



## **Trooper Wilfred Robert George BERRY**

**12-D-10**

Wilfred Berry did nothing that he should be remembered. Even his 3 brothers and sister did not remember him well. Their mother died when Wilfred, the eldest, was a

teenager and the family fell apart.

He was not particularly ambitious, a trained soldier but an inconspicuous assembly line worker at the General Motors Plant in St. Catharines, Ontario, before he volunteered for the army on 13 April 1941 at age 20. Six months later he was in England, where he stayed with hundreds of thousands of others, while the war was fought in other places. He was with the Royal Canadian Dragoons in Italy, went with the Canadian Army to Belgium and later fought in the Netherlands. Wilfred Berry had no medals and even no rank given, but simply did what he was told to do.

In April 1945 the Canadians had the bloody fighting in the south and south-east end and spread out across the countryside in the north. The advance in Friesland to a local intersection with the name Heerenveen was an important strategic objective. The village is near Heerenveen. Oldeholtpade with neat houses of red brick and yellow limestone. The larger houses around the church, the smaller homes at the end of the village. Oldeholtpade saw little of the war until at the end. In the beginning German officers came down in the rectory, but soon left. Afterwards came unexpectedly German trucks looking for young men for slave labor and Jews. Most young men fled across the fields and hid in the marshes, where they hide themselves in a camouflaged island on a raft.

In fact, the war began in Oldeholtpade on 12 April 1945. On the distant rumble of artillery fire. On the 12th, a convoy was attacked by German fighters on the road between Steenwyk and Wolvega. By noon there was a threatening silence and the inhabitants of Oldeholtpade were waiting at their front doors. At half past one there was an increasing engine noise from the road behind the church and three reconnaissance vehicles, but without weapons imminent came around the corner. The Canadians had arrived. The villagers cheered and danced around the cars and the Canadians grinned and parted white bread, chocolate and cigarettes. Afterwards the cars drove in the direction of Heerenveen. A half hour later, other Canadian exploration vehicles came through the village. This group missed the exit to leave Heerenveen and drove toward the German armored car. The lead scout car was about 100 meters before the other cars. When passing the German armored car was the Canadian hit by a Panzerfaust. Two Germans were hidden behind the armored car on guard. The reconnaissance car hit the road and fell on its side. Two crew members crawled out and took cover. The driver, struck in his back, lay half hanging out of the car, his dark hair hanging loose and blood poured onto the floor. It was Robert Wilfred George Berry. He lived for another half hour. The villagers buried him on the spot. Later his body was transferred to the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten

