



On June 10, 1920, John Brenton, nicknamed Jack, is born in Souris, Prince Edward Island. (PEI)

Three years later, Jack's sister is born, she is named Miriam.

In the 1920s, Souris was a bustling fishing and shipping town.

The economy was dominated by large trading companies such as Matthew & McLean Ltd.

Jack's grandfather was one of the founders.

Jack is the son of John Brenton Matthew and Ruth Hazel Matthew, née Crosbey. The family attends the United Church of Canada, and English is spoken at home.

After primary school, he attends Prince of Wallace College in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, for three years. He continues his studies for another four years at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In 1942, Jack obtains a 'Bachelor of Commerce' degree.

Jack's father and his uncle Harold G. hold shares in the company Matthew & MacLean.

Jack's studies are therefore explainable.



Matthew & McLean Ltd. 1920

He enlists as a reservist in late November 1939 and is assigned to the Dalhousie & King Contingent. During the medical examination, it is noted that he is slightly underweight (almost 6' tall, weighed 134 lbs) and he has a physical characteristic: a scar from an appendectomy.

(such a characteristic is recorded for potential identification)

In addition to English, he also speaks French and a little Spanish.

After completing his studies in June 1942, Jack enlists in Halifax for active duty in the Canadian army. As a reservist, he has already completed an officer training.

Jack starts at the district depot in Halifax, within two weeks he is transferred to Brockville, Ontario. He joins the officer training center there as a cadet.

In September 1942, Jack is promoted to 2nd Lieutenant and he is transferred to Camp Utopia in Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick, for an instructor course.

Camp Utopia, at the time the largest military facility in New Brunswick, was located a few kilometers from RCAF Station Pennfield Ridge. It opened on August 1, 1942, as an advanced infantry training center and served as a training base for members of the Carleton & York Regiment and the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment. Canadian soldiers began training at this location in 1943 in preparation for the invasions of Italy and Northwest Europe.



Camp Utopia after WW2

Jack's stay at Pennfield Ridge is short-lived. In mid-September 1942, he is posted to the infantry training center in Aldershot, Nova Scotia. He receives Christmas leave and reports to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, on March 1, 1943. There, he falls ill; he has mumps and is out of action for several weeks.

In Yarmouth, Jack qualifies for his driver's license for wheeled vehicles, also for a course 'platoon weapons'. Mid-June '43 he is allowed two weeks leave.

Jack's next stop, at the end of June 1943, is St. John, New Brunswick. He is assigned to the Prince Edward Island Highlanders (PEIH). Not without reason; Jack is booked for the so-called 'woodcraft training'.

In early 1943, these intensive training sessions were aimed at instilling essential outdoor survival skills, orientation abilities, and winter warfare tactics (such as skiing) for officers and infantrymen. In September, Jack ends up in the hospital for a few days. Problems with his left ankle are the cause. He is therefore granted a week of sick leave.

Jack's training continues; in mid-November '43, he is in Prince George, British Columbia. Here he is posted to the FB&JW school. The abbreviation stands for: Forest, Bush & Jungle Warfare.

The officers receive training in survival, navigation, and guerrilla tactics in dense, hostile terrain.

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

Jack has volunteered to go to the United Kingdom as an officer and to serve in a British regiment.

He is selected and his CANLOAN number is: CDN/349.

CANLOAN Officers

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

These ranks correspond to roles such as platoon or company commander.

Such infantry officers are 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 was set to become a major problem.

Canada had a surplus of these young officers—motivated and ready to join the fight.

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

- A maximum of 1,450 infantry officers and 50 logistics officers could be seconded.
- Participation was strictly voluntary.
- Pay was provided by Canada according to Canadian standards.
- Age limits: 33 years for lieutenants, 37 years for captains.
- British promotion rules would apply.
- Officers could be recalled by Canada if necessary.
- The initiative was given the codename 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 also came at a heavy cost. The final tally: 128 killed, 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.

Jack remains in Prince George until February 1944, then transfers to Sussex, New Brunswick, and is posted to the Special Officers Training Centre. On the forms, required for his CANLOAN officer application, Jack notes that he had special trainings in St. John and Prince George. He also mentions having visited Western Europe in 1937.

				Army No. <i>F-79688</i>	Regt or Corps. <i>P.E.I. Highs.</i>
				Period of rank service. From <i>6-6-42</i>	To <i>4-9-42</i>
				If serving on regular attestation.....	
(6) SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS					
(a) Foreign Languages (state dialects where necessary and degree of proficiency, i.e., "fluent," "good," or "fair")	Speak	Read	Write	(f) Any special knowledge or experience not included in (a) to (e)	
(b) Knowledge of Foreign Countries .. <i>Visited Belgium, Holland, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France as Tourist. Two Weeks in 1937.</i>					

In Sussex, Jack is one out of a large group of selected officers. One of them later recounted that Jack was fond of playing the occasional prank; as he left their quarters, he would sometimes toss a few blanks (training ammunition) into the stove as a parting gesture. The first time he did this, it caused quite a panic in the barracks.

A-34 Special Officers Training Centre.

The program here trained CANLOAN officers—Canadian officers who volunteered to be attached directly to the British Army to help offset heavy casualties. These men were sent to British regiments almost immediately after completing their training. For their wives and families, "destination Sussex" became synonymous with a swift, bittersweet farewell.

In April 1944, Jack and a group of CANLOAN officers boarded the *Bayano*, a ship bound for Liverpool in the United Kingdom (UK). They disembarked there on May 1, 1944.

Jack is put on a reinforcement roster for the 2nd Battalion, Glasgow Highlanders (G.H.). He lands in Normandy, France, on June 20, 1944, and is assigned to the G.H.

He is wounded on July 17, 1944—the final day of Operation Greenline near the Odon River in Normandy.

Shrapnel from a mortar shell struck his left foot, and he is evacuated to the 11th Canadian Military Hospital in Taplow, England. He is discharged in late September 1944.

Jack remains in the UK until the end of 1944. On January 1, 1945, he returns to the European mainland and rejoins the Glasgow Highlanders.

In late January, the division, to which the Glasgow Highlanders are attached is withdrawn from the front line along the Meuse River. The officers are granted 48 hours of leave in Brussels. A colleague of Jack's later recounts that he and Jack had a date with two Canadian nurses; he refers to one of them as "Jack's girlfriend." During this leave, Jack reportedly expresses a premonition that he will not survive the crossing of the Rhine.

Preparations for the Rhineland Offensive—aimed at driving enemy forces back to the east bank of the Rhine—are set in motion.

This offensive starts on February 8, 1945, with Operation Veritable.

Jack takes part in this operation with his regiment, as well as in Operation Plunder, which aims to achieve the crossing of the Rhine.

Lieutenant John Brenton Matthew is 'Killed in Action' during the fighting that followed the crossing of the Rhine and the airborne landings near Hamminkeln (Germany). By 27 March 1945, Hamminkeln was in Allied hands.



Temporary graves near Hamminkeln -Germany

That day also marks the end of Jack's life. He was initially buried in a temporary grave near Hamminkeln.

The CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten becomes his final resting place.

His grave reference is: Plot 4, Row F, Grave 5.

He is awarded:

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

His headstone reads:
**These were His servants
in His steps they trod**

Sources:

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

