

WILLIAMS VICTOR

Private

Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada

D 82900



Victor Edwin Lemoine Williams was born 24th February, 1920 in Montreal, Quebec. He was the fourth of five children born to Charles Frederick William Williams (born 1882) and Alice Hammond (born 1887). Their marriage had taken place in 1911 at St George's Anglican church. Both

Charles and Alice were born in England and had emigrated to Canada a few years before. At the turn of the century, Charles joined the British army as a teenager after his father died and taken part in the South African Boer War. He was very proud of this and always wore his South African tam (o'shanter) on Remembrance day. He was a moulder by trade.



Charles Williams with his four sons. Victor, in uniform is standing next to his brother Harry, in naval uniform.

Victor, known as Vicky in the family, attended the public school in Montreal for seven years. He was creative with his hands; there was a punchwork pillow he had made on his mother's Chesterfield couch and a butler figure with a decorative ashtray. His nephews and nieces remember him tobogganing with them in the winter. He said later that he liked playing soccer as a forward. After leaving school he went into the steel industry and was employed by the Campbell Shank Company for four years until he enlisted in the army in 1941. He worked as a furnace man tempering steel; he seems to have liked the work and said he wanted to return to the company when the war was over. He expressed a wish to become a tool maker in the future.



Victor's mother, Victor, Sam, Harry.



In November 1936, when he was 16 years old, Victor joined the Black Watch infantry regiment as a reservist eventually rising to the rank of Lance-Corporal.

Left: Victor in reserves.

IN THE MILITARY

Victor Williams now aged twenty-one, enlisted in Montreal on 27th June, 1941 as a Private in the Black Watch, the oldest Canadian Highland Regiment, part of the 1st battalion, Royal Highland Regiment of Canada. At his medical he was found to be in good health and classified category A. At this time he was 5'9" tall, weighing 148 lbs with blue eyes and auburn hair; he was left handed. It was noted that he had a reasonable attitude to army service and to his own health. He wanted to be in the infantry and did not seem to favour any particular specialization.

For the best part of the next six months, Victor was stationed in different infantry training camps in Quebec including Huntington in August and Farnham in October, both some sixty kilometres from home. He also had a short period with the RCE Wolf regiment.

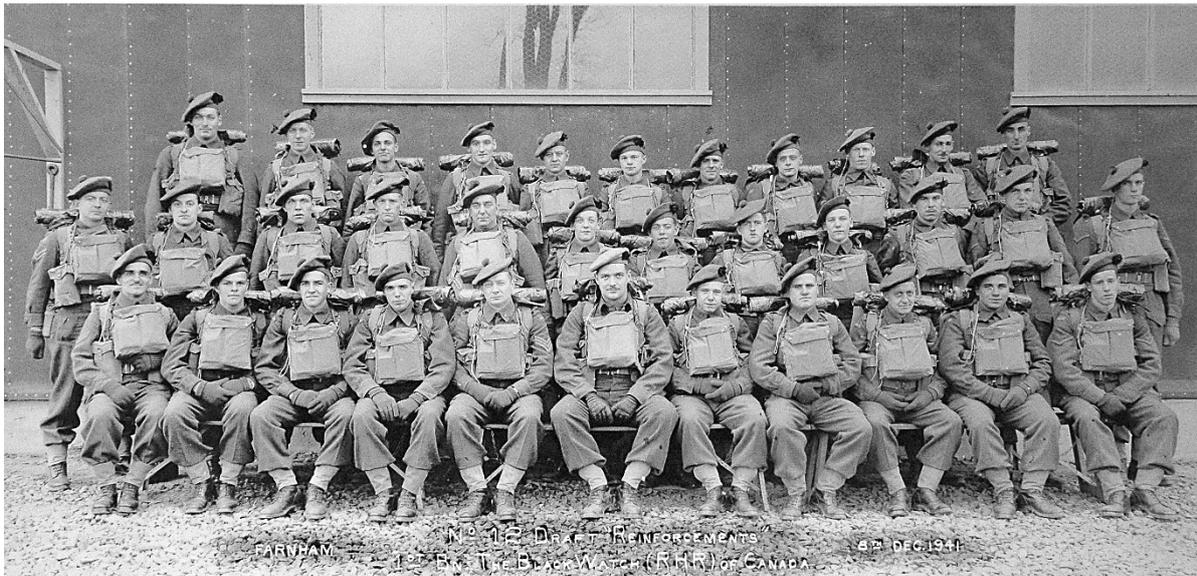
In September of the same year, he asked permission to marry and in November he was granted four days leave.



On 26th November, 1941, he married Annie Margaret Gibson at St Cyprian's Anglican church in Montreal.

This was also Victor's embarkation leave and less than a month later he boarded ship for Europe, arriving in the United Kingdom just before Christmas on 23rd December, 1941.

Victor top row 4th from the left.



Farnham

No 12 draft 'Reinforcement'

8 Dec. 1941

1st Bn The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada

He was to spend the next two and a half years in various types of arms training courses. He was given periods of local leave but no home leave.

The Black Watch regiment was stationed at different places on the south coast of England during this period as part of the coastal defences; they were subjected to periodic machine gunning from German planes. Special training increased in preparation for the invasion of France in 1944, which finally began on 6th June.

The war began in earnest for Victor Williams a month later on 9th July when the Black Watch landed in France on Juno beach; the regiment became immediately involved in heavy fighting. The bridgehead by the battle for Caen, led then across the Orme river to Faubourg de Vaucelles on July 18. Three days later Victor was wounded with bomb fragments lodged in his right hip. After treatment in France, he was sent back to England after a few days to recover, a period which was to last six months in total. Meanwhile his regiment fought its way across France, taking part in the Battle of the Scheldt in October 1944 where the Black Watch suffered heavy casualties. By 10th November, the regiment arrived in the Netherlands, by Cuijk on the river Maas, near Nijmegen. They were to spend the next three months in the Nijmegen area, only a few miles from the German border.

Victor, now recovered from his wound, rejoined his regiment on 31st January, 1945. The winter had been severe and at this point the thaw set in; instead of frost and snow, it began to rain and the meadows near the Rhine river were flooded to a depth of thirty centimetres or more. The men were often in dugouts near the Wyler lake and these quickly filled with pools of water. The enemy was close by and constant patrolling was necessary. On 14th February the Black Watch was ordered to barracks in Nijmegen for a few days well-earned rest. They entered Germany 18th February, passing through the Reichswald forest and stopping in Bedburg-Hau.

For the next few weeks, the Black Watch was involved in the exceptionally heavy fighting of Operation Veritable, which aimed to clear the enemy from the west side of the Rhine.

On 27th February, the regiment entered the well-defended Hochwald forest situated near Uedem, lying between Goch and Xanten. The Germans were in retreat but now on their own soil were fighting more viciously. This battle compared with those in Normandy but with three times the number of casualties. Ninety thousand Canadian Infantry soldiers took part against around a ten thousand strong enemy army. Knowing their territory well, the Germans set up innumerable tank traps for the Canadian Fireflies, which in any case were inferior to the enemy tanks. Through the constant rain and flooded farmlands, the ground had become impassable.

Quoting from the Black Watch war diary for 27th February: 'Weather - cloudy and cold, clear in the afternoon. We were fortunate we did not have to move until 0900. hrs this morning. The transport was an hour late moving off and moved at a rate of 3 mph owing to the congestion of vehicles on roads, due to the awful conditions - the roads being badly cratered in many places. The HQ was established at 055449 and the Battalion concentrated in the immediate area. Enemy artillery killed two men from A company and slightly wounded Capt. C.S. Mac Laren, their OC. The whole area became subjected to heavy and continuous harassing artillery fire.'

Private Victor Williams lost his life 27th February, 1945. He was buried temporarily close by ' in a yard in front of house under a tree near crossroad 005449 (sic) Uedem sheet.' His remains were transferred

eighteen months later to the Canadian Military Cemetery, Groesbeek, in the Netherlands for permanent burial. Grave Reference; Plot **XXV. A. 3.**

AWARDS

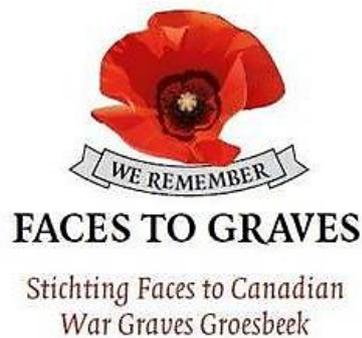
Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp

Defense Medal 1939-45

France and Germany Star

1939-45 Star

War Medal 1939-45



Life story Gwyn de Jong, Research Team Faces To Graves

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Source:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives, Canada



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With her son's picture

Travelled to Holland To Visit Son's Grave

By WALLY STIEBEL

Back in Montreal after more than five months of traveling in England and the Continent, during which time she visited her soldier son's grave in the Canadian Cemetery at Nijmegen, Holland, Mrs. Alice Williams, 4923 St. Catherine street east, is very happy to be back with her family for New Year's, although her initial plans were to be here for Christmas.

"It certainly was a thrill when the caretaker of the cemetery told me that I was the first mother to make the trip from Canada to visit her son's grave. What made me happier still was that I was given permission to plant flowers on the grave, and to take pictures with my own camera, while signs prohibited both. The caretaker told me, through a Dutch girl, who did my interpreting, that he was allowing these breaches of law, only because of the trouble I had gone through to get there.

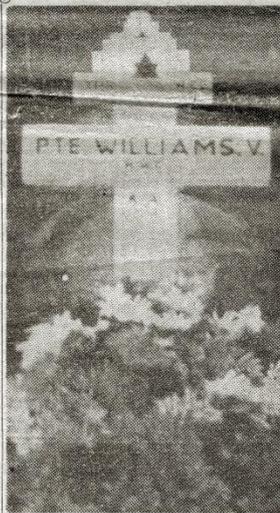
Although she arrived in Liverpool in July, it wasn't until September that Mrs. Williams received permission to make the trip to the Netherlands. In possession of the address of a Miss Nellie Van de Brock, who billeted her nephew, Fred Knight, in Veghel, while he served in Holland, Mrs. Williams boarded a Dutch ship in Harwich, England, and some 10 hours later arrived in the Hook of Holland.

ANXIOUS TO RETURN

"Had it not been for the kind and patient Dutch folk, I would never have found my way to Veghel," said Mrs. Williams, who, although born in England, was anxious to return home.

Arriving in Montreal in the midst of the worst snow storm of the winter, Mrs. Williams said that what impressed her most about present day England is the cold homes, "I was cold all the time," she said, as she searched through a purse, largest these eyes have ever seen, and which she said she purchased in Holland.

She visited the grave of her son Vic, who was killed on the seventh day of the Battle of Hochwald Forest, while a private with the Black Watch, R.H.R. He was killed, Feb. 27, 1945, three days after his 25th birthday.



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A corner of Canada

Youth Strangled By Falling Sash

Cornwall, Ont., Dec. 30 —(CP)

— Robert Roy Simmon, jr., aged five, of Newington, Ont., 24 miles northeast of here, was strangled to death yesterday when his neck was caught by a falling window sash at his parent's farm. He was dead when found by his father a short time later.