

Hector William Wilson
Rifleman
Queen's Own Rifles of Canada
Royal Canadian Infantry Corps



Hector William Wilson was born on July 19, 1924 in Renfrew, Ontario, to Scottish parents, Liford William Wilson (1894-1974) and Annie Mae McNevin (1897-1942).

His father, a farmer, served in the veterans guards in Canada during the Second World War. Liford Wilson also had served in World War One with the 148th Battalion. He had participated in Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, Mons and Ypres. He was wounded on two occasions, and gassed once.

The family consisted of Betty Mae (1927-1932); Christina Evelyn Wilson (1928) and Glen Duncan Wilson (1933-2013).

In his hometown, Hector attended public school until Grade VII but he quit to work at the O'Brien Woollen Mill in Renfrew and help the family. He was accepted for military service on July 3, 1939, close to his 15th birthday, with the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment in its pipe band. In his paybook, he listed service in the "42nd Black Watch" regiment from "1938-1940".

With the war declared in September, he attended annual training in August 1940. But military authorities discovered he was "under age" and discharged him from the army on June 19, 1941.

Seeking work in Canada's industrial towns, Hector Wilson was working as a steelworker for United Steel Company in Welland, Ontario, when he enlisted on Aug. 27, 1942 in nearby Hamilton. His enlistment document described him as "small and slight build" standing 5 foot 5 inches and weighing 122 pounds as well as being "young and immature" in attitude. The year of 1942 was also when his mother died of tuberculosis on Jan. 10 at age 44 back home in Renfrew.



Hector Wilson playing the bagpipes in 1942.

During his basic training at the Niagara Camp in Ontario, Hector married Helen Martha Grey Kelkirk on April 30, 1943. They had dated for the previous 11 months when she lived in Brantford, Ontario. During this period, he also was treated for tonsillitis and the mumps and recovered in military hospitals in Hamilton and Niagara-on-the-Lake in Ontario.

In a military assessment in November of 1943, he was reported to be "a first-class shot, suitable for sniper." He was shipped overseas to the United Kingdom on Feb. 24, 1944. Initially, he was assigned to the Highland Light Infantry Regiment but he was transferred to the Queen's Own regiment arriving in Normandy, France on July 7, 1944. This regiment fought from France, Belgium, the Netherlands and then Germany.

Rifleman Hector Wilson, 20, of Renfrew was killed on Feb. 26, 1945 in Germany as the Canadian Army launched Operation Blockbuster as part of the Rhineland campaign. His unit, the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, had the task of seizing enemy positions astride the road from Calcar to Udem immediately north of Keppeln.

He was buried at the temporary military cemetery at Bedburg, Germany, near Calcar. His remains were removed in 1946 and buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery. Grave reference is Plot **VIII. B. 16.**

His father, Liford Wilson, in Renfrew, Ontario was sent his son's war medals which were the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp, the War Medal 1939-45, the 1939-1945 Star, and the France-Germany Star. His wife, Helen Wilson of Brantford, Ontario received a Memorial Cross as his widow.



Biography made available for Faces To Graves, with courtesy of Kurt Johnson.



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A Dutch family -- Mr. and Mrs. T. Mentjal took care of Wilson's gravesite for years following the end of the Second World War.



Photo of Mr. and Mrs. T. Mentjal with Bea on Nov 11, 1946.