

Bowcott, Wilfred William

Lance Corporal

1st Hussars, 6th Armoured Regiment

Royal Canadian

Armoured Corps

A/533



Wilfred William ("Will") Bowcott was born 28 July 1918 at Tillsonburg, Oxford County, Ontario (ON). His parents George Bowcott and Ellen Brown were



married in England in 1896. The Anglican couple had four surviving children there: Nel, Florence, James and Edward. The Bowcotts emigrated to Canada in 1906 and settled at Tillsonburg, ON. George and Ellen had five more surviving children in Ontario: Laura, Robert, Rose, Will and Marjorie.

The family moved to London, ON by 1921 where George was a plasterer by trade and performed other labour. He died in 1927 age 61. Will went to work full time age eighteen after completing one year of High School. He found employment as a labourer with a barrel manufacturer in London and had an ambition to become a tool and die maker. Will trained with the Canadian Fusiliers Militia in London in 1940 and decided to go active the next year.

Camp Borden, ON WW2

Will attested 5 March 1941 at London, ON age 22, enlisting directly with the 1st Hussars. He was then 5'9" tall, 144 lbs with red hair and hazel eyes. He joined his regiment which had been redesignated 6 Canadian Armoured Regiment (6CAR) at Camp Borden, ON 28 March 1941 and





was assigned to "C" Squadron. Will qualified as Driver Class III while at Borden 28 August 1941 and was cleared for overseas service.

Will disembarked at Liverpool, England with his regiment 23 November 1941 and the 1st Hussars were stationed at Aldershot, England. He qualified as Driver Class II (Wheel and Track) July 1942 and Driver Mechanic Group "C" at the Armoured Fighting Vehicle School in the UK 27 March 1943. Will was admitted to 1 Canadian Special Hospital for two weeks August 1943.

Will Bowcott in centre with 1st Hussars comrades

Will remained in the UK during the Allied D-Day attack and landed in France 19 June 1944.

The 1st Hussars formed part of 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade along with the Fort Garry Horse (10th Armoured Regiment) and the Sherbrooke Fusiliers (27th Armoured Regiment). 6CAR supported 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade on D-Day to establish a beach head at Courseulles-sur-Mer, France.



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Troops from the Royal Winnipeg Rifles and Regina Rifles watch as tanks of the 1st Hussars land near Courseulles-sur-Mer, France, on D-Day in

6CAR suffered 38 casualties on D-Day and continued to support 3rd Canadian Infantry Division as they moved inland against the Germans, facing stiff resistance when they were counterattacked. On 11 June 1944 the 1st Hussars "B" Squadron was decimated during an abortive attack on the village of Le Mesnil Patry, northwest of Caen, France. 6CAR participated in

the capture of Caen in July, followed by the Battle of Verrières Ridge. The Allies forced the Germans retreat from Normandy that summer.



1st Hussars (6CAR) tank crewmen sharing a meal in Normandy 1944 – Trooper Will Bowcott (Driver) is second from left in white undershirt

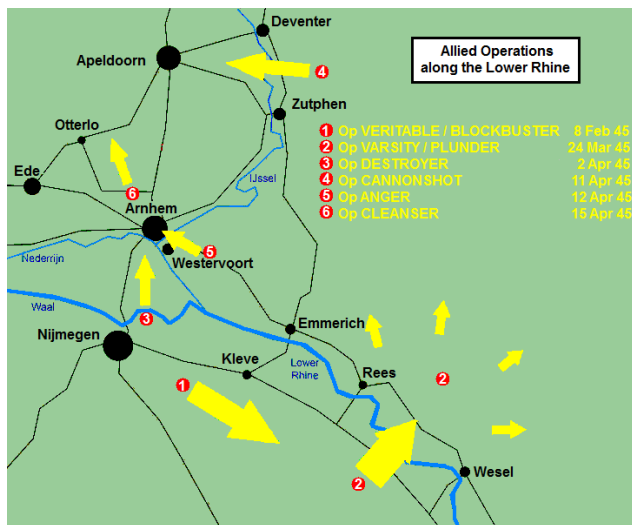
The 1st Hussars helped clear Channel ports in September. 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade had limited involvement in the Battle of the Scheldt that fall due to the wet ground conditions in Belgium and the Netherlands. First Canadian Army took up static positions around Nijmegen, Netherlands in November against a well entrenched enemy. Will was promoted from Trooper to Lance Corporal 21 November 1944.

The Allies Operation VERITABLE offensive was launched 8 February 1945, with 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade advancing into Cleve, Germany. The second phase of the Allied offensive was Operation BLOCKBUSTER, which began with their attempts to drive the Germans out of the Hochwald Forest. The 1st Hussars "A" Squadron was assigned to the Black Watch of 5th Brigade while "B" and "C" Squadrons were supporting 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade during their attack on Keppeln, Germany 26 February 1945. 6CAR "C" Squadron was initially assigned to the Queens Own Rifles (QOR). Sergeant

Aubrey Cosens of the QOR received a posthumous Victoria Cross for his heroic actions that day involving the 1st Hussars.

They then joined the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment (NSR) with the 13 surviving tanks of "C" Squadron. The 1st Hussars tanks picked up a platoon of the NSR "A" Company around 1400 hours and dashed towards Keppeln, followed by "B" and "C" Companies on foot plus the battalion's Wasps (flamethrowers) and carriers, ready to engage opposing anti-tank weapons. Enemy tanks on the outskirts of the village knocked out three of 6CAR's Sherman tanks and were in turn set on fire by the Wasps. In the face of heavy machine-gun fire the infantry platoon dismounted and made its way into Keppeln, soon to be joined by the rest of "A" Company plus "D" Company brought up from reserve. The tanks moved in, and by 1700 hours all objectives had been taken. The North Shores suffered 81 casualties that day, 28 of them fatal. The 1st Hussars lost nine tanks to enemy action, besides four bogged down and suffered several casualties 26 February 1945.

Following BLOCKBUSTER, 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade withdrew to the Nijmegen area while the Allies worked towards building bridges to cross the Rhine River with the Germans defending from the other side. The 1st Hussars came under the command of 1st Canadian Infantry Division 6 April 1945, which had been redeployed from Italy to Northwest Europe. They crossed the IJssel River between Deventer and Zutphen, Netherlands 12 April 1945 while supporting 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade.



6CAR's next assignment was to support 1st and 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigades at Apeldoorn, Netherlands.

Allied Operations Apeldoorn Area April 1945

Lieutenant Edward Brock, a platoon leader with the 48th Highlanders, recalled the battle that commenced 13 April 1945 in his memoir:

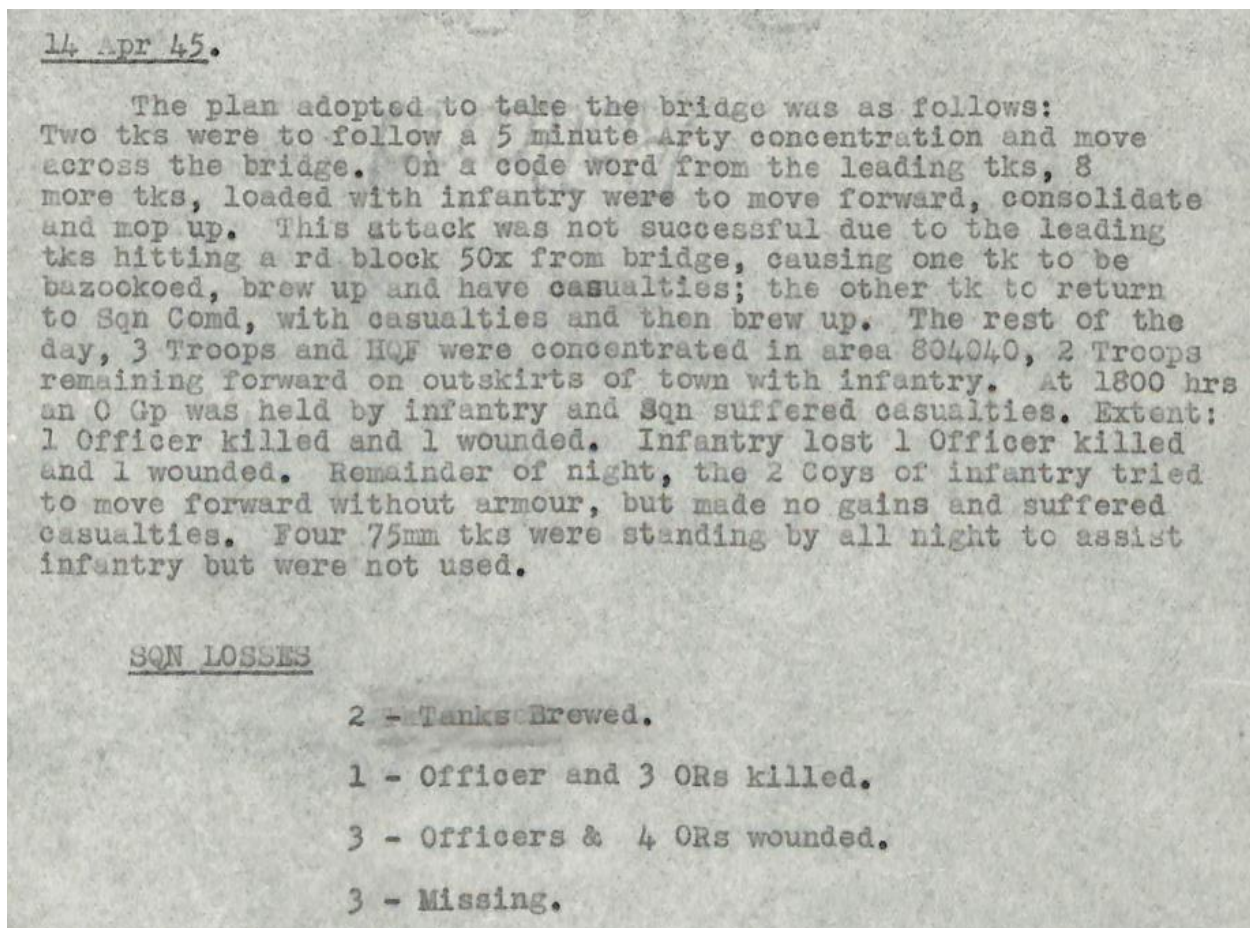
"The battle for Apeldoorn started with an amazing amount of support for we PBI (poor bloody infantry) –

more artillery, tank and air support than we had ever seen before... We had the 1st Hussars for tank support with their versatile Shermans and, all we need do was indicate points of resistance with our tracer fire and they would hit the spot with those devastating 17 pounders. They were the most willing

tank support I ever saw and as long as we could protect them against anti-tank fire, they would assist us in our attack."

Apeldoorn was still occupied by Dutch citizens so the Canadians could not bomb it. By midnight 13 April 1st Brigade had closed up to the Apeldoorn Canal and the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) was running patrols in the suburbs. That night a squadron of 1st Hussars and a company of RCR tried to cross the canal but were rebuffed with the loss of two tanks.

6CAR "C" Squadron was still supporting the RCR on 14 April 1945. Their plan of attack to take the bridge crossing the Appeldoorn Canal was not successful due to their two leading tanks being stopped at a road block near the bridge. This resulted in one tank being hit by a German anti-tank gun and 'brewed up' (burning) with casualties. The other tank returned to 6CAR Squadron Command with casualties and also caught fire. Will Bowcott was one of the 6CAR casualties that day, originally reported missing and then confirmed killed in action, age 26.



6CAR War Diary "C" Squadron Supplement 14 April 1945

Lance Corporal W.W. Bowcott was temporarily buried at Apeldoorn, Netherlands and later relocated to Holten Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **I. E. 9**.

Photo Credit lestweforget1945.com

The inscription on his headstone:

A DEAR SON AND BROTHER.
IN THE GARDEN OF MEMORY
WE MEET EVERY DAY

Will Bowcott's campaign medals:

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



Biography by Jim Little, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources Consulted:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Veteran Affairs Canada – Canadian Virtual War Memorial

Ancestry public trees

Newspapers.com

Tillsonburg, ON postcard image <https://digitalarchive.tpl.ca/objects/292914/water-tower-on-lake-joseph-tillsonburg-ontario?ctx=3df5bbdbff1f207148241d165f6b7a908d39979e&idx=8>

Camp Borden, ON tank picture <https://www.ontrmuseum.ca/tankmuseum/blog-post/ontr-tanks-of-second-world-war/>

1st Hussars Regimental information and photos <https://sharrob56.wixsite.com/first-hussars-wwii/blank-1>

1st Hussars cap badge picture <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/military-history/history-heritage/official-military-history-lineages/lineages/armour-regiments/1st-hussars.html>

1st Hussars battle information https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Hussars

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Operation Blockbuster information

<https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/UN/Canada/CA/Victory/Victory-19.html>

Adams, Sharon. 2021. Canadian Summer in Apeldoorn. Legion Magazine. <https://legionmagazine.com/en/2021/04/canadian-summer-in-apeldoorn/>

Brock, Edward (Memoir). My Last Battle.

<https://www.canadianletters.ca/content/document-17852>

Allied operations map Apeldoorn area and battle details

<https://www.canadiansoldiers.com/history/battlehonours/northwesteurope/apeldoorn.htm>

* Do you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact info@facestograves.nl