

Jackson, Walter Leslie. Rifleman

12-D-9



Walter Leslie was born on August 28, 1921.
Son of Jonathan L. and Margaret Jane Jackson.
They lived at 411 Rhodes Avenue in Toronto-Ontario.

According to the notes, three brothers and two sisters were also part of the family.
The family was affiliated with the Church of England.
After primary school, Walter Leslie attended high school for another 4 years.

He had a job when he enlisted on March 24, 1941.

He worked at J.R. Kearny Corp. in Leaside, near Toronto.

On his forms, the company name was somewhat "strangely written", as was his position.

It was noted: "pump press operator". Later notes showed it should be "punch press operator". In other words: he was a machine operator on a punching machine.

His first introduction to the military was at Camp Borden. Not with the infantry section but with the Canadian Army Medical Corps, which also had a training centre there.

After two months, in mid-May 1941, Walter Leslie was already posted to the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada. (QOR of C.) at Camp Sussex, New Brunswick; an infantry training centre.

It went quite quickly, because on July 29, 1941, Walter Leslie already embarked in Halifax and arrived in Gourock, Scotland on the 29th of that month.

Walter Leslie would stay in the United Kingdom for a longer period of time.

After arrival he first had a week's disembarkation leave.

On August 8, 1941 he reported back to the unit, the QOR or C.

Except for a few notes about leave, there is no entry in his records until June 25, 1943.

"Attached to the Headquarters of the 3rd Canadian Division at a FAP, a "first aid post".

In August, Walter Leslie received a disciplinary punishment, which cost him five days' pay. There are strikingly large gaps in the timeline in his records.

In January 1944, he was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp. Next, there was a jump in time until June 1944.

On June 6, 1944, the QOR of C., with Walter Leslie Jackson in its ranks, landed on the Normandy beach.

The War Diaries of the QOR of C. can be found on the internet.

To illustrate this, we add a passage from June 7, 1944.

ANGUERNY France 014775	7 Jun 44	0100	Quite a bit of excitement and confusion was caused by a truck load or so of "Jerries" arriving in the centre of the village, however these were dealt with in short order. The whole night was marked with confused bits of fighting. An enemy patrol broke into B HQ but was dispersed, the offr in charge being taken prisoner.
		1200	HQ 8 Cdn Inf Bde set up in Arguerny in vicinity of our B Coy.
		1300	Prisoners kept coming in in quite a steady stream - most of these were young fellows about 16 years of age and great amusement was caused by one of them who was wearing a great coat about 15 sizes too large.
		1400	Alt B HQ is still established in their house at Bernieres Sur Mer and all their available time is spent wombing the beaches for missing personnel and visiting the wounded in the B D S at MR 999855. All the lads there are quite cheerful - the walking wounded are being shifted onto various craft and being shipped back to merrie England. The lads who fell on the beach itself were rather a disheartening sight - many of them trained for years and only lasted for a few moments in action. Many a good man was lost on these beaches but they did a wonderful job. There was much activity during the day, tracking down snipers in the village of ANGBERNY- more prisoners were taken including a chauffer found slöpping in a German staff car. At least twelve German vehicles, half tracks and lorries were taken captive in our area and included one staff car and one armoured O.P.

Reading these documents is worthwhile to get an idea of the first hectic days after landing, that these men encountered, including of course Walter Leslie.

The confusion when, after the landing and fighting, a truckload of Germans shows up in the middle of the night.

But also, a moment of reflection for the men who did not get further than the beach.

The advance of the regiment:

They fought through Normandy, Northern France to Belgium and the Netherlands. In July 1944, a message was mistakenly sent to the home front that Walter Leslie was injured, but this was later rescinded.

France July 1944: Deployment at Carpiquet airfield, fierce battle.

Followed by many "smaller" skirmishes on the route to Falaise.

An entry in the diary about the casualties in the regiment:

VICTIMS SINCE "D-DAY".

Officers/Other ranks:

Killed in Action & Died of Wounds: 7/162

Injured: 17/278

Combat Exhaustion: 0/39

In La Capell – France, the regiment was given a longer rest.

Next a further advance north: Boulogne – Calais, with varying deployment and battles.

The French-Belgian border was crossed on October 4, 1944.

On October 5, 1944 is noted the arrival of six new vehicles; the so-called "Weasel", an amphibious carrier.

In the meantime, Walter Leslie had qualified as a driver 'mechanical transport'.



Weasels

The regiment could then prepare to take part in "Operation Switchback. Clearing the Scheldt estuary to use the port of Antwerp. This was an order, directly from General Eisenhower to Field Marshal Montgomery, after the partial failure of "Operation Market-Garden".

On October 10, 1944, the regiment started moving again. It started an advance towards Sluiskil in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, in the southwest of the Netherlands. Walter Leslie's service records are still blank. Southwest Netherlands would take a heavy toll on the QOR or C.

On November 3, 1944, Westkapelle was reached by the QOR of C. Word came that the regiment would go to Ghent (B) for a longer rest. The "longer rest" period lasted a week. The regiment stayed in Ghent until November 8, 1944.

In mid-November 1944 they were moved to the Berg en Dal, in the Groesbeek area. The diary starts almost every day with: cloudy-cold-foggy-night frost.

Operationally it was relatively quiet, there were patrols and some enemy activity.

At the end of November and beginning of December 1944, part of the regiment was stationed in the front-line area of Ooij-Erlecom.

There were regular reports of infiltrations and shelling by the enemy.

The winter months were tough. Cold and snow played tricks on the troops.



Properly dressed for the occasion, the Queen's Own Rifles move out on patrol from the Nijmegen salient, January 22, 1945. (B. J. Gloster, National Archives of Canada, PA-114073)

Walter Leslie undoubtedly witnessed the run-up to the Rhineland Offensive. To clarify:

"After the partly failure of Operation Market Garden, an enormous Canadian/British force was built up in the Nijmegen area in the winter of 1944/1945. Approximately 400,000 men and almost 35,000 vehicles. A similar American force gathered more south in the Roermond area.

The aim is to push the Germans back behind the Rhine.

On February 8, 1945, the Canadians and British launched their attack with "Operation Veritable". They encounter heavy resistance in the Reichswald.

It will be the bloodiest battle ever on German soil. On March 10, the western bank of the Rhine was virtually cleared of German troops.

On the night of March 23 and 24, the Allies cross the Rhine at Wesel and Rees.

On the eastside of the Rhine about 16,000 paratroopers landed in the Wesel-Hamminkeln area. On March 29, the Rhine crossing was complete and the Rhineland was in Allied hands. In the Rhineland Offensive about 25,000 Allied and more than 60,000 German soldiers were killed".

The first entry in Walter Leslie's service records is only from February 1945. He was given 9 days' leave, which he spent in the United Kingdom. He returned to the unit on March 1, 1945.

A month later, April 1, 1945, the QORs of C. crossed the German-Dutch border. The advance along the eastern border of the Netherlands had begun. On April 11, 1945, the regiment was already in the city of Deventer. On April 14, north of the city Meppel. On the fatal day for Walter Leslie Jackson, April 16, 1945, an advance was planned from the city of Heerenveen towards the "Afsluitdijk".

A fierce confrontation with the Germans took place there. The leading unit ran into a German ambush near the dike. Five soldiers were immediately fatally wounded and one was seriously injured and died of his wounds the next day. One survivor (Private Orville Cook) stated:

"We were heading with 3 brengun carriers to the dike. The Germans had set up a barricade. They wanted to keep a corridor open for the retreat of their own soldiers. We had to prevent that.

The information we had received had not mentioned anti-tank weapons. However, they were definitely there. It was a difficult decision; we were sufficiently armed and decided to attack. They let us get very close but then hit three times.

I was the only one in the carrier who wasn't hit. I jumped out of the carrier, pulled the sergeant and driver out and gave them morphine and a cigarette.

The sergeant gave the order to warn the others.

The soldiers in the leading carrier were all killed instantly. When I went back to the commander to report the position of the Germans, I realized how terribly we had been hit. Later we discovered that the Germans had deployed "FLAK", an anti-aircraft gun.

The next day, the five fatalities, who laid along the road and where the population had laid flowers, were buried in Sneek."

This is exactly the place where Walter Leslie was killed. He was given a temporary grave at the general cemetery in Sneek.

A plaque on the wall of the Martini Church in Sneek commemorates the six fallen.



On March 26, 1946 Walter Leslie got his final resting place in Holten. Grave reference: 12-D-9.

Walter Leslie Jackson was awarded:

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

During the war, 463 members of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada were killed and buried in Europe, and nearly 900 men were wounded, many twice or three times.

