

MacKenzie, Donald Charles, Lieutenant.

3-F-12



Donald Charles MacKenzie was born on September 3, 1914 in Springhill, Nova Scotia.

He was the son of Charles Tupper and Lydia Claire MacKenzie.

Springhill was known for its coal mining.

Commercial mining had been carried out here since 1874. According to reports, the deepest coal shaft (1,220 meters) in Canada was located here.

When Donald C. MacKenzie enlisted on September 2, 1939, he stated that he worked in mining.

Before enlisting, he had volunteered for the North Nova Scotia Highlanders (MG), a machine gun unit, from mid-July 1936 to the end of August 1939.

Note:

(On 1 December 1936, as a result of the reorganization of the Canadian Militia, the Cumberland Highlanders were amalgamated with the Colchester and Hants Regiments and C Company of the 6th Machine Gun Battalion, CMGC.

The name for the new unit: North Nova Scotia Highlanders (MG).

Donald had married Mary Ann McSavaney on June 19, 1936 and had a 6-month-old son (Charles) at the time of enlistment.

With the North Nova Scotia's, he had already the rank of Lance/Sergeant. (Corporal with temporary sergeant function)

As such he was also taken on strength (TOS) at the district depot of Halifax, Nova Scotia on August 6, 1940.

In January 1941 Donald was, at his own request, reverted to "private" and transferred to the 6th Field Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE) in Debert. This unit had started there in 1940 with the construction of the infrastructure for what would later be known as "Camp Debert".

He would remain in Debert until mid-June 1941.

In the meantime, he obtained driving licenses, qualified as "pioneer", "miner" and "fitter".

In short: he became an all-round Engineer. In between he enjoyed a few leaves.

Donald boarded the "Britania" in Halifax on June 18, 1941 for the crossing to the United Kingdom.

Now, Lance/Corporal again, he remained assigned to the 6th Field Company of the RCE. He followed various training courses and enjoyed a few short leaves.

At the end of July 1942, he followed an NCO course for a few weeks. (NCO = Non-Commissioned Officer)

Donald absolved course after course. In November/December 1942 he was trained in "combined operations". Engineer work in conjunction with infantry operations, a kind of preparation for the real deployment at the front.

For Donald, 1943 began with further training, his pay was increased and on April 6, 1943 he officially was appointed to be a Corporal. Soon followed by a recommendation to "Acting Sergeant". But that was struck at his own request. He received the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp in September 1943.

Donald served with the Royal Canadian Engineers in England until February 1944. He was then recommended for Sandhurst, the famous military academy. He was one of the first Canadian officers to be trained by British officers. He graduated on September 21, 1944.

On October 18, 1944, Lieutenant Donald Charles MacKenzie arrived in Belgium. He was taken on strength by the Support Company of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. (RWR)

Undoubtedly Donald took part in all the battles in which the RWR's were deployed. Among other things, the liberation of the Scheldt estuary. According to the reports he spent the winter of 1944/1945 (cold and severe) in the area of the Waal River.

Early February 1945 the actions, known as the "Rhineland Offensive", began. The RWR's were employed in the Moyland Forest area (D), the Rhine crossing and Hoog-Elten.

Back on Dutch soil, Donald and the RWRs were in action again. The name "Deventer" is mentioned as "Battle Honour".

On April 6, 1945 the Royal Regina Rifles reached the Ozerhof, southeast of Deventer. They found the graves of ten resistance fighters who had been liquidated there just hours before the arrival of the Canadians.

On April 7, 1945, the crossing of the Schipbeek Canal stood before. The pioneer section of Lieutenant Donald Charles MacKenzie had to make the crossing possible. Under heavy German machine gun fire, MacKenzie succeeded in laying planks across the stream. He made use of the stone piers of the weir. The upper part of it had disappeared. Thanks to Donald's inventive ideas, and courage, a company was able to cross relatively easily.

During this action, MacKenzie was wounded by shrapnel from German hand grenades. For his efforts at the Schipbeek Canal he was nominated for a Military Cross. That was awarded to him in August 1945, unfortunately posthumously.

The employment that would become fatal for Lieutenant Donald Charles MacKenzie began on Sunday 22 of April 1945: the attack on Appingedam.

The regiment was ordered to attack Appingedam. There was heavy fighting on the borders of the city.

NAME	MAC KENZIE, DONALD CHARLES			F. 49955-505
RANK	CORP LT			H.Q. File 602-13-2401
ACTIVE UNIT	C.I.C.			
RESERVE UNIT				
Appt. R.O. No.	5062	Date	22 SEP. 44	Effective date of Appt. 21 SEP. 44
CANADA GAZETTE				
TRANSFERS, PROMOTIONS and REVERSIONS				
EMBARKED CANADA - SAILING LIST No. 682 18-6-41				
Awarded	M.C.	R.O. 5953	11 Aug. 45	
Killed in action, 22 Apr 45, The Royal Wpg. Rifles, Western European Theatre of War. Battle # 8705A 3 May 45				

The Support Company, under Donald's command, was ordered forward to clear mines.

Two men from his unit were wounded by machine gun fire while attempting to cross a bridge. Lieutenant MacKenzie himself went forward to evacuate them, despite heavy enemy fire.

He managed to get both men to safety. He himself was shot by a sniper shortly afterwards.

Wounded, he was taken into a house.

When that house was hit by enemy artillery shells, it turned out that Lieutenant Donald Charles MacKenzie had been fatally wounded by the shrapnel.

He would never see his son, little Charles, grow up.

He was temporarily buried in Loppersum.

He was given a final resting place at the CWGC Canadian Cemetery in Holten.

Grave reference: 3-F-12.

He was awarded:

the Military Cross; 1939-1945 Star; France-Germany Star; Defence Medal, War Medal 1939-1945 and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp.

