

William James Mennie

Private G10190

Carleton & York Regiment
Infantry Signaler Group C



Personal Information: William James Mennie was born on February 2nd, 1920. Born in New Hills, Aberdeen, Scotland, he was one of three children born to the late William Mennie, and his mother Maggie Mennie who died in 1925. When Maggie died she was 36 years old and the rest of the family moved to Canada. William James Mennie had a sister, Helen, and a brother, George Alexander Mennie who was also killed in action during the war. George died on August 15, 1944 at the age of 22. William's father later remarried. When he enlisted in Saint John he was of the Baptist religion and lived in Blacks Harbor, New Brunswick. At enlistment he was 6 feet tall and weighed 168 pounds and was of good health. On March 7th, 1944 William married Mercedes Corinne Anderson of Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick.

Military Movements: William James Mennie enlisted in the Army on the 13th of February, 1939 in Saint John, New Brunswick and was initially stationed with the 8th Anti-Aircraft Battery. He trained in Saint John until September 27th, 1941 when he was taken on strength with the 7th Anti-Air Battery (7 A.A.BTY.) and went to Newfoundland. While in Newfoundland, he was stationed in St. John's and spent most of his time in Gander. During his time in Gander, he was attached to the Royal Canadian Air Force. He proceeded in Command and attached to the C.S.A.T.C for a gas course. He had a short stay in the military hospital and upon discharge he received training in chemical warfare. He then returned on command to the gas course. William later went on to Bedford, Nova Scotia on November 11th, 1943 for an Anti-Air Reinforcement Camp and another two training camps in Halifax and Windsor, and one more in Utopia, New Brunswick. He received five days leave on Christmas. Later on he went to Barryfield, Ontario where he was trained to

be an Infantry Signaler Group "C". He left to go overseas on the 25th of November, 1944 and arrived in the United Kingdom on December 5th. He left the UK on February 16th, 1945 to go to Northwest Europe where he arrived the next day. On April 2nd he was taken on strength with the Carleton and York Regiment. The Carleton and York had just completed a tour of duty in Italy in March of 1945. This regiment took part in the invasion of Sicily in July of 1943 and took part in many important battles over the following 20 months. The Italian Campaign for the CYR included participation in the battles for the Gully, Ortona, the Liri Valley and the Gothic Line along with many other operations. William Mennie would join the regiment soon after their arrival in Holland. He would be with this regiment for only 18 days before his death.

The Final Days: The Carleton and York Regiment had a role in the plan for trying to cross the Apeldoorn Canal in Holland and the capture of the surrounding area starting on April 12, 1945. As the companies advanced some met severe resistance. On April 15 it became apparent that tank support was needed. It was decided not to communicate this need using the wireless set as the enemy was so close. Instead a runner was required to send a message 1000 yards back to Battlefield Headquarters under heavy machine gunfire. The runner was successful and the tank support arrived to support the advance. Many Germans were captured in the mopping up operation. Positions were scouted to prepare for the eventual crossing of the canal and the capture of the town.

The plan was to cross the canal at 10:30 PM on April 16th. However due to the lack of German opposition at this time they decided to cross at 8:00 PM. By 11:00 PM, the engineers had a bridge across and in operation. As other regiments carried out their duties, the CYR softened up the enemy by making use of their Wasp flamethrowers. The West Nova Scotia Regiment crossed the canal at 1:00 AM on April 17 and took the town with little difficulty. The CYR crossed at 8:00 AM. Some regiments encountered some resistance later on that day but not the CYR. They did capture a large number of prisoners as they moved towards the town by unit transport and carriers. On April 19th the CYR did meet occasional pockets of resistance, captured additional prisoners and continued their advance.

On April 20th, the CYR cleared nine villages and part of the village of Ham, where it ran into medium machine guns and bazookas. Sections of the platoon explored all side roads that turned out to be cobble stoned. They noticed that some stones had been lifted and set back into position raising the suspicion of mines underneath. The Carleton and York suffered two casualties this day. One man was wounded and one man was killed. The man killed was William James Mennie.

Medical Records: On the 13th of November 1939, William Mennie was admitted into the Lancaster Hospital for nine days. He was admitted again on the 15th of March, 1941 by ambulance where he received a chest x-ray and a re-examination. All tests came back good and he was discharged on the 26th of the same month. He visited the military hospital as well while in Gander.

Lest We Forget: William James Mennie was killed in action on April 20th, 1945 in Holland. He was 25 years old when he died. Only three additional Carleton and York Regiment men were *killed in action* after the death of Private Mennie. The war would be over in Europe in another 17 days.

William Mennie was originally buried in RC Church Langenooer 392018 sh Cemetery. He was later reburied in the Groesbeek Canadian Military Cemetery, 4 miles south east of Nijmegen, Holland. (grave 6, row H, plot 14.) His awards include the 1939-45 Star, France & Germany Star, Defense Medal, 1939-1945 War Medal, CVSM & Clasp. Two months after William James Mennie died, his son William James Alexander Mennie, was born.

William James Mennie

Lest We Forget

Video William James Mennie: <https://youtu.be/ToDQT79o8Ys>

Bibliography

Tooley, Robert William, *Invicta: The Carleton and York Regiment in the Second World War*, Fredericton, NB: New Ireland Press, 1989.

Archival Reference

Military service files of Private William James Mennie obtained from Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario.

Internet Sites

Veterans Affairs Canada

<http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca>

Biography courtesy of the Lest We Forget initiative of Belleisle Regional High School, Springfield, NB



William James Mennie with his bride Mercedes.
Picture from the collection of William James Alexander Mennie, son of William James Mennie.



William James Mennie
Picture from the collection of William James Alexander Mennie, son of William James Mennie.



The gravesite of William James Mennie in Holland. The nephew of William James Menie's son is kneeling by the grave.
Picture from the collection of William James Alexander Mennie, son of William James Mennie.