



Thomas Farrell Greenhalgh is born on May 31, 1917, in Banff, Alberta, Canada.

He is the second child of Josh and Flora Greenhalgh. They married in Montreal in August 1910 and had a daughter, Flora, in 1914.

Just a few days before Thomas's birth, his father died on May 25, 1917.

After primary school, Thomas attends Banff High School, graduating in 1935. He subsequently continues his studies at the University of Alberta and graduates as a chemical engineer.

Thomas is a true 'working' student; during his holidays, he works, among other things, at the Home Oil Company (Calgary) as a "roughneck" on a drilling crew. Another year, Thomas works at the Department of Mine & Resources in Banff and at the Britannia Mining & Smelting Company in Britannia Beach, British Columbia. At the time, the largest copper producer in the British Commonwealth.

Thomas is a Presbyterian. His native language is English, though he speaks some French. He is athletic, and skiing and swimming are his favorites.

On June 28, 1940, he registers in Calgary and is then a member of the Canadian Active Forces. As a reservist, he already spent a few months attending a Canadian Officer Training Center and holds the rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant.

His medical report states that he is 1.83 m tall and weighs 79 kg.

Other characteristics: black hair, brown eyes, and a scar on the palm of his left hand. Thomas is still single at the time.

He is assigned to the Royal Canadian Engineers.

In July 1940, Thomas is transferred to the Engineers' training center in Petawawa, Ontario.

He officially is to be a Lieutenant in anticipation of crossing to the United Kingdom.

In December 1940, Thomas goes overseas and arrives in Greenock, Scotland, on December 26, 1940.

The year 1941 starts for Thomas with a few weeks of landing leave. He is then assigned to a company of Engineers responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads.

He receives a comprehensive induction/training period.

Between February 17 and March 6, 1941, it is recorded that he joins a CCS (Casualty Clearing Station, the first medical support station after the First Aid Post for the wounded).

Subsequently, he goes to No. 5 General Hospital. Whether this is part of Thomas's orientation period is unclear. No notes on injuries or illness can be found.

In early March 1941, he is taken on strength by a British Holding Unit, not unusual for Canadian soldiers awaiting their final assignment.

From June 1941, on, Thomas was taken on strength by a Bomb Disposal Unit.

*To clarify:*

*On May 6 and 7, Greenock was the target of Luftwaffe bombing raids.*

*The toll: 271 dead, more than 10,000 wounded, and 5,000 homes destroyed.*

For the remainder of 1941, Thomas visits the Army Gas School in Winterbourne Gunner near Salisbury, Wiltshire. He is introduced to chemical warfare, a specialization he found particularly appealing.

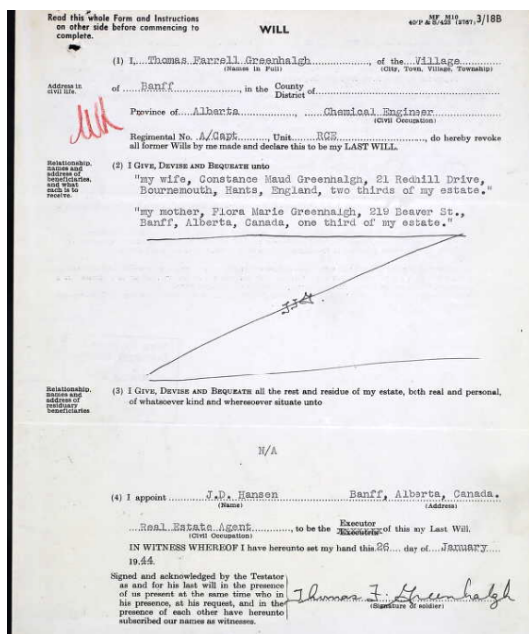
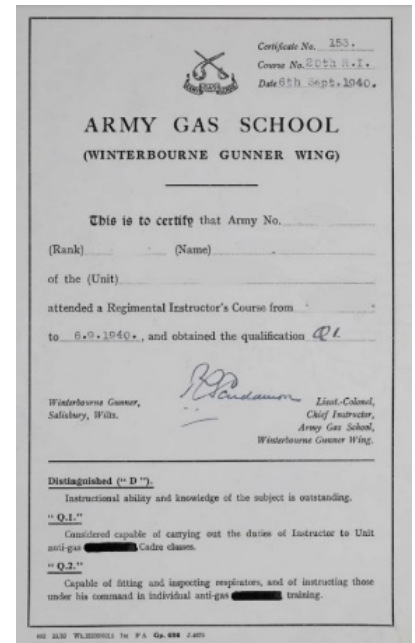
Thomas qualifies there according to Q1 standards.

In early 1942, Thomas is placed on the general list of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of Engineers until he is reassigned to the road construction company in April 1942.

Thomas then joins a unit where his knowledge and interests converged: the CPWEU (Canadian Petroleum Warfare Experimental Unit).

In June 1942, he is assigned to this newly formed unit. The CPWEU is engaged in testing and improving flamethrowers and fuels.

Thomas joins this unit for approximately one year.



In June 1943, another transfer: Thomas joins the Canadian Training School and is to be an Acting Captain if a posting warranted it.

In November 1943, he enjoys nine days of private leave.

On December 27, 1943, Thomas marries Constance Maud Rowe in Bournemouth, England. In his last will, signed January 26, 1944, he stipulates that she inherits two-thirds of all his estate and his mother one-third.

In January 1944, Thomas is assigned to the 7<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Regiment of the Duke of York's Royal Canadian Hussars.

However, with the notation: "for pay and food only."

In mid-April 1944, Thomas is to be a Captain. His training continues.

In May 1944, he spends a week at the School of Intelligence for a course on the structure and tactics of the German army.

Afterward, he is posted back to the Canadian Training School. It can be inferred that he has to fill an instructor vacancy and is assigned to the CMHQ, the Canadian Military Headquarters.

Thomas's rating as a instructor is good.

Quote: *"He has the class under control, covers the prescribed material and is able to convey his knowledge effectively."*

Then, Captain Thomas Farrell Greenhalgh faces the reality of the battlefield.

On October 28, 1944, he arrives on the mainland of Western Europe.

He is taken on strength by the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Squadron of the Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE).

This unit had already witnessed the entire advance from Normandy. By the end of October, 1944, it has seen heavy action at Caen, Falaise, and the Leopold Canal, among other places.

Thomas joins the unit in its advances from Belgium to Bergen-op-Zoom, Netherlands.

At the end of November 1944, Captain Greenhalgh is the 2<sup>nd</sup> in command of the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Squadron of the RCE when his predecessor leaves for the UK.

The relatively quiet winter months of 1944/1945 for the Engineers, are spent in the southern Netherlands, replenishing equipment, replenishing personnel, and testing new equipment.

According to a member's diary, they enjoy Christmas dinner in a hall in Schijndel, a village south-east of 's-Hertogenbosch.

At the end of January 1945, the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Squadron is deployed in the capture of Kapelsche Veer.

The Rhineland Offensive, with the objective to push the enemy back behind the Rhine, is launched on February 8, 1945, with 'Operation Veritable'.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Field Squadron RCE also sees action. Kleve, Hochwald, and Sonsbeck are the locations noted in the war diaries.

The 8<sup>th</sup> is given a few weeks' rest in mid-March and is stationed near Tilburg.

At the end of March 1945, the entire troop moves back to the Kleve area. The plan is to build a bridge over the Rhine near Emmerich.

The preparatory work was disrupted by enemy fire and fighting around that city.

To avoid wasting any time, the Division crosses the Rhine at Rees on April 1, 1945, using Blackfriar's Bridge.

After crossing the Rhine, the advance continues into the eastern part of the



Sappers of the Royal Canadian Engineers lay decking on the Blackfriars Bridge over the Rhine near Rees, Germany. March 30, 1945.  
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Netherlands.

On April 2, 1945, the unit crosses the German-Dutch border, their destination is the village of Ruurlo.

Along the way, their task and destination change.

The new mission: build a bridge for crossing the Twente Canal south of Delden.

The Engineers succeed in carrying out their task, but the Squadron faces heavy losses.

For example:

A bicycle lying on the side of the road turns out to be booby-trapped.

*(A booby trap is an improvised weapon that, like a landmine, is concealed and activated by the victim.)*



Delden, April 1945

How the explosive is triggered is unclear, but it is clear that seventeen Engineers are injured. Two men are also injured in a jeep accident near Delden, two others have a motorcycle accident and one man is trapped between two cars.

The advance continues after crossing the canal, the Squadron passes Almelo (NL) and Meppen in Germany. Finally, at 6:00 PM on April 9, 1945, the Engineers arrive in Sögel, Germany.

The headquarters of the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Squadron is established just north of Sögel, near a cluster of buildings and a road intersection.

**The following text is from an eyewitness account by a member of the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Squadron RCE.**



*"On April 10, 1945, shortly after 8:00 AM, gunfire rang out. The visibility was poor due to heavy mist and we were used hearing Allied troops discharging enemy small arms. This fact hampered early detection of the attack. The attack was very sudden, only 15 or 20 men, all ranks, were able to procure their weapons. About 20 Germans fanned out to flank us and apparently snipers were already on our flanks".*

Sherman tanks in Sögel. Original photo.  
Archive of the Municipality of Sögel.

About 20 Germans and a few snipers attempted to neutralize the headquarters.

The Engineers manage to hold the enemy at bay until two tanks arrive to assist. Then the battle is quickly decided.

The balance was drawn up.

The commander was wounded, and his 2<sup>nd</sup> in command, Captain Greenhalgh, was killed. Three others were also killed; three wounded and of these three, two more died of wounds.

Captain Thomas Farrel Greenhalgh was given a temporary grave in Sögel. He was later transferred to the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten. The grave reference is: Plot 10, Row C, Grave 15.

His headstone has no additional inscription.

*He was awarded:*

*The 1939-45 Star; the France & Germany Star; the Defence Medal; the War Medal 1939-1945; and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp.*



Sources:

[www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org); [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); [www.canada.ca/library-archives](http://www.canada.ca/library-archives), [www.myheritage.nl](http://www.myheritage.nl)