

Marchbank, Basil Lewis

Private

G/12225

North Shore (New Brunswick)

Regiment

Royal Canadian Infantry Corps



Personal Information: Basil Lewis Marchbank was born on the 31st of January, 1918 in Greer Settlement, Saint John, New Brunswick. He was the youngest of three children and was the only boy. Basil was the beloved son of Hudson James and Violet May Marchbank. He attended the Salvation Army Church, and stayed in school until he was 16 years of age and completed up to grade 5. Growing up he lived on a small farm outside of Saint John, then when he was older he moved into the City of Saint John. A year before enlisting, Basil worked for Carpenters and Jointers of America, in a Veneer Plant packing wood. At 21 years of age, on July 8th 1940, Basil Lewis Marchbank, without any prior military experience, enlisted to fight for our country in the Second World War. After the war he wanted to switch careers, and become a painter, and also he wanted to move back in with his parents and live on their farm with them.

Military Movements: Upon enlistment in July of 1940, Basil was placed with the 15th Heavy Battery, 3rd Coast Brigade in Saint John. There he started training. About four months into his training he was admitted to the Howe Lake Hospital for 7 days for tonsillitis surgery and recovery. He trained in Saint John up until June 16th, 1942. From there he was transferred to Dartmouth until February 3rd, 1943. After that he was

transferred to Woodstock, Ontario where he attended Driver I.C. Courses. Throughout all of the training, Basil had some trouble with the rules and regulations; he was reprimanded several times.

After finishing his drivers' course, Basil was granted a leave to return home to Saint John one last time prior to going overseas. This would be his final Christmas to visit family and friends. After his leave was over, he was sent to Windsor, N.S. on January 5, 1944. In late March, Basil sailed for England to become part of the Canadian Artillery Reinforcement Unit. He disembarked in the United Kingdom on April 3rd, 1944. Basil was transferred from the Artillery Reinforcement Unit to the Infantry Reinforcement Unit and became a private instead of a gunner as of April 22, 1944. No doubt the time spent between April 22 and July 13 was devoted to infantry training.

On July 13, 1944, Basil set sail for France where he would be taken on strength by the North Shore Regiment. He was wounded nine days later and sent to a military hospital in England. He was discharged from the hospital on August 11, 1944. From August 11, 1944 to November 8, 1944 he was with the Canadian Infantry Training Regiment where he received training and conditioning in preparation for his eventual return to the battlefield.

By November 10, 1944 he was in North West Europe and had been taken on strength again by the North Shore Regiment.

The Final Days: On January 4th, Operation 'Veritable' or the "Big Push" was issued. Operation 'Veritable' was designed to overcome three German defence lines that were built between the Rhine and Maas Rivers east of Nijmegen. The Germans were very tight and behind their defensive lines was German territory, including the cities of Goch and Cleve. The objective was to reclaim the land, and in order to do so, units united to fight against the Germans. For this operation every soldier was issued a white snowsuit and received the final briefing on the Operation.

The Allies were preparing for a huge fight. They would fight harder, because they knew that the Germans would be even fiercer on their territory than they would anywhere else. During the month of January, the roads to Nijmegen looked a lot like the roads in England just prior to "D" Day, the roads were filled with boxes of equipment and crowded with soldiers preparing themselves for battle. Roads leading to Nijmegen were being rebuilt and new roads were being created. Some roads were blocked with equipment, and every effort was made to try to hide everything that was going on from the Germans.

In early February the first phase of the operation was ready. For the first phase, their objective was to clear the Polder country between Reichswald and the River Waal. The North Shore Regiment was to take hold of Kekerdom, then to go and capture Zandpol and the factories along the riverbank.

February for them was rainy and the marching became harder with the winter slowing them down. Once again the officers were briefed, but no orders were issued. On the 7th, airplanes bombed the targets. It was to help weaken them before the attack.

The attack was on February 8th. At daybreak the artillery opened up, and the "Big Push" was in play. The units tried to do as ordered, but the Germans blew up dykes and flooded the whole area. Their wireless broke down, NRS (North Shore Regiment) attacked Zandpol but the Germans were strong.

The attack was a success. By the end of the day they managed to capture eighty prisoners and captured the land. Twelve men were wounded and ten men were killed in action. Basil Louis Marchbank was one of the ten men who died that very significant day.

Medical Records: Basil was sent to the hospital three times during his time with the Canadian Army. He was in the hospital for seven days for tonsillitis, and then he was wounded in war twice. There was no clear information with regard to his wounds. Basil was pronounced dead on February 8th, 1945. He was killed in action and buried at the Canadian Temporary Burial Ground in Nijmegen. Later he was reburied to the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek, grave reference **I. B. 8.**

Lest We Forget: Basil Lewis Marchbank is buried today in Holland in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery. This cemetery lies 1500 metres east of the main road to Nijmegen. Basil left everything to his mother which included his medals: the France and Germany Star, Defence Medal, War Medal and C.V.S.M. (Canadian Volunteer Service Medal).¹⁰ Basil Lewis Marchbank was only 26 years old when he died.

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

Video by a student at Belleisle Regional High School as part of the school's Lest We Forget initiative: <http://youtu.be/Ls8CEyT9Sdw>

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



Bibliography

Rev. Hickey, R. Myles. The Scarlet Dawn. Fredericton, New Brunswick: UNIPRESS, 1949.

Bird, Will. R... North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment. Fredericton, New Brunswick: UNIPRESS, 1963.

Archival Reference

Military service files of Private Basil Lewis Marchbank obtained from Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario.

Internet Sites

<http://canadianheroes.org/loren/veritabl.htm>

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

<http://wwii.ca/memorial/world-war-ii/>

Book:

Bird, Will. R... North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment. Fredericton, New Brunswick: UNIPRESS, 1963. Pg.499-501

Rev. Hickey, R. Myles. The Scarlet Dawn. Fredericton, New Brunswick: UNIPRESS, 1949 Pg. 209-210

Rev. Hickey, R. Myles. The Scarlet Dawn. Fredericton, New Brunswick: UNIPRESS, 1949 Pg. 210

Extra information from Gary Silliker:

8 February 1945

Two Miramichi soldiers, of the North Shore Regiment, were killed in action on this day during Operation Veritable in the Netherlands. They were Lieutenant Louis 'Lou' Joseph Walsh, the son of William and Ellen Walsh of Chatham, and Lance Corporal Robert Graham Creighton, the son of Susie Bass of Douglastown.

During the late afternoon of the fighting near the little village Kekerdom, Walsh and Creighton, along with three other NSR soldiers, were using the bank of a dyke for cover from enemy machine-gun fire.

A German booby-trap of naval shells and a pressure switch, buried in the dyke, detonated and all 5 men were killed. Walsh and Creighton are buried in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, in the Netherlands, along with 59 other soldiers of the North Shore Regiment.