

Murray, James Gordon. Lieutenant

1-H-8



On March 14, 1917, James Gordon was born in Stellarton, Nova Scotia. His parents were Alexander Hugh Murray and Helen Rose Murray.

The family included another brother, Arthur Ross, and a sister, Gladys Margaret.

The family belonged to the United Church of England.

James had a good education. It was reported: grade 11 with certificate.

After primary school, at least another 4 years of high school.

After school he had worked several jobs. Helped in a shoe store, worked at the Eastern Car Company, manufacturer of railway wagons.

He had also been active as a self-employed carpenter.



Eastern Car Company

James was also active, as a volunteer, with the Pictou Highlanders, an infantry regiment.

His service records show that he had faithfully followed the training from 1936 to 1939. He was then a corporal.

On September 2, 1939 he enlisted in the army in Stellarton.

He indeed stated his occupation as "carpenter".

James was allowed to carry the rank of Lance/Sergeant from the start.

He was subsequently stationed at Mulgrave, Dartmouth and Stellarton.

On December 3, 1941, he married Elizabeth Donaleen Murray.

That same month he started his officer training at the OTC (Officers Training Centre) in Brockville, Ontario.

When James successfully completed this training in March 1942, he went to the School of Instruction in Aldershot, Nova Scotia.

In April 1942, James was promoted to lieutenant.

In late April 1942, James is at No.62 Canadian Army (Basic) Training Center in Charlottetown-Prince Edward Island.

At the end of 1942, James was back in the ranks of the Pictou Highlanders (P.H.) based in Sussex.

He qualified, among other things, as a driver "wheeled vehicle".

James remained in the P.H. ranks but spent some time in Gander in the summer of 1943 on a "leadership" course.

James then had to travel quite a bit for training and courses.

According to the service records: Debert-Nova Scotia; St. John -New Brunswick and Vernon B.C.

There was also a refreshment course as an "instructor" for James and he subsequently qualified as a driver "tracked vehicle".

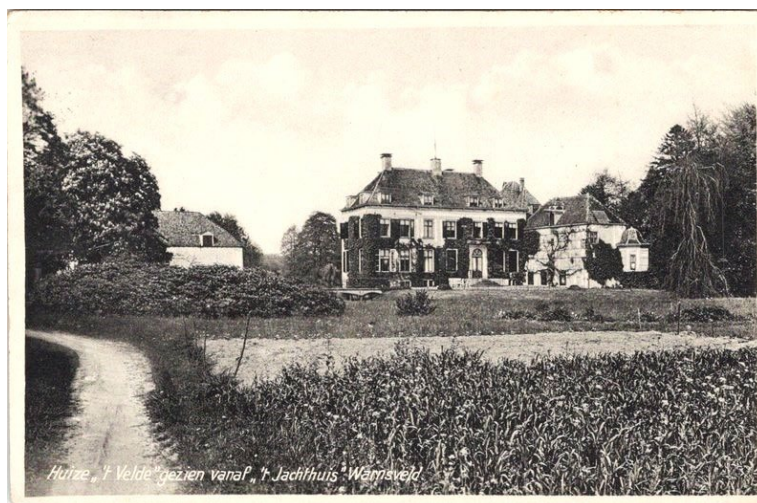
In December 1943 he was booked into St. John; following a "battle drill" training. (These are exercises in standard procedures)
 At the end of January 1944, James was allowed to be "acting captain".
 In between, James enjoyed some weeks of leave.
 In mid-October 1944 it was sent to "refreshment course" for officers in Vernon.

The crossing to the United Kingdom began for James during Christmas 1944, by boat. The arrival was on January 9, 1945.
 Until the beginning of March he was assigned to various positions with the 3rd and 2nd Canadian Infantry Training Regiments.
 The next transfer was to the Canadian Infantry Corps on March 9, 1945, which also meant that James set foot on land in Western Europe.

On March 30, James Gordon Murray was taken on strength by the North Nova Scotia Highlanders. That means also, that he got to deal with front service.
 This regiment had been involved in the battles on the mainland of Europe since D-Day.

With little or no combat experience, Lieutenant Murray immediately had a hard time.
 In the first week of April 1945 the regiment became involved in heavy fighting near Warnsveld-Gelderland.

Battle scene:
 the "Groot Graffel" psychiatric hospital and the nearby cemetery and in the woods around hotel "het Jachthuis" and "het Velde".



The German opponents: extremely fanatical Hitler Youth members, who fought to the end and young "paratroopers", who had only had very short infantry training.

The losses for the North Nova Scotia Highlanders were high in two days:
 Two officers dead, one of them James Gordon Murray and two wounded.
 A total of 36 soldiers lost their lives here, 35 Canadians and 1 Englishman.

Refer- 3 003929 at 3803	5 Apr 45 Thursday	<p>Weather - a clear sunny day</p> <p>At this point of the attack "A" Company became involved in a fierce fight for a hospital in the woods in area map reference 982943. The Germans were well dug in and held a fairly strong position. The Command Post moved at 0145 hours to house at map reference 986941, just behind "A" Company. By 0300 hours "A" Company reported the hospital and woods cleared and were told to consolidate there and wait for "C" Company to pass through them. "C" Company then passed through "A" Company and proceeded on towards WHEAT. Major Winnola, "C" Company Commander came to see the Commanding Officer for details and then took his Company through. Meanwhile "B" Company were coming under heavy machine gun fire and the fighting appeared to have shifted from the left axis to the right axis. By 0400 hours "C" Company reported WHEAT and swung over to the edge of the woods along WHEAT midway between the two axes. Most of the fire seemed coming, on the "B" Company axis, from two 20 mm guns at road junction map reference 974952. After suffering several casualties Major Wright felt the position was held in sufficient strength to warrant an attack properly formed up with supporting arms, so asked permission to pull back the forward platoon sufficiently far to organize this. In the meantime two troops of Crocodiles had reported at first light and one troop was despatched along each axis. The troop on the "B" Company axis soon reported having difficulty with the wood, so "B" Company was ordered to move across to the other axis in order to co-ordinate their attack with the troop of crocodiles on the left. As soon as they started to do so they came under fire from the edge of the wood between the two axes and Lt. Murray was killed and Major Wright wounded. Things slowed down while Captain J.L. Fairweather moved up to take over and</p>
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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information
Map Reference 003929 Sheet 3803	5 Apr 45 Thursday Continued		<p>then the troop of crocodiles on the original "B" Company axis got out of the wood and caught up with them. The Company then went in on the wood with the crocodiles and cleaned it without difficulty. They then proceeded back toward their original axis and went in on the road junction at map reference 974952 with both troops of crocodiles. This was cleared without difficulty and it was felt that the enemy had withdrawn, so permission was obtained to proceed straight into Warnsveld. "B" Company went to the first cross roads and "D" Company then proceeded along the main road street to the end of the town. Meanwhile "C" Company cleared up the south side of the town. The few machine gunners left then were discouraged by the troop of tanks working with each Company. "C" Company sent out a night patrol at 2030 hours which brushed up against some Germans. They had a corporal killed and a lance corporal wounded. They were trying to contact the Stormont Dundas and Glengary Highlanders. During the past 24 hours of fighting all three Battalions of the 7 Canadian Infantry Brigade had run into the same type of Germans - young, about sixteen and seventeen years of age on the average - fanatic, when interviewed they still thought Germany would win and their belief in Hitler and Nazism was still unshaken. However, there were cases among the prisoners of just badly scared boys. The unit which we were fighting was a paratroop Division of which we had periodically seen so much. Most of them had only been in battle a week and the average had only been in the army three months. They had no supporting arms outside of a few mortars but were supplied with bazookas and machine guns of which they had many. Rear Battalion Headquarters moved in with Command Post. The Companies were tired after fighting all night. This was particularly true of "A" Company and "B" Company. Lt. Prouce, A.G. or "D" Company was hit in the leg by a sniper bullet and evacuated. This made four officers, two killed, two wounded and twenty nine other ranks, four killed and twenty five wounded. Four new reinforcement officers arrived - Lts. G. MacDonald, M.O. Morgan and J.A. Saunders who went to "B" Company and Lt. H. Haskins who went to "A" Company</p>

The war diary speaks for itself.

On April 10, 1945, Murray's wife received a telegram.

This incorrectly stated that J.G. Murray was killed in action on April 7, 1945.

Later a correction was made by letter, stating that the correct date was April 5, 1945.

However, the incorrect date of death appears on his gravestone and in the databases, including the Canadian-Virtual-War-Memorial.

James Gordon Murray was given a temporary grave at the cemetery in Warnsveld on Friday, April 6, 1945, together with 7 other Canadians.

On January 30, 1946 he was reburied at the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten, grave reference: 1-H-8.

He was awarded:

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

