

Jones, Earl Frederick

Private

**Black Watch (Royal Highland
Regiment) of Canada**

L56014



Life for the Jones family began in Canada when Alfred Thomas arrived in Saskatchewan in 1906, after emigrating from Ruabon in North Wales with his father William Henry. Six years later at the age of 27, he married Clara Julia Mueller who was born in Minnesota, USA in 1887 to parents who came from Germany. The couple went to live in Rabbit Lake, a small settlement situated some 160 kilometers northeast of Saskatoon and farmed a homestead there. The family attended the United Church.

In the next twenty years twelve children were born to Alfred and Clara. On 18 August 1919 in Verndale, Saskatchewan, the twins Irvin and Earl



arrived. In due course they attended the local school for eight years, leaving at age 14 and going to work for their father Alfred on the farm. When Earl joined the army in 1941, he said that he wanted to come back to Rabbit Lake as a farmer and settle there. His twin brother Irvin also joined the army about the same time and served in Europe.

Earl 's father and mother, taken at the Rafuses.

IN THE MILITARY

Earl enlisted in the army on 11 June 1941 in Regina and stated a preference for the infantry. He could drive a car but had no particular hobbies. At his medical he was found to be a healthy, well developed young man, 5ft.9 ins tall, weighing 142 lbs. with green eyes and a fair complexion. Earl was to train in Canada for the next fifteen months, going first to Brandon in Manitoba, then Debert in Nova Scotia and finally Sussex in New Brunswick.

Given periodic leave, he was able to return to Rabbit Lake occasionally.



*The twin brothers
Irvin and Earl.*

On 18 September 1942 Earl landed in the United Kingdom. Here he was to spend the next two years in various infantry training units, regularly taking part in small arms courses and learning how to handle a wide range of different weapons. France was invaded in June 1944 and at the end of August, Earl, still in England, was with the Rocky Mountain Rangers, which was then used as a reinforcement unit for the different fighting regiments.

On 6 October, Earl landed in France and a week later was placed with the 1st battalion of the Black Watch, part of the Royal Highland Regiment of Canada. The Black Watch had landed on Juno Beach in Normandy on 9 July and taken part in two months of intense fighting across northern France, suffering heavy casualties in the process, It reached Belgium by the middle of September and prepared to take part in the battle of the Schelde. This aimed to clear the enemy from the river estuary, thus freeing the port of Antwerp. Earl joined the regiment, possibly on 15

October, as one of 151 reinforcements that arrived on that day, on the northern shore of the Schelde river in the Netherlands. Although the enemy was never far away, there was time for more training until the battalion was transported in the night of 9/10 November via Tilburg, and 's-Hertogenbosch to Cuijk in the Nijmegen area.

Nijmegen had been liberated in September, 1944 and there followed a three month period of relative calm allowing the battle weary troops to recuperate and retrain; there was some opportunity for entertainment and short periods of leave. However the German border was situated very close by and there was constant military harassment necessitating regular patrols by all regiments.



Earl Jones

The Black Watch started off in Cuijk, a small town on the west bank of the Maas river, some 15 kilometers from Nijmegen; the pipe band, marching in their kilts proved popular in Cuijk and friendships were made with the local people. They stayed for two weeks but were to return several times in December and January for short periods.

A very different situation awaited them in Groesbeek where the Dutch people had been evacuated and the enemy was positioned less than two kilometers away watching for any signs of movement. Living conditions were unpleasant, either in dugouts or ruined houses. As the winter approached, the constant rain led to flooding, followed by extreme cold, ice and snow. In the middle of December the Black Watch was in the wooded area near Mook and in January, 1945 they were given the task of guarding the Maas bridge in Grave. On 1 February they moved close to the lake at Wyler through which the German- Dutch border runs. Some days were quiet but often there was some kind of offensive action with casualties.

The major Operation Veritable began 8 February, preceded by the mass bombing of Kleve and Kranenburg in the night. The weather was milder, thawing conditions adding to the considerable flooding; vehicles, often stranded in the mud on higher ground had to be freed.

In the middle of February, the Black Watch battalion enjoyed a rest of three days in Nijmegen, staying in the Prince Hendrik barracks. On 18 February, they started to take part in Operation Veritable, entering Germany in the evening at 20.15, passing through the Reichswald forest and reaching Bedburg Hau at midnight. The next day they were in the battle zone near Kalkar. After a few days involved in heavy fighting, the war diary relates that on 24 February, in the woods near Moyland, dugouts were made and 'the boys had their first full night's sleep since entering Germany...

On 25 February, Operation Blockbuster began at 4.30am; the intention was to capture the high ground above Kalkar. There was fierce German resistance as the Allies reached their objective and many casualties on both sides.

Earl Frederick Jones was killed 26 February, not far from the village of Uedem. Eight days later, 6 March, he was buried in the temporary Canadian Military Cemetery, Uedem, A year later, 7 March, 1946.

He was reburied in the Canadian Military Cemetery, Groesbeek, in the Netherlands Plot **XXIV. E. 12.**

In the northwest of Saskatchewan a lake has been named in memory of Earl Frederick Jones.

AWARDS

1939-45 Star

France Germany Star

Defence Medal War Medal

CVSM & Clasp

Memorial Bar



FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story: Gwyn de Jong, Research Team Faces to Graves.

SOURCES:

Library and Archives, Canada
Black Watch War Diaries
Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Julian Hawkins (great nephew)
Photos Julian Hawkins



Earl's great nephews at his grave, 2019.