

Buchan, John Kenneth

Sergeant

A 59193

Royal Winnipeg Rifles

Royal Canadian Infantry Corps



John Kenneth Buchan, known by his second name, was born 23 November 1918 in Lawrence Station, a small community that lies 17 miles southwest of London, Ontario. He was the youngest child of Alexander Buchan and Christena March, both British born. They had married in London, Ontario on 9 April, 1909. Kenneth had two sisters, Dorothy Stevenson and Katherine and a brother, Donald. The family attended the Woodview United Church in Lawrence Station.

School went well for Kenneth; he completed five years of High School, passing his Junior Matriculation examination at the end of it. He was brought up on a mixed farm and learned to drive the farm tractor and a light truck as well as a car without accident as he reported later. In July 1936 he went to work in the Royal Bank of Canada as an assistant accountant and teller; he had good reports and his job would be available for him again after his army service. He remained at the bank for more than five years, still living with his parents, until he enlisted in January 1942. During this period he volunteered for army service as a reserve in the Middlesex and Huron Regiment; the training took place at the Noll BTC Woodstock in November/December 1940. He enjoyed many sporting activities in his free time and listed the team sports baseball, hockey (defense position) and football as full back. He also liked to play golf, badminton and tennis.

IN THE MILITARY

Kenneth joined the army in London, Ontario on 2 January, 1942 when he was twenty three years old. He was tall, 5ft.11ins., weighed 163 lbs., with

brown eyes and a dark complexion, He was well developed and had generally good health; a childhood mastoid infection was noted.

At his first interview it was clear that he was ambitious and aimed for a commission. His preference was to enter the Pay Corps or to become an instructor. Unfortunately there were no vacancies at that time. The officer reported positively: he had a good disposition and presence, and was eager to get along in the army. Kenneth himself said he joined the army 'to do his bit'. His map reading and military knowledge was good but his mechanical knowledge rather limited.

He began his army life as a trooper in the general list but by March was promoted to acting Lance Corporal and in September to acting Corporal. His basic training which he completed in April, began in the Kitchener Camp and continued in Camp Borden, both in Ontario. The year's advanced training lasted until April 1943. By September Kenneth was attached to the CIRU (Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit) and sent to England where he did an advanced rifle and small arms course; he also took part in a gas training course. He was confirmed in the rank of Corporal at this time but had already had periods as an acting Sergeant.

At the turn of the year he was awarded the CVSM and clasp (Canadian Volunteer Service Medal). In March 1944 he took part in Exercise Dark. On 10 June he was assigned to the Royal Winnipeg Rifles regiment which was already engaged in the Normandy landings. It is not clear exactly how soon Kenneth crossed over to France but by September he was an acting Sergeant and by December, confirmed as a full Sergeant.

The Royal Winnipeg Rifles (RWR) were in the first wave of landings in France on 6 June, 1944 and came under heavy fire as they waded ashore. Viciously attacked, with no tank support, three companies were wiped out. With reinforcements, the regiment fought on through the Normandy campaign, taking part in the battle for Caen and the Falaise Gap.



Several channel ports were liberated before the Schelde battle began in Belgium and the harbour in Antwerp was freed in September and October. The Winnipeg Rifles spent the next three months rather quietly near Nijmegen in the Netherlands. Training courses were given in preparation for Operation Veritable (the Battle of the Reichswald) which was to begin on 8 February 1945. It was an enormous operation involving more than 300,000 soldiers which aimed to drive the enemy back across the Rhine; Kenneth's regiment took part in the operation. Conditions were hard; after a long frost,

the thaw had set in and the ground in the forest soon became a sea of mud, hampering all the heavy army vehicles.

Between the forest and the Rhine, the flat land was flooded to a depth of up to three feet of water; the amphibious Buffalos which the Canadians used, were constantly in need of repair. The enemy was driven out of the Reichswald by 13 February and the Winnipeg Rifles moved south east in the direction of Kalkar, experiencing the heaviest shell fire they had ever been under. On 18 February, Canadian forces began a stiff battle round the area of Moyland wood; this was finally cleared on 21 February after a carefully coordinated attack by the Winnipeg Rifles Regiment

Sergeant John Kenneth Buchan was killed on 21 February, 1945 at the age of 26. He was buried temporarily in Bedburg Hau, near Kleve in Germany. He was later reburied in the Canadian Military Cemetery, Groesbeek, Plot **XI. E. 8.**

AWARDS

1939-45 Star

France and Germany Star

Defence Medal

Defence Medal CVSM and clasp



Life story Gwyn de Jong Research Team Faces To Graves.

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives of Canada

Official History of the Canadian Army: Col. C.P. Stacey

Jeannie McNaughton



Kenneth Buchan – photo cousin Jeannie McNaughton