



At this cemetery Holten lays one Canadian liberator which is killed in action in Belgium:

About his grave and memorial stone goes the following story told by Kevin Verboven of Massenhoven, Belgium.

"In and around my village Massenhoven (near Antwerp, Belgium) there were for a long time stories about a killed Canadian soldier in WW 2. He should have been killed here and was buried for a while there. After exhuming of his body they should have unveiled a memorial stone for him at this spot. This stone however was nowhere to be found.

In September 2014 this memorial stone was recovered. On this stone I read the name of Jack Corvan. A name of which I was searching for more information. Strange enough this name was not in the file of the Commonwealth War Graves

Commission and there were not known any details about a person with this name. Further research taught me that it finally belongs to the Canadian Lieutenant John Taylor Cowan. He had as a given name Jack. So Jack Cowan. The name of Jack Corvan does not exist at all. It is a mistake at the memorial stone, Important in my research were the contacts and help of the Information Centre Canadian Cemetery in Holten and of Mrs. Evelina Vermeiren. Her father had known Lieutenant John Taylor Cowan for a while.

With the right name I went on searching for the family of the killed one in Canada. In the first place I wanted to inform them about the recovered memorial stone. I also wanted to become more to know about the person who without knowing has become a part of the history of Massenhoven.

After many e-mails, in cooperation with some Canadians, researching some sources etc., I came in contact with the son of the sister of Lieutenant John Cowan in Canada. It appeared that he did not have any kids. However there are still two nephews and two cousins alive at this moment.

Through the nephew of Lieutenant Cowan with whom I had contact I received several documents and old photos. These had all to do with the death of John Cowan. There were also things among them which had to do with Massenhoven and the family of Evelina Vermeiren. Further evidence was this that John Cowan was the right person.

The documents of the family give an idea what happened to lieutenant Cowan.

We know that he belonged to the 8th Reconnaissance of the 14th Hussars RCAC. This was a Recce unit, which operated in front of the army to discover enemy troops and to give this information then to the artillery backwards. Lieutenant Cowan crossed on September 21 1944 by boat the Albertkanaal from the south side to the north side. The Albertkanaal divides Massenhoven in two parts. The south side was already liberated but not yet the north side. The canal was a kind of no man's land. A German soldier on the north side was taken prisoner of war. They took him with them to the boat and they went back to the south side. There was an enemy fire and Lieutenant Cowan was killed instantly. His body fell into the water.

This is the same story that has been told in Massenhoven. It is unclear how many soldiers were with Lieutenant Cowan at this crossing then.

The body of Lieutenant John T. Cowan was found later on in the water and buried temporarily in the neighbourhood. This was the war grave in Massenhoven on which later was placed the memorial stone.

In 1947 was Lieutenant Cowan reburied at the Canadian War Cemetery Holten in Holland. There is his grave till this day. Why he was reburied there is not known at all."

Writer: Kevin Verboven