

Hedley BANNAN

Trooper B-132458

**8th (New Brunswick) Princess Louise's
Hussars**

5th Canadian Armoured Division



Personal information: Hedley Bannan, or as friends and family called him, "Pete"¹, was born on the 28th of February, 1922 in St. Catharines, Ontario. He was the son of Harriet C. Bannan and Albert H. Bannan and third in the family of five children with four sisters: Irene, Gertrude, Helen and Bernice. Hedley enjoyed rugby, lacrosse, swimming, fishing and hunting. He was also a member of a baseball team where he was the catcher and he played right wing on a hockey team. People considered him an athletic young man.² As a young Baptist, he began to work with his father who was a painter at the time. He received a weekly wage of \$22.00. It was his intention to return to this job after the war was over. He enlisted with the 5th Canadian Armoured Division in Hamilton Ontario, on the 4th of September, 1942 so he could fight for his country. At the time of enlistment, Hedley was 5 foot 3 inches in height and weighed 124 pounds. His military record indicated that he had completed grade 8 and he was in good health.

Military movements: After enlisting in September, Hedley started basic training in Fredericton N.B. from September 19th, 1942 until November 17th, 1942. On the 18th of November, he was taken on strength by the Canadian Armoured Corps Training Centre in Borden, Ontario for advanced training. In February of 1943, Hedley qualified as a tank gunner class II. On the 22nd of January he was granted permission to marry Miss Betty Marie Meighen.³ The marriage took place on the 20th of February, 1943. He was awarded the

CVSM and Clasp on the 4th of March, 1943. He then received a furlough from March 10th to March 23rd, 1943 and had time to spend with his new wife.⁴

On the 26th of March, Hedley was struck off strength in preparation for embarkation to the United Kingdom on March 27th. He arrived in the UK on the 4th of April, 1943 where he was taken on strength with the Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit. In June of 1943, Hedley was taken on strength by the 5th Canadian Armoured Regiment. On the 15th of November, 1943, Hedley was among hundreds of 8th Hussars who left the UK to battle for the first time. The 8th Hussars were to take part in the Italian campaign. They disembarked on November 27th, 1943.

The Hussars training continued on Italian soil. They studied Nazi techniques and trained on their German tanks. By January of 1944 they were ready to move north. The Italian winter brought much rain and along with it mud. The Hussars would move up through the Liri Valley. They would help penetrate the Hitler Line then move on to the Gothic Line. They would face their strongest opposition in Italy at Coriano Ridge in September of 1944.

In February of 1945, the Hussars left Italy. They proceeded to Marseilles, France and then on to Belgium. By April they were in in Holland which had been under German occupation for four years.

The final days: During the dark, early hours of April 15, the Hussars moved into Arnhem in preparation for Operation Cleanser. The Hussars along with four other regiments were told that in four days they were to cover 30 miles and clean out the Germans from Arnhem to the banks of the huge inland sea: Zuider Zee. They were told that the terrain was mostly flat with a bit of high ground. Parts of the land was heavily wooded. During this difficult night, Lieutenant Horncastle's tank was struck. A shell came through the front and started a fire. Hedley Bannan was the driver of this tank. He was in trouble, his clothes were burning, his co-driver had sustained a head injury and the gunner had cut his foot. The Germans continued to hit the tank. All of the men managed to get out but not Bannan. Lieutenant Horncastle succeeded in his second attempt to get back into the tank only to find Hedley Bannan dead.⁵

Lest we forget: Hedley Bannan was buried in Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery and then re-buried in the Groesbeek Canadian Military Cemetery in Holland. He is one of 2610 Canadian soldiers who were buried there who

sacrificed their lives in the Second World War for our freedom. He was survived by his parents, four sisters and his young wife who was only 20 years old. Hedley Bannan was only 23 years old when he died on April 15, 1945. The war would be over in less than a month.

Video Hedley Bannan:

<https://youtu.be/LPRh4x9Qgko?list=UUOgnx5r2YVkmivgsdDXl-pg>

Hedley Bannan

Lest We Forget

Bibliography: How, Douglas. *The 8th Hussars: A History of the Regiment*. Sussex, NB: Maritime Publishing, 1964

Archival Reference: Military service files of Trooper Hedley Bannan obtained from Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario.

Internet Sites:

8th Canadian Hussars (Princess Louise's)

<http://en.wikipedia.org>

Veterans Affairs Canada

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca>

Canada at War

<http://www.canadaatwar.ca>

Veterans Affairs Canada

www.vac-acc.gc.ca

Footnotes:

¹E-mail received from his Terry Shaw who is married to the niece of Hedley Bannan.

²Military service files of Trooper Hedley Bannan obtained from Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario.

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⁴ Military service files of Trooper Hedley Bannan obtained from Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario.

⁵ The details of April 14 and 15, 1945 are detailed in the Douglas How book: The 8th Hussars. Sussex, NB: Maritime Publishing, 1964

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



Biography made available for Faces To Graves, with courtesy of Stephen Wilson, Belleisle Regional High School.



Trooper Hedley Bannan (Source: From the Bannan family collection)





Hedley Bannan's grave in the Groesbeek Canadian Military Cemetery.



The inscription on his grave marker. (From the collection of S. Wilson)