



Clarence Foster Heald, nicknamed Clarence, is born on April 5, 1921, in Edmonton, Alberta. He is the son of Joseph Ernest Foster Heald and Clara Heald.

His father was a veteran of the First World War. He had enlisted in April 1916, subsequently went to the European theater of war in November 1916, and returned in 1918.

When Clarence enlists, his father has already died and his mother has remarried. Upon registration, he lists his mother's name as 'Clara Varnum'.

The family moves to London, Ontario, when Clarence is still young. English is spoken at home, and they attend the United Church. (His father was registered as a Methodist)

After primary school, Clarence attends High School for four years. Afterward, he attends a business course night school for a few months and then looks for work. He joins the Bank of Toronto in 1937. His position is described as: 'counter'.



On May 12, 1942, Clarence enlists for active service in Brockville, Ontario. At that time, he states that he lives in Landsdowne, Ontario.

During an interview after his enlistment, more becomes clear about Clarence's family background.

The death of his father and his mother's remarriage is discussed. It is also mentioned that he did not get along very well with his stepfather. He has an older sister and a half-brother.

Clarence is an amateur photographer; in terms of sports, he is interested in skating, baseball, and hiking in nature.

When he reads, it is preferably 'fiction'.

He is described by the interviewer as a friendly, well-mannered fellow who is very cooperative. Perhaps he could be a little more assertive at times.

His medical report indicates that he is a 'lightweight'; at a height of 5'7", he weighs barely 118 lbs. The following physical characteristics are noted: a scar on the right wrist and a scar from an appendectomy.

By May 1942, Clarence already has a reasonable military background as a reservist.

From 1939 onwards, he has consistently followed training courses, first with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, and later with the Brockville Rifles.

The commander of the latter unit states that he would accept Clarence as an officer in his unit without question, should he be assigned to it.

At the Brockville Rifles, Clarence also received preparatory training as a future officer. After the district depot in Ottawa, Clarence is transferred to Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. The next transfer, by then a sergeant, a posting to the Trois-Rivières officer training center in Quebec in mid-November 1942.

Clarence apparently performs well here, for on February 13, 1943, he is to be a 2nd Lieutenant.

Officially assigned to the Brockville Rifles, Clarence returns to Vancouver Island in March 1943; this time: Long Beach is his new base.

In 1943, Long Beach on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, was a crucial, remote military construction site where the RCAF Air Base Tofino was being built to defend the coast.

Beach defenses—including posts and barbed wire—were installed due to fears of an invasion.



Clarence's next station is Ucluelet on Vancouver Island

The Canadian Air Force has a station with seaplanes there. It is part of the first line of defense against a potential Japanese invasion.

Clarence sees almost all the stations on Vancouver Island.

After Ucluelet, he is posted to the air force base at Patricia Bay near Sidney on the east side of the island.

He is still assigned to the Brockville Rifles, who perform guard duties all over Vancouver Island.

In February 1944, Clarence is transferred to Vernon B.C.

There, he attends a one-month course at the Canadian Infantry School, after which he returns to Sidney.

Meanwhile, since late 1943, negotiations had been taking place at the government level to allow Canadian officers to serve in the British Army.

Clarence reports relatively late that he is willing to go to the United Kingdom as an officer and to serve in a British regiment.

He is selected, his CANLOAN number is CDN/414.

CANLOAN Officers

In the autumn of 1943, the British Army had a severe shortage of lieutenants and captains in the infantry.

Ranks associated with positions such as platoon or company commander, among others. These infantry officers could be found in frontline operations.

By then, the British Army had already been fighting on multiple fronts for several years, and losses in the aforementioned positions were heavy.

With the planned invasion looming, this was going to pose a major problem.

In Canada, there was a surplus of these young officers, motivated and willing to participate in the fight.

After much British-Canadian consultation, the green light was given in February 1944 for the following plan:

- A maximum of 1,450 infantry and 50 ordnance (logistics) officers can be loaned out.
- Participation is exclusively on a voluntary basis.
- Payment by Canada according to Canadian standards.
- Age limits: 33 years for lieutenants, 37 years for captains.
- British promotion rules will be applied.
- If necessary, the officers can be recalled by Canada.
- The entire operation is given the code name CANLOAN.

A large number of applications was expected in Canada because many officers believed they could achieve faster promotion by participating in the battle. Others were so focused on deployment that they had themselves demoted in rank to qualify.

Nevertheless, the pre-estimated number of applications was not reached.

Ultimately, 623 infantry and 50 ordnance officers were selected.

They were given a registration number starting with CDN and a sequential number based on their application.

The commitment and performance of the CANLOAN officers were beyond all doubt. The list of decorations and promotions is long.

Their dedication and courage also had a dark side.

The balance: 128 killed in action; 310 wounded, 27 prisoners of war, and one missing.

Eleven of the fallen are buried in Holten.

Their gravestones can be recognized by the maple leaf on the stone, the registration number beginning with CDN, the designation 'Royal Canadian Infantry Corps', and the British regiment to which they were assigned.

In preparation for his departure to the United Kingdom (UK), Clarence is transferred to Sussex, New Brunswick, the assembly point for troops making the crossing.

On May 3, 1944, the ship 'Empress of Scotland' departs from Halifax with, among others, 250 CANLOAN officers on board. (CDN numbers 202-557)

On May 11, 1944, the ship arrives in Liverpool.

The 1st Hampshire Regiment is the unit Clarence is assigned to.

He does not land in Normandy on D-Day, but on June 20, 1944.

On July 31, 1944, Clarence is wounded during Operation Bluecoat, the continuation of the advance following the capture of Villers-Bocage.

In the summer of 1944, the Allied advance stalled in the bocage—Normandy's dense network of centuries-old earthen embankments topped with tangled shrubs and trees.

These barriers, some reaching 10 to 15 feet high, created ideal natural fortresses for German defenders,



German defenders

After being discharged from the hospital, Clarence is initially reassigned to the Hampshire Regiment. However, in late November 1944, he is transferred to the 2nd Devonshire Regiment.

The Devonshire Regiment is deployed during the Battle of the Bulge, but there is no record of this in Clarence's file.

The regiment returns to the UK in March 1945 and subsequently prepares to participate in the Allied Rhine crossing in late March 1945.

Key aspects of the Rhine crossing:

Operation Plunder & Varsity: On the night of March 23–24, 1945, Operation Plunder began under the command of Field Marshal Montgomery.

This was accompanied by Operation Varsity, an airborne operation on the right bank of the Rhine near the village of Hamminkeln, close to Wesel (Germany). It was the largest single-day airborne operation in history.



Landed gliders

During the advance toward the river Elbe, after the Rhine crossing, Clarence is wounded for the second time on March 31, 1945.

According to medical post records, he sustained gunshot wounds in the head and dies relatively soon after arrival at the Advanced Dressing Station.

He is given a temporary grave southwest of Wüllen near Ahaus (D).

Lieutenant Clarence Foster Heald's final resting place is the CWGC Canadian Cemetery in Holten.

On April 15, 1946, he is laid to rest in: plot 12, row G, grave 16.

He is awarded:

the 1939-1945 Star; the France-Germany Star, the War Medal 1939-1945, and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

The text on his gravestone reads:

**Devoted son,
True friend,
Loyal patriot,
Gave his life for humanity.**

Sources:

www.cwgc.org; www.ancestry.com; www.canada.ca/library-archives;
wikipedia, wartimesproject.com; codeword CANLOAN ISBN 1-55002-167-2

