

Matheson, Ivan Fowler
Private
A21390
Essex Scottish Regiment
Royal Canadian Infantry Corps



Ivan Fowler Matheson was born 15 June, 1918 in Crinan West Lorne, Ontario, Canada, the son of John Alexander and Alberta Sarah; they were married in London, Ontario, 22 November, 1911.

Ivan had an older brother, Donald Allwyn, born 27 March, 1913 who also served in the Canadian army and was stationed in Belgium.

He had two sisters, Birva Alberta Matheson Armour, born 12 January, 1915 and Orpha Lloraine Matheson Paterson, born 6 October, 1920. Ivan's mother was widowed when her husband was accidentally killed while he was working on a roof. When she remarried, Ivan gained two older half-sisters, Ila Catherine Taylor Campell, born 12 August, 1907 and Annie Maxine Taylor, born 16 August, 1909.

Ivan lived for fifteen years in Windsor, Ontario and went to the J. E. Benson school. After that he worked for seven years as a shop assistant in the M & P supermarket, the first of its kind in Canada; (the name is derived from those of the two owners, Mailloux and Parent). Ivan sometimes also worked as a chauffeur and truck driver.

He has dark brown eyes and dark brown hair and a well-developed body. In his free time he enjoyed hunting and fishing and liked playing ice hockey and softball. He remained single.

Ivan indicates that after his service he would like to work in the open air due to his health.

Ivan's grandparents are of Scottish origin and therefore he belongs to the Presbyterian Church.

On 8 September, 1939, Ivan enlisted with the Essex Scottish Regiment (ESR) and was sent to England in July, 1940. He was an officer's batman for about five years, acting as an assistant and chauffeur.



Ivan, photo Helen Badder

His battalion was first stationed in Aldershot, Surrey where he began his four year training. It was part of the 4th Infantry Brigade of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division. The ESR was honoured with a visit from King George VI who was impressed by the regiments' bagpipe band in their kilts.

In 1942 preparation was made for the Dieppe raid with special training in

cliff climbing and beach landings; this took place on the Isle of Wight. Ivan did not take part in this operation as he was in hospital for a month at this time.

In August the Regiment moved to Middleton on Sea; the Dieppe operation had failed and there had been a heavy loss of life. Reinforcements were sent and mine laying training and learning to work with artillery support began the next year.

The tide was turning in the Allies' favour and in 1944 preparations began for the Normandy D-day landings. In January, Ivan was awarded the Canadian Voluntary Service Medal and Clasp. From February to April he was unfortunately again in hospital in Alton. On 1 June he was placed with the Canadian Base Reinforcement Group and arrived in France on 6 July.

The ESR was involved in heavy fighting across northern France which again led to a heavy loss of life. In September the ESR took part in the Battle of the Scheldt that lasted until the end of October.

Around 9 November the ESR travelled to the Netherlands, to the area round Nijmegen, close to the German border and the Reichswald. There followed a three month period in which the soldiers could recuperate a little but also take part in further training for the coming Operation Veritable; this aimed to drive the enemy over the river Rhine and to the east. Nijmegen itself had been liberated but the Germans were close by and active. The ESR carried out regular patrols and these often led to enemy skirmishes with shelling and machine gun fire. The presence of mines, enemy as well as Allied, were an ever present menace.

Ivan was killed by mortar fire on 14 November, 1944 near Cuijk, which lies on the river Maas, about 16 kilometres from Groesbeek. He was just 26 years old.

He was temporarily buried in Mook and on 1 August, 1946 reburied in the Canadian Military Cemetery in Groesbeek, grave **III. D. 1.**

The inscription on the headstone reads:

“Sleep well soldier, you are not forgotten”.

Mother and Dad Windsor, Ontario.”

He received the following awards:

- 1939-45 Star
- France & Germany Star
- Defence Medal
- War Medal 1935-45
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp

At the time of Ivan's death, his brother Allwyn was still in Belgium; his sisters Annie Maxine and Orpha were still living with their parents. His sister Birva wrote the following verse in his obituary (Jeannie is Birva's little daughter):

Six years ago you said "So long"
An Essex Scot so young and strong;
You're resting now in a far-off sod
Where tulips bloom and gently nod;
But you're always here in Jeannie's smile,
In little things that are worth the while.
Cherished memories I have of you
My brother, my pal, so good and true.



FACES TO GRAVES

*Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek*

Life story: Saskia Peters, Research Team Faces To Graves.

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Photo Donna Maxwell

Photo's Helen Badder

Information from cousin Helen Badder

Site: People- The Essex Scottish Regiment WWII

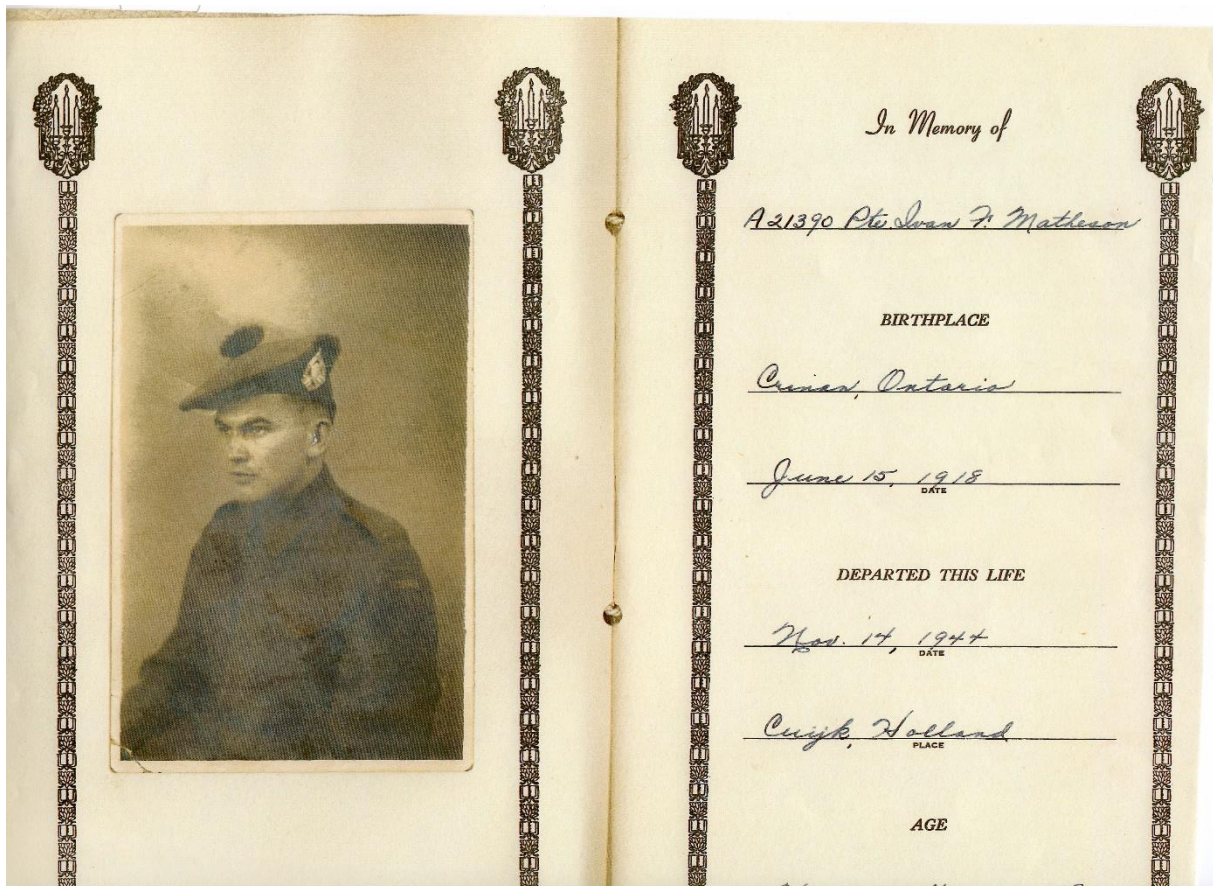
Additional help from Gwyn de Jong, Research Team Faces To Graves.

Saskia's grandparents Eikholt adopted Ivan's grave after the war; later Saskia's mother, Riek Peters Eikholt took it over and Saskia often accompanied her to lay flowers on the grave. Now her mother has passed away, Saskia continues the task. Three generations that regularly visited Ivan's grave!

His family has learned of this after contact was established with them in March 2019.

Reason enough for Saskia to become a volunteer with Faces to Graves and write Ivan's life story.

In the Knox Presbyterian church, a pew was named after Ivan. The church is now closed and the building associated with the local university.





Ivan, photo Helen Badder.

November 16, 1944 Major J.E. Steek wrote a letter to Ivan's mother:

16 Nov. 44.
Maj. J. Steek
Essex Scottish Regt.
C.A.C.
Holland

Dear Mrs. Matheson:

It is with very deep regret I write this letter. Your Son, 921390 Pte. Matheson J. F. was killed by Mortar fire near the town of Luyt, Holland on 14th. of Nov. 44. His body lies in a small Canadian Cemetery near Guesbeek, Holland and a white cross marks his resting place.

Ivan worked for me since the 20th. of July and certainly did a wonderful job. He stood up under heavy enemy fire many times and always carried out his duties in a very efficient manner and never showed a sign of fear. All ranks of "D" respected Ivan for his great ^{courage} and I shall always remember him for his loyalty, courage and devotion to duty.

Ivan died for his country a
fighting Soldier and a Gentleman.

I wish to extend my sincere
~~sympathy~~ sympathy to you in your great
loss. If I have left any questions
unanswered please do not hesitate to
ask for the answers.

Sincerely

J. E. Steele Major
O.C. "D" Coy.

Essex Scottish Regt
C. A. O.

[Handwritten signature]

PTE. MATHESON

Pte Matheson, serving with the Essex Scottish Regiment in Belgium, was officially reported killed in action November 14, his parents were informed today

Born at West Lorne, Ont. Pte. Matheson had lived in Windsor for the past 15 years and attended Frank Begley Public School. Prior to enlisting he was employed at the M. & P. grocery stores. He enlisted in September 1939 with the Essex Scottish and went overseas with that regiment in July 1940.

He is survived by his parents, one brother, Allwyn, overseas with the Canadian Army and now in Belgium, and four sisters, Mrs. Bruce Campbell of Detroit, Mrs. Harold Armour of Windsor and Maxine and Orpha at home.

Windsor Daily Star



Sister Birva at Ivan's grave.

Also his sister Orpha visited his grave.





B. COMPANY THE ESSEX SCOTTISH REGT. (CON. ARMY OVERSEAS)
ENGLAND. MARCH 1941.