

Christie, Hugh Patterson

Private

F/89357

North Nova Scotia Highlanders

C Company

Royal Canadian Infantry Corps



COS CHEUM NACH GABH TILLEADH-"Our footsteps will not allow us to go backwards", or "No retreating footsteps"

Hugh Patterson Christie was born on Saturday, 27 March 1920 in Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada, the son of David Shepherd Christie and Christine Rebecca MacDonald, who married 17 July 1910.

The family attended the Presbyterian church. Hugh had two half brothers, John and Donald MacDonald and five older sisters: Anna, Kathleen, Marion, Jean and Betty. He also had two younger brothers, Kenneth and John. They lived in Englishtown, Victoria County, a small fishing community on the coast of Nova Scotia; it is on Cape Breton Island, near St. Ann's harbour.

Hugh was in the local school and completed grade VI by the age of 14; he then left and went to work for Jack Horton, the lighthouse keeper on Ciboux Island, also known as Bird Island. (In the 1860's, the people of Cape Breton asked the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia for a lighthouse on the mouth of the Great Bras d'Or and this was built in 1863 on outer Bird Island.) At the same time Hugh also worked on a farm for five years.



Lighthouse on Ciboux Island, Cape Breton, Canada. Source : Lighthousefriends.com

On 21 July 1941, Hugh, aged 21, joined the army in Sydney, Nova Scotia; he said that he would like to serve in the merchant marines. He was placed with the #14 Infantry Training Centre in Aldershot, Nova Scotia, which lies just outside Kentville; it was opened in 1904 as an infantry, cavalry and field artillery training camp. Ten days later he was transferred to #60 Basic Training Centre in Yarmouth, NS and remained there for two months. Then he went to the Coast and Anti-Aircraft Training Centre in Halifax, the capital of Nova Scotia on 2 October. His next move was to Halifax Fortress, in December, with the 16 Anti-Aircraft (machine gun) Battery Artillery Unit; he stayed here for eight months and was then given 14 days home leave.



In the autumn of 1942, Hugh was placed with the Canadian Royal Ordnance Corps in Camp Debert NS. His military training continued in November on the Pennfield airfield, where the #34 Operational Training Unit was situated. Shortly afterwards, he went on to #36 Operational Training Unit in Greenfield, NS.

Hugh with his sister Marion in the summer of 1942.

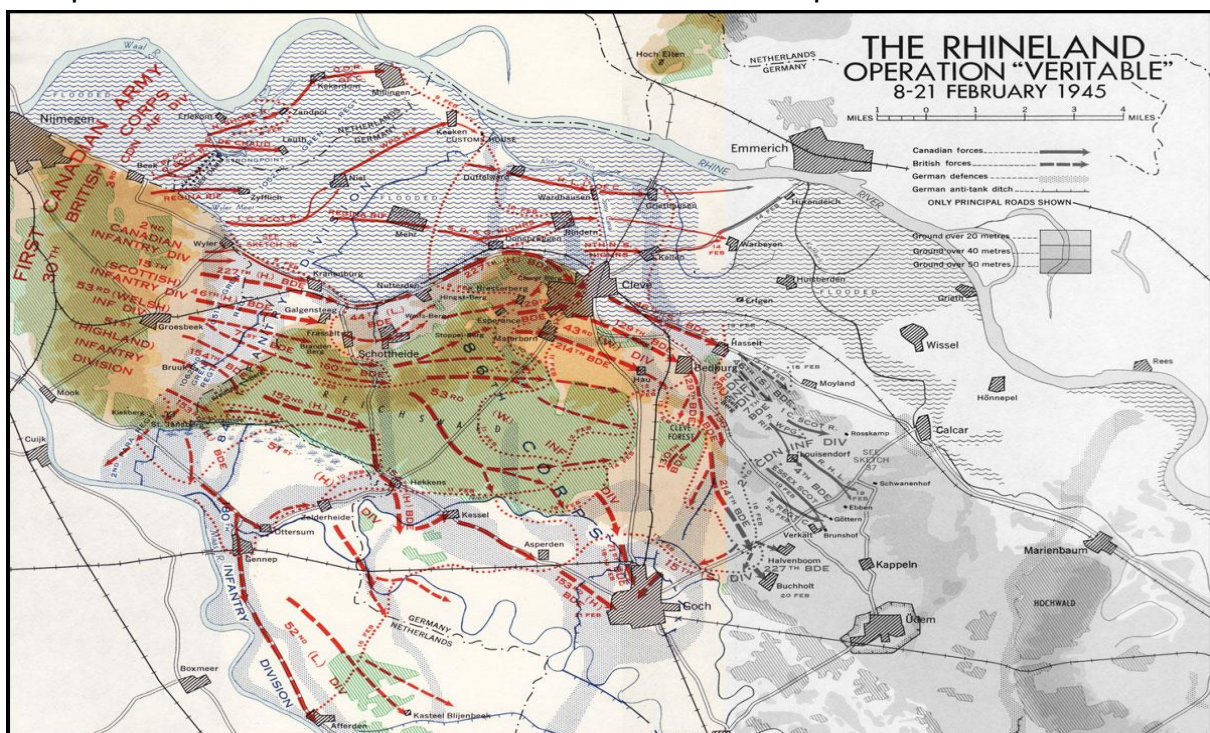
Photo from the book "In the Morning" Veterans of Victoria County, Cape Breton.

In January 1943 he had to go into hospital on two occasions was finally released on 20 January. From March until the end of the year, he remained in Debert and commuted between the two Training Units. He spent 16-23 December, with the Royal Canadian Artillery in Halifax.

After Christmas leave Hugh was stationed in Aldershot with the #14 Infantry Training Unit. Then followed various short periods in the military hospital from January until 5 April, 1944. In June, he took part in Sten, Mortar and Bren gun courses and qualified as a Q II Gunner. On 31 August he was placed with No 1 Brigade Group in Camp Debert. followed by a week with the Royal Canadian Artillery in Halifax, just before Christmas.

On 14 October 1944, Hugh left Canada on the ship to England, where he joined the #3 Canadian Infantry Training Regiment. Some weeks of hard training followed in the south of England; on 23 November he was shipped to France and placed with the #2 Canadian Base Reinforcement Group. These men were then assigned to regiments which had suffered heavy losses in battle. Hugh joined the North Nova Scotia Highlanders on 30 January, 1945. This regiment had taken part in the Battle of the Scheldt in Belgium and the Netherlands and was then stationed in the Nijmegen area for three months.

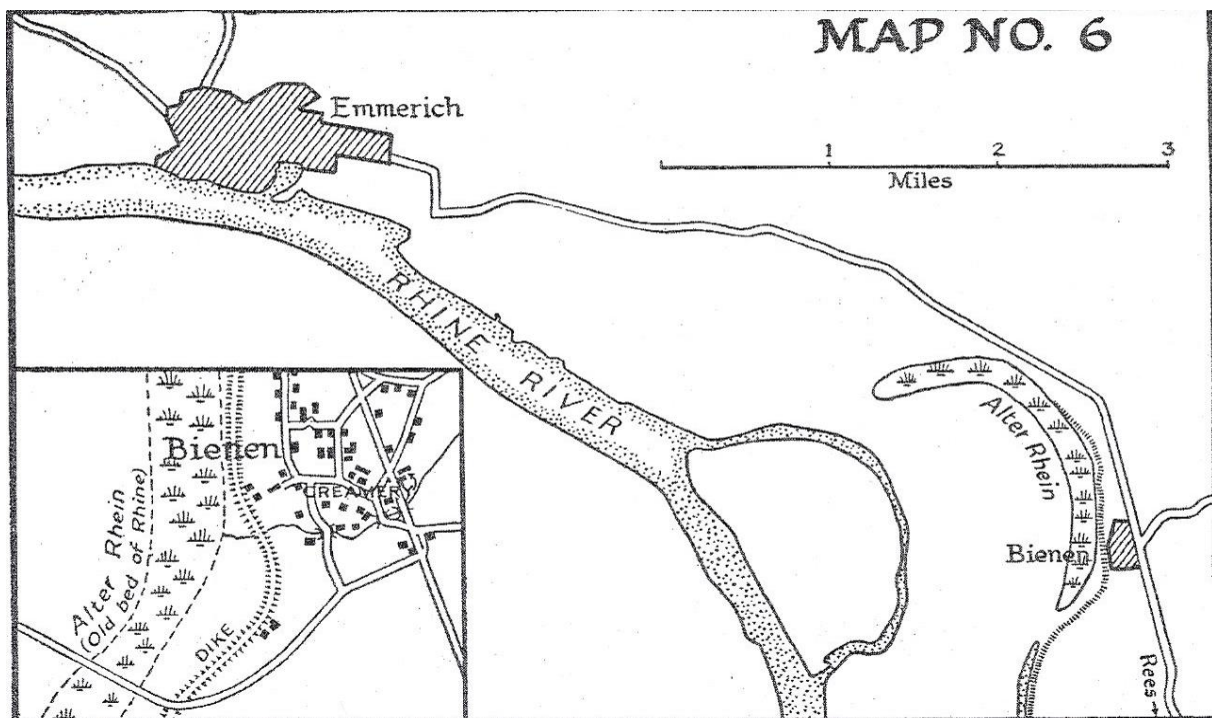
Operation Veritable began on 8 February; it aimed to clear the enemy out of the region between the rivers Maas and Rhine. British and Canadian troops attacked from the north and American troops from the south.



The Germans hindered progress from the north by opening dams on the Roer river and flooding the area.

In the heaviest air bombardment of WWII, the town of Kleve was devastated. In the Reichswald forest, a battle of attrition was taking place. After wintry conditions, a thaw set in and together with heavy rain, the ground became a sea of mud. When the water finally receded, the operation was successful.

Operation Plunder began in the night of 23/24 March, the Rhine was crossed near Wesel and the troops moved further into Germany.



Source : *No Retreating Footsteps*

The North Nova Scotia Highlanders were ordered to go in the direction of the village of Bienen. It was strongly defended by a large number of machine guns. Without the possibility of using tanks and other vehicles in the narrow streets, the Canadians were an easy target for the anti-tank guns and panzers. The Wasp flamethrowers could have helped them but all three were out of order.

The Company advanced through fierce enemy fire coming from all directions. The men ran towards the Speldrop-Bienen road but 8 of them ran the other way, towards a house from which a German officer appeared; they shot and injured him. (He was lamed for life.) The German Platoon Sergeant Propokchuk was also injured, with a shot through both

legs. Using his gun as a crutch, he dragged himself over the road in an attempt to help his commander.

The 24-year-old Private Hugh Patterson Christie took the initiative and together with his comrades, stormed the house. With four men, he attacked a machine gun position but was killed together with three others. His body was found later with one of his hands still on his machine gun.



Hugh died on 25 March in Bienen, two days before his 25th birthday. He was first buried near the Rosan farm in Bienen.



Canadian soldiers later visit their comrades' graves at Rosan Farm. Photo Josef Becker, historicus Bienen.

On 6 December 1945, he was reburied in the Canadian War Cemetery, Groesbeek NL, grave reference **XVII. G. 13.**

"A LOVING SON IS GONE
A VOICE WE LOVED IS STILL
A FAITHFUL SOLDIERS NOBLE END "

Awards Hugh Patterson Christie: 1939-1945 Star, France en Germany Star, War Medal 1939-1945 and Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp.



Life story: Gijs Krist, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Wikipedia

Canadiansoldiers.com

Nova Scotia Archives



Photo Kim Huvenaars – Faces to Graves.

On the square in front of the church in Bienen, a plaque on the wall reminds us of the hard battle.

In the church in Bienen is the "Roll of Honor", a commemorative book containing the names of all victims of the battle of Bienen: British, Canadian and German soldiers together.

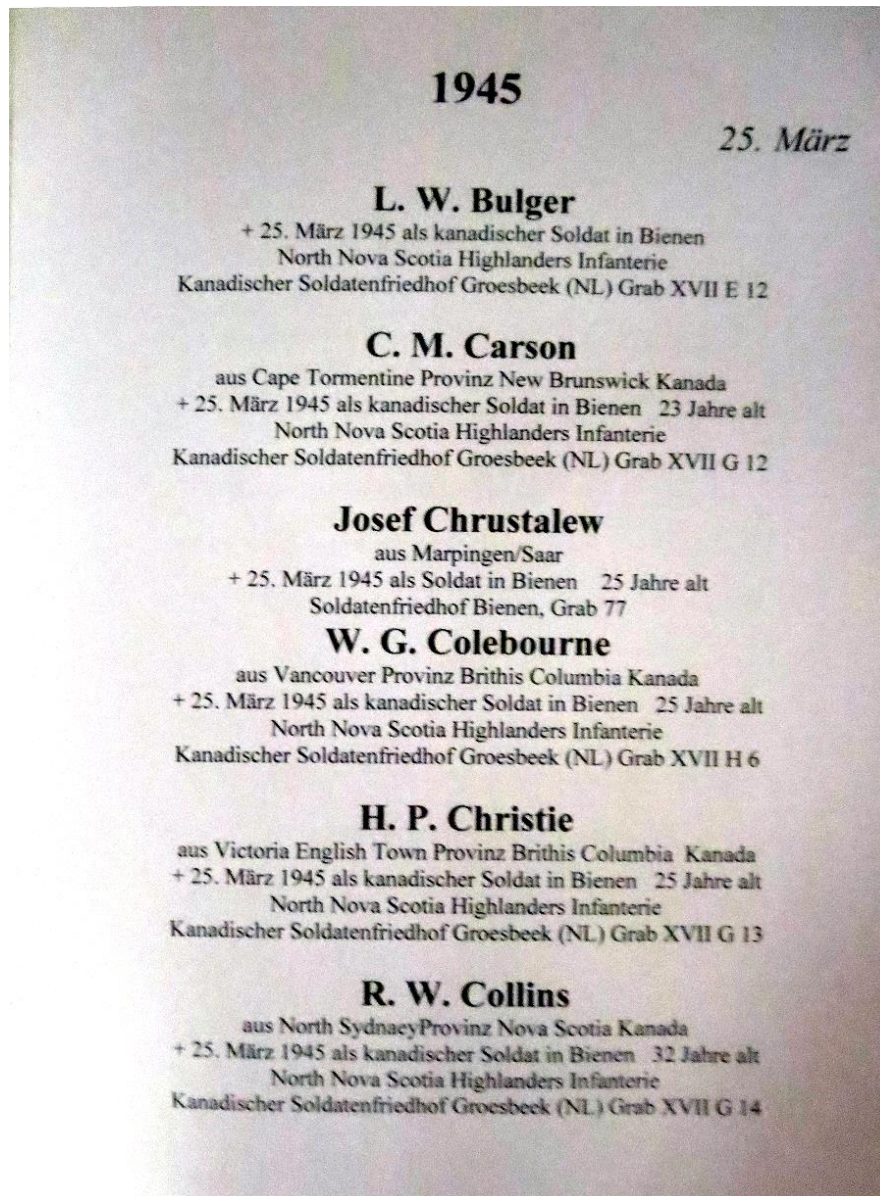


Photo Faces to Graves.



Hugh Patterson Christie is commemorated on the Memorial in Englishtown, Canada.

Source : Flickr.com