



Joseph Hemelryk is born on February 24, 1912, in Denham, Buckinghamshire, England. He is the youngest of seven children, Joseph has one brother and five sisters.

His parents—George Edward Hemelryk and his wife Elizabeth Mary Hemelryk (née Smith)—and their children, formed a prominent Catholic family.

During the First World War, George Edward Hemelryk served in the British Army, attaining the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

After his military service, the family settled in Dyserth/Rhyl, Wales. George Edward dedicated years of service to the community—including as a Justice of the Peace (JP)—and was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1937. This is the second-highest rank within the British order of chivalry.

*The surname Hemelryk (originally *Hemelrijck*) is of Southern Netherlandish origin. Joseph's grandfather, Paulus Eduard Josephus Hemelrijk (1840–1919), was born in Leiden in the Netherlands and worked as a cotton broker in Liverpool.*

High standards are set for Joseph, and he proves capable of meeting them. After five years of "public school" education, he attends Stonyhurst College in Lancashire, England—a prestigious Catholic boarding school run by the Jesuits. Joseph subsequently obtains further qualifications at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge before ultimately pursuing his interest in technical fields.

On April 21, 1929, Joseph arrives in St. John, New Brunswick, accompanied by his father.

Upon arrival, it is recorded that they were traveling on to visit a relative in Lethbridge, Alberta. Richard Smith, Joseph's uncle, owns a farm there that was well-known in the region. His father returns home, while Joseph remains in Canada.

The Smith Farm: In the 1920s, Smith's Farm was a prominent agricultural operation in Lethbridge, Alberta—a progressive enterprise that, even then, utilized an irrigation system to maximize crop yields.



For years, Joseph focuses on agricultural mechanization there, immersing himself in the application and development of machinery for the agricultural sector.

When Joseph enlists for active duty with the Canadian Army on May 1, 1941, he states that he has already been working for five years at the Cockshutt Plow Company, a manufacturer of agricultural machinery. Joseph served there as a product engineer.

A product engineer is a multidisciplinary professional responsible for designing, developing, testing, and optimizing a product throughout its entire lifecycle.

This company ramps up production to support the war effort. Was this what prompts Joseph to enlist, or is it his father's military background? Incidentally, his older brother is already serving in the British Army at the time.

Joseph's medical report notes that Joseph is 6'2" tall, weighed 179 lbs. A specific physical characteristic mentioned is the amputation of the fourth toe on his right foot, the result of a complicated fracture. (recorded for potential identification purposes)

Joseph has already attended military training with the Dufferin & Haldimand Rifles (D&HR) in Canada, and, while in England, he has been a member of the Stonyhurst College Cadet Corps. He also completed officer training with the D&HR regiment.

After a few weeks, Joseph—then an acting sergeant—is transferred to Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. He remains there until mid-September 1941, when he is transferred to Camp Borden, Ontario, for further infantry training.

Joseph is commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant and assigned to the D&HR, based in Vancouver. Training sessions and courses follow in rapid succession for Joseph, as did the associated transfers.

By April 1942, he is back in Nanaimo. A few months later, he is transferred again, this time to Courtenay, British Columbia.

In the interim, Joseph obtains driving qualifications for wheeled vehicles—including the 'Otter' (light reconnaissance vehicle) and completes the corresponding reconnaissance course.

This all is followed by 'battle drill' training (standardized tactical procedures for a unit).



Otter

From August 1942, Sussex, New Brunswick, is Joseph's base. While there, he spends a few weeks in the hospital with pneumonia. After his discharge, he is granted another month of sick leave.

He enjoys leave over Christmas, and in January 1943, Joseph qualifies as an instructor at the Driver Mechanics School.

Various training courses follow, all within the large military Camp Sussex.

On May 13, 1943, Joseph is promoted to the rank of captain.

During this period, he is also authorized to wear two black service chevrons on his uniform, signifying that he has completed two years of service.

In the summer of 1943, Joseph makes the crossing to the United Kingdom for the first time. He arrives there on September 1 and is assigned to the Perth Regiment of Canada.

After serving with the 8th Reconnaissance Battalion and a special British unit specializing in camouflage techniques, Joseph returns to Sussex, Canada, at the end of 1943.

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

Joseph is one of the first to sign up for assignment to a British regiment. He is selected and his CANLOAN number is: CDN/4.

CANLOAN Officers

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

These ranks typically held positions such as platoon or company commander.

Such infantry officers were found on the front lines during combat operations.

The British Army had already been fighting on multiple fronts for several years, and casualties in these roles were high. With the planned invasion on the horizon, this threatened to become a major problem.

Canada had a surplus of these young officers, who were motivated and willing to join the fight.

Following extensive British-Canadian consultation, the green light was given in February 1944 for the following scheme:

- A maximum of 1,450 infantry officers and 50 logistics officers could be seconded.
- Participation was strictly voluntary.
- Pay was provided by Canada in accordance with Canadian standards.
- Age limits: 33 years for lieutenants, 37 years for captains.
- British promotion regulations would apply.
- Officers could be recalled by Canada if necessary.
- The initiative was codenamed CANLOAN.

A high number of applications was expected in Canada, as many officers believed that participating in the fighting would lead to faster promotion. Others were so determined to serve that they accepted a reduction in rank to qualify.

Nevertheless, the projected number of applications was not reached.

Ultimately, 623 infantry officers and 50 logistics officers were selected.

They were assigned a service number beginning with "CDN," followed by a sequential number based on the order of their application.

The dedication and performance of the CANLOAN officers were beyond question.

The list of decorations and promotions is extensive.

Their service and courage came at a heavy price.

The final tally: 128 killed in action, 310 wounded, 27 taken prisoner, and one missing in action.

Eleven of those killed are buried in Holten.

Their headstones can be identified by the maple leaf emblem, the service number beginning with "CDN," the inscription "Royal Canadian Infantry Corps," and the name of the British regiment to which they were attached.

While other officers for the CANLOAN program were being transferred to Sussex, the process was quite simple for Joseph and a few others.

As one of his colleagues later recounted: "All we had to do was gather our gear and move to another barrack."

Captain Joseph Hemelryk (CDN/4) is among the first group of 52 CANLOAN officers to depart for the UK.

Their ship, the **Andes**, arrives in Liverpool on April 6, 1944.

The men are posted almost immediately to British regiments or, whenever possible, to a regiment affiliated with their own Canadian unit.

Regarding this initial group of 52 men, the following details are recorded from an interview with CDN/29 Lieutenant John (Jack) McBride:

"Upon arrival in Liverpool, a deck of cards was 'borrowed' from the ship's lounge. Everyone in our group drew a card. We then got quite busy for a while: each of us signed every card drawn by the others. Everyone agreed that the card would be showed if asked for. If a group member failed to do so, he would forfeit a drink. At a reunion in the early 1990s, the surviving members of the group confirmed that they still carried their original cards and had never once had to buy a round."
This small group later became known as 'Club 52' or 'the card club group'.

Joseph is assigned to the 1st Battalion, H.L.I. (Highland Light Infantry). This unit lands in Normandy on June 24, 1944. The timeline in Joseph's file contains only two further entries after that.

- As of 13 December 1944, he serves with the rank of Major.
- 14 April 1945: Killed in Action.

The unit's war diary sheds light on the second half of 1944 and the early months of 1945.

In mid-July 1944, the unit sees action during the Battle of the Odon River in Normandy.

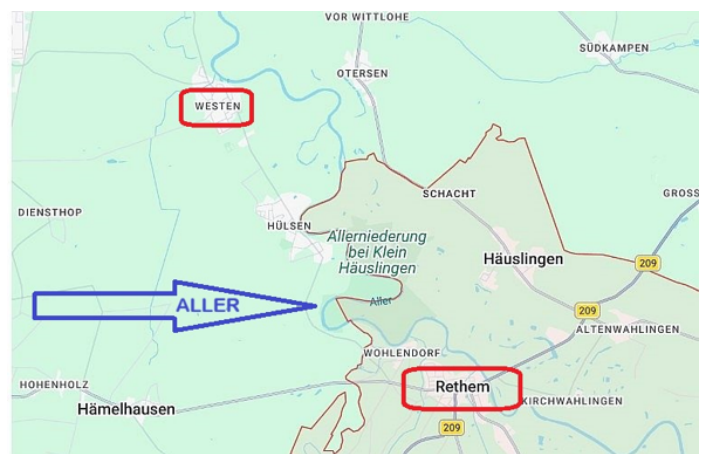
In September 1944, following the airborne landings of Operation Market Garden, Joseph is deployed with the 1st H.L.I. in the southern Netherlands, in the Middelbeers/Oostelbeers region.

In December 1944, Joseph is officially to be a 'Major'.

The 1st H.L.I. is also deployed during the Battle of the Bulge in January 1945. Subsequently, they take up positions along the west bank of the Meuse River in the Netherlands until early 1945.

The Rhine offensive is imminent, and the concentration of troops is underway. The Rhineland offensive intends to drive enemy forces back to the east bank of the Rhine. This offensive starts on 8 February 1945 with Operation Veritable—operations in the Reichswald (Germany)—in which the 1st H.L.I. also takes part. The 1st H.L.I. also participates in Operation Plunder, which involved the crossing of the Rhine.

After the crossing of the Rhine the Allied advance continues onto German soil.



The 53rd Welsh Division, to which Joseph's unit is attached, heads towards northern Germany.

In April 1945, they reach the Aller, a tributary of the Weser.
This is the last major German defensive line intended to slow the British advance.

The fighting there takes place primarily between April 9 and 11, 1945, around the villages of Essel and Rethem. The bridge over the River Aller at Rethem was of crucial importance. Two British attacks were repelled, resulting in heavy casualties. Eventually, the British succeeded in crossing further to the West and flanking out the German defenses.

On the night of April 13–14, 1945, a massive counterattack is launched against the British bridgehead. It is repelled, though again at the cost of many British casualties.

It is during this action that Major Joseph Hemelryk is 'Killed in Action'.
He is initially buried in a temporary grave near the roadside to Soltau, in the neighbourhood of Häuslingen.

Through the efforts of the British, his remains were later transferred to the CWGC Cemetery in the Reichswald, south of Kleve (Germany).

His final resting place is the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten.
He is interred there on October 31, 1947, in Plot 4, Row F, Grave 11.

He is awarded:

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

Major Joseph Hemelryk has received further posthumous honors.

The specific dates to which these relate cannot be determined.

He was awarded a 'Mention in Despatches' (MiD).

Official recognition: The recipient's name, rank, and unit are published in official sources, such as the *London Gazette* and the *Canada Gazette*.

He also received a high-ranking decoration: the Military Cross.

The Military Cross is a prestigious British Commonwealth decoration awarded to Canadian Army officers for "*exemplary gallantry during active operations against the enemy on land*".

The inscription on his headstone reads: **R.I.P.**



Sources:

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