Dyball, William Leslie Lance/Corporal 8-C-15



William Leslie Dyball—known as William—is born in Broxburn, West Lothian, Scotland, on August 20, 1925.
His father, Charles Dyball, is an Englishman, hailing from London, Middlesex; he is listed as a "commercial traveler."

William's mother, Annie Dyball (née Blaney), is Scottish and originally from Broxburn.
The family attends the United Church and speaks English.

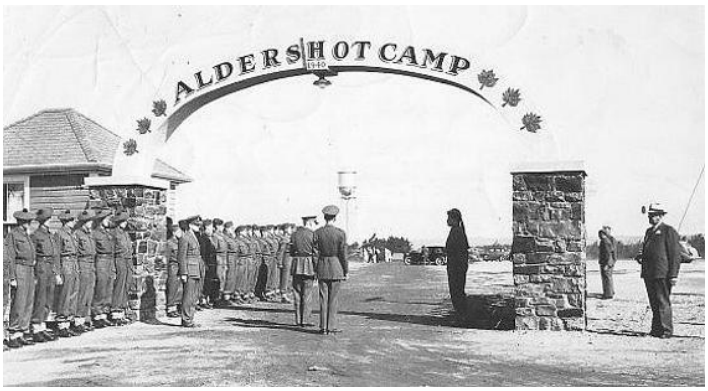
In 1927, his parents—along with two-year-old William—depart from Glasgow for Canada, arriving in Quebec in November 1927 aboard the ship *Letitia*.
According to their immigration forms, they continue to Daysville, Saskatchewan, where a relative lives.
While in Canada, a daughter and another son are born.

William completes primary school and absolves two additional years of education—referred to in Canada as "high school."
On January 20, 1944, William enlists for active service in the Canadian Army in Toronto.
Prior to this, he has worked a short time in the machine shop of the Joseph Stokes Rubber Company in Welland.
His enlistment papers note that he is not 19 years old and, therefore, not yet eligible for overseas service.

The standard procedure, for a recruit as William, is a medical examination. His physical details are recorded in his file: almost 6' tall; weight 150 lbs; blond hair and blue eyes. It is also noted that he has a scar on his right upper arm—a physical characteristic recorded for potential identification purposes. He is declared fit for service.

The district depot in Toronto is the first station where William is introduced to military life. The beginning is rather unusual: after a week to settle in, he is granted a week of "enlistment leave" and he has to report back on February 2, 1944.
By then, his transfer has already been arranged, and William departs for basic training in Brampton, Ontario.
The training there is for men destined to be assigned to an armored unit.
In mid-April 1944, William is transferred to the infantry.
No specific reason for this is recorded in his file.

It is possible that his height played a role; while the position of vehicle commander might have been a (literally) fitting role for him, it is not the path envisioned for him, given his school education and skills.
In April '44 William is transferred to Camp Aldershot, Nova Scotia for infantry training.



The summer of 1944 is not overly strenuous for William.
He enjoys two weeks of leave in June, and during the last week of August, he is granted embarkation leave.
A transfer to Camp Debert is on the horizon—the location where troops destined for the crossing to Europe are assembled.

On October 14, 1944, William—then assigned to the 3rd Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (3 C.I.R.U.)—boards a troopship along with many others, bound for the United Kingdom (UK). They disembark there a week later.

In 1944, units of the 3rd C.I.R.U. are primarily stationed within the Aldershot Command area in southern England (including army camps around Bordon and Farnborough in Hampshire). This strategic location allows the army to rapidly move trained reinforcements to southern ports for transport to active battlefields in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

William doesn't remain in the UK for long. On November 18, he lands in Normandy on Juno Beach as part of a large contingent of reinforcement troops.
His assignment at that time is: 58th Company of the 13th Battalion, 2nd Canadian Base Reinforcement Group—or, in military jargon: No. 58 Coy; 13 Bn; 2 CBRG
(This was a holding and training depot in Northwest Europe responsible for receiving, training, and forwarding infantry reinforcements to combat units at the front.)

In early January 1945, William is posted to the Algonquin Regiment.
After that, only two further entries can be found in William's file:
1. Promoted to Lance-Corporal on March 11, 1945.
2. April 18, 1945: Killed in Action.

The war diary of the Algonquin Regiment provides some insight into what William endured during those few months in 1945.

From the beginning of December 1944, the regiment occupies an area in the Netherlands—roughly between Drunen and Waalwijk—along what was known as the Meuse (Maas) line.
The weather conditions are harsh during this severe winter, characterized by heavy frost and snow.

In late January or early February 1945, they are relieved and granted a period of rest. By then, preparations for the Allied offensive in the Rhineland are already in full swing.

The Rhineland Offensive consisted of three phases:
Phase 1: The northern pincer and advance (Operation Veritable) – Beginning on February 8, 1945, British and Canadian forces launched an offensive from the Nijmegen salient into the heavily defended Reichswald forest and the area around Kleve, with the objective of clearing the territory between the Meuse and the Rhine.

Phase 2: The southern pincer and link-up (Operations Grenade and Blockbuster) – From February 23, 1945, American units joined the offensive from the south (Operation Grenade). This was followed by Operation Blockbuster, aimed at defeating the remaining German forces west of the Rhine and reaching the river.

Phase 3: The Rhine crossing (Operations Plunder and Varsity) – During the night of March 23–24, 1945, the Allies carried out a massive crossing of the Rhine near Rees, Xanten, and Wesel, supported by large-scale airborne operations (Operation Varsity).

The Algonquins don't take an active part during Phase 1.
However, they are deployed during the second phase as part of 'Operation Blockbuster'.
On February 26 and 27, 1945, the regiment sees action during the assault on the so-called 'Hochwald Gap'.
(the area between the Hochwald and the Balberger Wald).
Here, they encounter fierce resistance and suffer heavy casualties, particularly around the towns of Uedem and Veen in Germany.



Algonquin Regiment moving forward near the Hochwald Forest, Udem, Germany, March 1st, 1945.

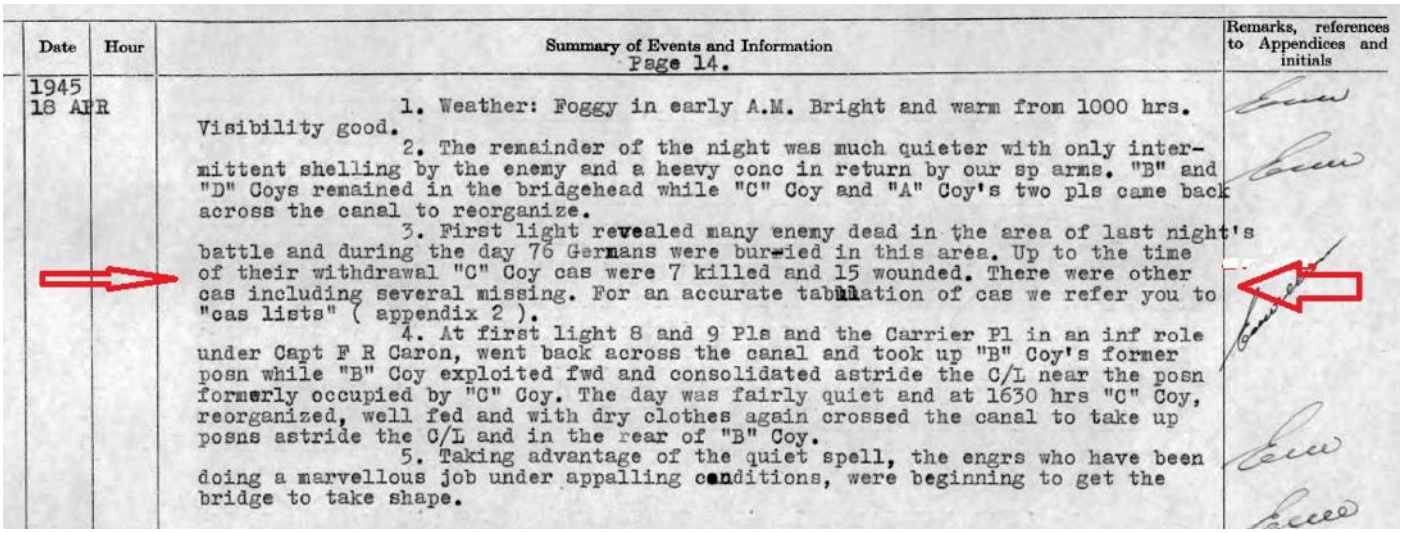
Photo by Jack H. Smith. Department of National Defence / National Archives of Canada, PA-192879.

William appears to have come through these battles relatively unscathed; there are no notes in his file to suggest otherwise.

On March 31, 1945, the regiment crosses the Rhine. Subsequently, the Algonquins move into Dutch territory.
Passing through places such as Millingen and Lochem, they head toward Bornerbroek (April 4, 1945). A confrontation with the enemy near Wierden is imminent.
Heavy fighting takes place for the liberation of Wierden. Once again, luck seems to be on William's side.

The advance continues onto German territory. Esterwegen is reached on April 11, 1945. The Küstenkanal (Coastal Canal) is reconnoitered, and the regiment's next task—following the crossing of the canal—is to secure the road from Edewecht to Friesoythe.

In the early hours of April 17, 1945, the north bank is reached and a bridgehead is established. By the afternoon, the unit faces counterattacks.
The Germans deploy heavy equipment, including a self-propelled armored howitzer.
The resulting shelling causes several casualties.
Support is requested from friendly artillery, but it proves largely ineffective.
Meanwhile, further casualties are reported among the regiment's own troops.



Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information Page 14.	Remarks, references to Appendices and initials
1945 18 APR		1. Weather: Foggy in early A.M. Bright and warm from 1000 hrs. Visibility good. 2. The remainder of the night was much quieter with only intermittent shelling by the enemy and a heavy conc in return by our sp arms. "B" and "D" Coys remained in the bridgehead while "C" Coy and "A" Coy's two pls came back across the canal to reorganize. 3. First light revealed many enemy dead in the area of last night's battle and during the day 76 Germans were buried in this area. Up to the time of their withdrawal "C" Coy cas were 7 killed and 15 wounded. There were other cas including several missing. For an accurate tabulation of cas we refer you to "cas lists" (appendix 2). 4. At first light 8 and 9 Pls and the Carrier Pl in an inf role under Capt F R Caron, went back across the canal and took up "B" Coy's former posn while "B" Coy exploited fwd and consolidated astride the C/L near the posn formerly occupied by "C" Coy. The day was fairly quiet and at 1630 hrs "C" Coy, reorganized, well fed and with dry clothes again crossed the canal to take up posns astride the C/L and in the rear of "B" Coy. 5. Taking advantage of the quiet spell, the engrs who have been doing a marvellous job under appalling conditions, were beginning to get the bridge to take shape.	

William is assigned to the C-Company, the unit that faces a severe ordeal during the night of April 17/18, 1945, within the bridgehead on the north side of the Küstenkanal.
By the early hours of April 18, 1945, this company has sustained 7 deaths and 15 injuries. William is recorded as one of the victims of April 18.

He is given a grave near Friesoythe on a temporary graveyard for the Canadian victims in the region.



On March 9, 1946, he is laid to rest at the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten, Plot 8, Row E, Grave 15.

He is awarded:
1939–1945 Star; France and Germany Star; War Medal 1939–1945; and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

His headstone reads:
In the Lord I put my trust
Absent from the body
Present with the Lord.



Sources:
www.cwgc.org; www.ancestry.com;
www.canada.ca/library-archives; wikipedia, wartimesproject.com; War Diary Algonquin Regiment.