

Trooper Fred BUTTERWORTH 05-E-08

The Canadian veteran Stanley Butterworth lost his brother in Groningen. Soldier Fred Butterworth, who was 22 years, was the first of more than forty Canadians, who died in the liberation of Groningen. Fred Butterworth was a boy of the Calgary Regiment with the heart in the right place. A true comrade, a good guy. On liberation tour from Normandy to northern Netherlands he and his comrades have been through a lot. But the evening of April 13, 1945 brought an end to his life.



*Picnic of the family in Lake Winnipeg Butterworth, Fred is on the right with his sister Doreen on his lap. Behind him is mother Doris, who hold their dog Jockey. Fourth from left in the back row stands Stanley. Next to him his father Fred (with crossed arms).
Photo from the private collection of Stanley Butterworth*

Stanley Butterworth tells:

Fred was born on April 22, 1922 in Winnipeg in the Canadian Province of Manitoba. He was the eldest son of Fred (1896) and Doris (1900) Butterworth. Later on came brother Stanley (1924) and the sisters Ruth (1927) and Doreen (1935). Butterworth father worked at a soap and chemical company. During World War I he fought as an allied soldier in France, Egypt and Palestine. His two sons

followed his example and fought in World War II in the liberation of Western Europe.

Fred received his education in Winnipeg on the Champlain Elementary School, Machray Junior School and then at St. John's Technical High School. Sports were his hobby. He played football and played hockey. To earn extra money he worked from his 14th to 16th as a newspaper deliveryman with his brother Stanley. Also, he sold soft drinks, ice cream and candy at football matches. In the photo of the picnic in 1937 Fred looks smiling with his sister Doreen on his lap.

"He was a bit taller than me," said Stanley who is about 1.75 meters long. "We fight with each other, but in the way as brothers do." Fred and his girlfriend Dorothy spent a lot of time with Stanley, his girlfriend Hazel and their friends.

After high school, Fred worked in a meat processing company and then in the cleaning manufacturer Empire Soap Co.. Even though he had a job that exempted him from military service, he enlisted on April 28, 1943 and voluntarily joined the Canadian Army with his brother.

"Many of our friends made the same choice at the time", says Stanley. "What war really meant, we had no idea. We were adventurous young men as far as we could call ourselves men at that age .

Both brothers underwent intensive training. It began with medical tests, vaccinations, IQ tests and exercises. They were assigned to the armored units as tank gunner. They had endurance training and learned to deal with weapons. A very unpleasant part of the military training was to test the gas masks. "We were locked in a room full of tear gas to prove the effectiveness of the mask. Before we left the room, we had to take off the mask. Tears streamed down our faces."

Fred and Stanley were then transferred to Ontario. There they got for more than six months shooting an advanced training and radiocommunications training. When they successfully completed their training, they moved to Europe. On June 1, 1944 they set for the first time foot on European soil in Greenock, Scotland.

"Fortunately we came in action only a few months after D-Day."

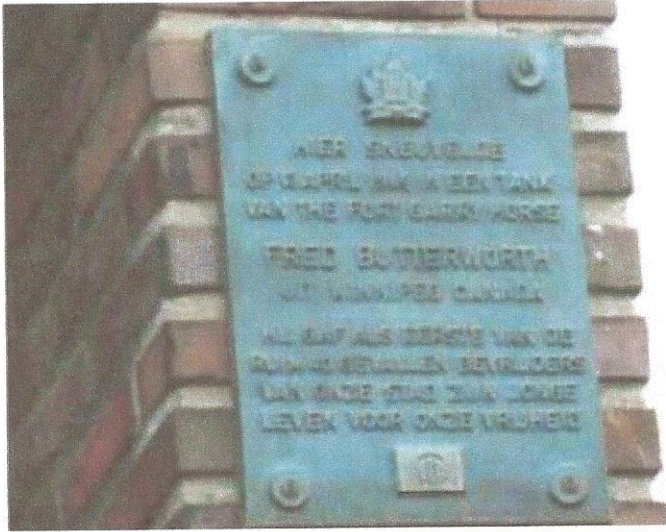
In September 1944 the brothers were assigned by the military leadership at various squadrons. Fred became part of the B-squadron and Stanley in A-squadron of the Fort Garry Horse Regiment, this was an armored reconnaissance unit of the Canadian Army. The brothers participated in the same battles. At the Belgian-Dutch border they eliminated switched the shore batteries, called Operation Breskens Pocket. Then they fought there way to Woensdrecht and to Nijmegen and Doetinchem. In the North-Brabant city Grave they had three weeks off. What did the men in their free time? "We discussed the news that we read in letters from our family. Also, we thought about what we would write back. And of course we drank to the victory."

In February and March 1945, the brothers fought in the Battle of the Hochwald, one of the heaviest tank battles during World War II. It was Friday, April 13, 1945 when a large part of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division arrived at the airport Eelde and Paterswolde with war material. The tanks of the B-squadron of the Fort Garry Horse, led by Sergeant Chauk, went along with a number of armored vehicles on the road to the edge of the city of Groningen. Then the 3rd Troop of B Squadron drove over the Paterswoldeweg to the City Park, where about the first houses from the city began. Fred was in the first Sherman tank that went into Groningen at 16.00 hrs. German soldiers had hid themselves on the side of the City Park.

From a hidden trench a German pointed his Pantzer- faust, an antitank weapon that was worn on the shoulder and fired at the tower of the tank. This occurred around 18.35 pm. The B-squadron was surprised and got the full load. Fred was killed. The tank became unmanageable, made a right turn and rammed into the front of the house of the family Van Liefland. The house at number 188 flew on fire and put the whole block in flames. The rest of the crew ran as quickly as possible away from the tank.

Stanley's squadron reached the city on Friday in the evening. He had planned to look for Fred in the Canadian army base in the city park. But he did not find him. He was called by the army leadership and heard the horrible news that his brother was killed. The following days he felt emotionless. There was no much time mourning the death of his brother. Fred died in Groningen and I had to go on. As a soldier you are trained to do your job. Your comrades must rely on you. The battle was not yet over. He struggled to write the sad news to the family. Words could not describe what had happened. Stanley planned to write home as soon as possible. Today family members are informed within a few hours. My parents heard the news a week later by letter.

The Canadian army including Stanley fought his way through Groningen, which on 15 April resulted in the liberation of the city. Only then the body of Fred was removed from the tank and buried at the other side of the Paterswoldeweg in an allotment. It was a temporary resting place. Later his remains were transferred to the Holterberg to the Field of Honor. The victory over Groningen was for Stanley bittersweet. A few days later Stanley's tank unit moved to Oldenburg. In January 1946, Stanley returned to its homeland, without his brother.



plaque of Fred Butterworth, number 188 on the Paterswoldseweg.

