *"He had a good average build, neat and clean with dark brown hair and dark complexion. He spoke with a distinct accent through being brought up in a Ukrainian District. However, he appeared to have about average learning ability, had a fair general knowledge of current event and can express himself well. John had a good attitude and should absorb training without difficulty and was eligible for extended training during Basic Training"*.

At the A27 Canadian Reconnaissance Training Centre John completed his ten weeks basic training. The training was interrupted by pneumonia, he was taken to the Dundurn Military Hospital during one month, April 1944.



Then he continued training but again on 10 May he was taken to the same hospital with pneumonia, this time for a week. After this he was sent to the #3 Casualty Retraining Centre in Portage and on 19 July he was found medically fit for training and returned to Dundurn.

On 2 October 1944 he completed the Canadian Armoured Corps (Reconnaissance) Training as per standard syllabus – General Duty. John showed a good conduct, his attitude to Reconnaissance was good. He was a conscientious type, slightly handicapped by lack of good English but didn't have particular difficulty. He was suitable for Overseas Service.

On 14 October 1944 he embarked in Canada and arrived in England on 20 October. Next month he was first posted to the 1 Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit as a Sapper and later to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Rocky Mountain Rangers as a Private.

He stayed only for two months in the UK and then was transferred to France with the Canadian Infantry Training Regiment.

On Christmas Day he was posted to the Essex Scottish Regiment (ESR).



By that time the ESR had set up camp in Groesbeek (The Netherlands) and surroundings.

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.

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 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.

Also John Peter Chomyn died on 19 February at the age of twenty and was buried in Bedburg, Germany. Later He was reburied at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **VII. F. 6.**

Text on his headstone:

OUR BELOVED SON JOHN.  
EVERY DAY IN SILENCE  
WE PRAY & REMEMBER.  
FAMILY & RELATIVES

Awards:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France-Germany Star
- War Medal 1939-1945
- 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.

\* If 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
- Canadian Virtual War Memorial
- The Essex Scottish Regiment, C. van Beek, Putte, 2004, speciale uitgave Tijding, periodiek Heemkundekring Het Zuidkwartier
- Horrall, Andrew "An "Eternal Memorial for Canadian Heroes": The Dutch Town of Putte Commemorates the Essex Scottish Regiment." Canadian Military History 20, 3 (2011)
- "information supplied by Project '44 - the Road to Liberation" - <https://www.project44.ca>