

Aikins, Ernest Alexander. Sergeant

7-D-7



Creemore, Ontario (from the Irish Croí Mór "big heart") was the village where Ernest Alexander Aikins was born on September 9, 1915.

Son of David Crawford Aikins and Annie Aikins, born Mostyn.

The 1921 census recorded that he had two brothers and four sisters.



Creemore

Ernest enlisted on June 26, 1940.

His occupation was "farmer".

Ecclesiastically the family belonged to the Church of England.

After primary school, Ernest attended a high school for one more year.

His first military experience he made in Hamilton-Ontario. His unit: the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's).

For short: A & SH of C.

Apparently, his agricultural assistance was indispensable; because from August 25 till September 8, 1940 he was on "harvest leave".

Returned from leave Ernest was transferred to Niagara.

In January 1941 his record reads: "while on guard, not very alert." This resulted in 7 days "Confined to Barracks" and also "7 days pay was withheld".

Late December 1941 the regiment, including Ernest, was in Kingston, Jamaica.

Regiments served in rotation at Kingston and it was the turn of the A & SH of C. to "occupy" the garrison there.

To clarify:

Canadian troops in Jamaica are a result of the war in Europe.

At the time, Jamaica had the status of a "dominion" within the Commonwealth.

A dominion is a partially or wholly self-governing part of the British Commonwealth, which has the British monarch as head of state.

The Governor-General represents the British crown.

To safeguard British interests, a garrison was also established on Jamaica. This was occupied in turn by different units.

The first English troops were already oriented to the battle in Europe at the end of 1939.

It is therefore not surprising that Canadian units took over other tasks, including the presence in Jamaica.

It was not until May 1943 that Ernest returned to Niagara, Canada.

He had been on leave in Jamaica a number of times, but had also spent some time in hospital.

In June of 1943 he was granted furlough before being transferred to England.

Ernest arrived there on July 28.

In October 1943, still in the strength of the A & SH of C., Ernest ended up briefly in hospital in England, this time with contusion to the thigh.

He was promoted to corporal in February 1944 and the regiment was preparing for the planned landing in Normandy.

On July 1945 the A & SH of C. came ashore in France.

On August 27, 1945 Ernest suffered a wound to the right shoulder.

Not by enemy fire, but by a bullet from his own Sten gun.

While sitting, with the weapon next to him, he accidentally knocked it over and a shot was fired spontaneously.



It was known that the "safe position" was the weapon's weakness.

For many soldiers this had already led to injuries, even death.

Ernest experienced the entire campaign with the A & SH of C.

Through Northern France, Belgium and the Southwest of the Netherlands.

He suffered cold during the winter break on the Maas River, experienced the battle for Kapelsche Veer and the battles on German soil via the Reichswald, Hochwald till Veen.

Followed by the advance through the eastern part of the Netherlands into Northwest Germany.

In early March 1945 he was appointed acting sergeant.

Him was allowed nine days' leave, which he spent in England.

On March 19, he was back with his unit.

The fighting in northwestern Germany resulted in heavy losses for the regiment.

Some companies were reduced to less than sixty men in the battles around and across the Küsten Canal.

The War Diary for April 22, 1945 states that the regiments strength had fallen to approximately 50%.

Ernest Alexander Aikins was killed in action during the attacks on objects at Osterscheps on April 22nd.

His service record confirmed that he had served as a sergeant for only 16 days.

The Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada had to add another name to the loss list.

Ernest was granted:

1939-1945 Star; France-Germany Star; Defense Medal, War Medal 1939-1945 and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp.

