

Pte Loren Nels Nelson

8-F-8

& the Lincoln & Welland Regiment in Holland and West-Germany

Note that Loren was AWOL 17 hours prior to his heading to overseas service. This was due to the train from Fort Frances to Winnipeg being delayed and he was subsequently late returning back to Winnipeg from leave.

Killed in action 10 April 1945 while serving with the
Lincoln and Welland Regiment

Awarded the France and Germany Star,
Canadian Volunteer Service Medal
with clasp and War medal.

Rank or service number H-22396.

Enlisted in 14-March 1944
Trained at Ft. Gary, Man

Awol for 17hours, docked 1 days pay
and admonished 29 May 1944

Granted leave to embark on 16 Sep 1944

Embarked on 4 Oct 1944

Embarked to UK on 11 Oct 1944

Reported for duty in UK on 13 Oct 1944

Embarked for front on 4 Nov

Assigned to Regiment on 8 Nov.

Deceased 10 Apr 1945 Place C.L.A5

Death Occurred on Strength of Forces H.Q.: 405-N-5978

Remains buried in Germany Werlte, MR Werlte sh 3112
Cemetery 957728 in park across from station

Reburial
Holten Canadian Military Cemetery,
Holland Grave 8 Row F Plot 8 Jan ,1947



A Son and a Brother

Growing Up on the Farm Near Sprague, Manitoba



Loren on the farm near Sprague, Manitoba.

Loren grew up on a farm near Sprague, Manitoba. He was the son of Nels John and Christina Nelson, the younger brother of Evert, and the older brother of Harley and Clarice.

His family loved him dearly. As the third son, Harley says that he always looked up to his older brother, Loren, to teach him wisely.

After grade 8, Loren got a job as a carpenter along with his father. Together they built one of the original Canada Customs Buildings at the Middleboro crossing in southeast Manitoba. In his spare time, he also helped to break land on the newly acquired farm with his father and his brothers. There was also farm work and chores to be done. As a teenager, he helped his father build a home on the farm because all they had was a very cold log house to live in. He did most of the work himself because his father had to earn a living by working outside the farm.

Loren proved that he was also very inventive by building and designing a sweep rake and a hay stacker. For recreation he also built a croquet set by hand. When there was time for musical enjoyment, Loren's older brother Evert would play the accordion and Loren would accompany him on his guitar.

In early 1944, Evert and Loren went off to join the army. Evert was turned away and Loren was accepted. Loren was barely 18 at this time. The whole family was very sad when he joined the army, because his good humour and his help around the house was sadly missed.

Loren left the farm in March of 1944 for basic training in Winnipeg. Over the next seven months he returned to the farm twice to visit his family, in May and September.

Photos of Loren Prior to Going on Overseas Service



Loren and his family prior to going overseas. (Left to right) Harley, Clarice, Christina (Mother), Nels (Father), Loren and Evert.



Loren on the farm near Sprague, Manitoba.



On the farm at Sprague, Manitoba, Loren is in the center of this photo. Pictured is Marvin (Cousin), Evert (Brother), Loren, Harley (Brother) and Edgar (Uncle). This photo was likely taken in 1941-42.



Loren is seen here with his cousins Marvin and Percy Stogell.



Loren (right) and his good friend Charlie McCarthy. Taken somewhere in Winnipeg in the winter of 1944/1945.



Arrival in Holland

November 1944 - January 1945

Loren joined the Lincoln and Welland Regiment on the 8th of November 1944 near the town of Vlijmen, just south of the Maas River and west of the city of s'Hertogenbosch, 75 kilometres west of Steenberg Holland. The regiment had just completed fighting the battle of the Scheldt, in particular the very costly battles for Bergen Op Zoom and Steenberg.

A large amount of new men arrived in the Regiment around this time. By November 11th the Regiment was up to its full complement of men. These new men would be fortunate, they were brought in during a lull in the war, and could benefit from a "unit reception school". Also during this time the new men could learn from the more experienced men, and become accustomed to the conditions in war-torn Holland.

The Regiment was guarding the south banks of the Maas River near Vlijmen. The German army occupied the north bank. In this position the allied army was fearful of a German counterattack over the river and southwest to re-take the port of Antwerp. The troops remained ever vigilant on the south side of the river. On occasion parties were sent across the river in boats in an attempt to capture a German prisoner, and gather intelligence through questioning. These patrols proved to be very dangerous. Firstly, the Maas River has a very strong current. Boats were often turned around in the darkness, their occupants not knowing which direction to paddle. Secondly, if they made it to the other side, the Germans would be waiting to attack.



Dutch children attending a Canadian Army sponsored Christmas Party were sent home with loaves of bright white bread.

In mid-November the whole Regiment was rotated off the front lines for rest and relaxation. They stayed in a Seminary in the town of St. Michielsgestel. For two weeks the troops enjoyed movies, dances, bingo games and army shows. On the 4th of December the Regiment came under the command of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, the bulk of the Regiment returned to Vlijmen the next day. Some members of the Regiment stayed behind to put on a planned Christmas Party for the children of St. Michielsgestel on the 6th of December. The people of Holland were starving, and the Regiment wanted to help the local children have a good Christmas.

It was shaping up to be a relatively quiet Christmas for the Regiment until the Germans spearheaded the Ardennes offensive. The Ardennes was well south of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment's present position, but it was feared that a similar attack may be forthcoming from the Germans along the northern front as well. On 23 December the regiment was ordered southwest

of Vlijmen to the town of Loon op Zand. Their orders were to hold the town against possible attack from enemy paratroopers.

Christmas of 1944 was celebrated in Loon op Zand under a cloud of uncertainty. regardless, Christmas dinner was served to the men by the Officers of the regiment, and life at the front went on. On New Year's morning the town was strafed by three enemy planes, causing some civilian casualties.

The New Year brought January's cold, which also brought on quiet times for the Regiment. There was some leave granted in England, and basketball and swim teams were established.

Meanwhile, just north of their present position, a group of Royal Marine Commandoes would be unsuccessful in dislodging two companies of German Paratroopers from an island in the Maas River called Kapelsche Veer. Soon it would their turn to fight upon the very same polders.

Kapelsche Veer

26 January - 1 February 1945



On the Dike at Kapelsche Veer
A sketch by Lieutenant A.M. Damer.

Kapelsche Veer is a ferry harbour set into the north shore of a long narrow island on the Maas River, just north of the Dutch town of s'Hertogenbosch. A small garrison of German Paratroopers surrounded the harbour and manned a network of slit trenches and tunnels which surrounded two farm houses. The 1st Polish Armoured and the 47th Royal Marines had already attempted to dislodge the Germans in December and on January 15th, but had failed.

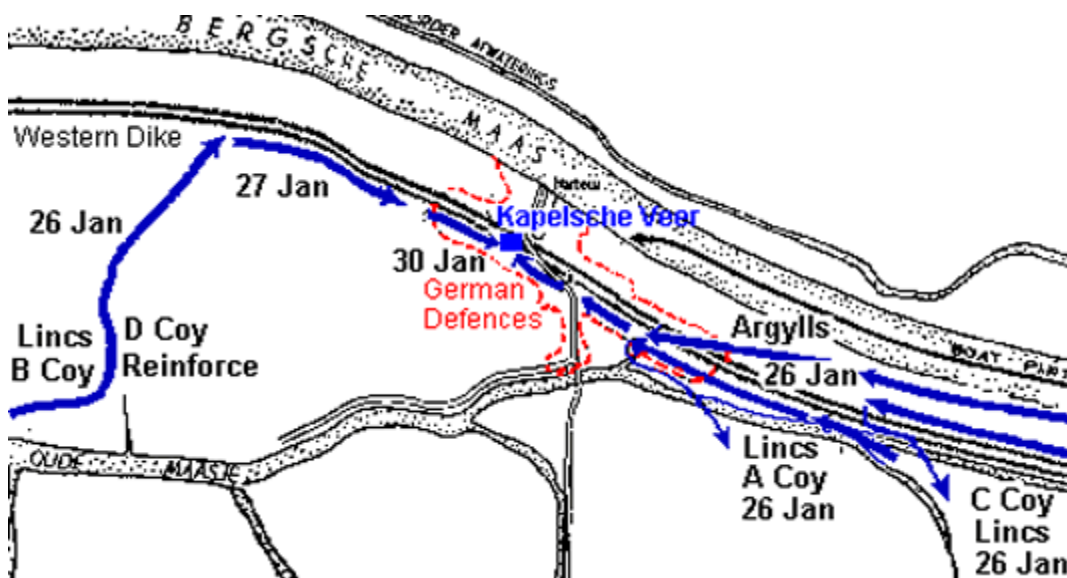
The land is very flat, and doesn't afford much cover. Also the only way onto the island by land is on an seven meter high dike which was open and treeless. In winter the soil is moist and muddy, making movement difficult. Only the hard packed earth of the dyke is good for quick movement.



Men of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment practice for a canoe assault at Kapelsche Veer.

The 4th Armoured Commander, Major General Chris Vokes, thought of it as a waste of time and good men to dislodge the Germans. Therefore, he ordered canoes be brought up to the front so as to complete the task. Thinking the canoes would never arrive, he thought then that the attack would be abandoned. To everyone's surprise Peterborough canoes arrived at the front and the attack orders were refreshed.

On the morning of the 26th of January the Lincoln and Welland Regiment launched a pincer attack on the German Paratroopers at Kapelsche Veer. The attack was hampered by cold and the canoes didn't work all that well, as the water close to shore was frozen. Most of the canoe operations were cancelled. The land at Kapelsche Veer is mercilessly flat and the attack had to be mounted onto a dike which ran parallel to the river. To complicate matters, the Germans had tunneled into the dike with their machine guns pointed out. The enemy held their fire until the Canadians were virtually on top of them, then opened up so effectively that within minutes all officers of the two companies attacking from the east were hit. After a fierce German counter-attack, they were withdrawn from the island.



On the west side, despite all its platoon commanders being killed, B Company gained a foothold, beating off enemy counter attacks and held its position until it was reinforced by D Company. On the opposite flank the Anti-Tank Platoon, a company of Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and two tanks from the South Alberta Regiment had managed to gain a similar position by nightfall.

From the east and the west the Lincs and the Argylls worked towards the German positions, digging in after every short move. For four days of acute cold and misery they clawed their way forward while the artillery pounded the German positions.

Early on the morning of the 31st the flanking Canadian forces met in the ruins of the small town. They had captured 34 prisoners and counted 145 German dead on the battlefield. The remainder of the Germans had escaped. The Canadians had suffered 234 casualties, of whom 65, including 9 officers, were fatalities. After the war the commander of the 6th German Parachute Division said that the defense of Kapelsche Veer had cost him between 300 and 400 serious casualties plus 100 more men disabled by frostbite.

In all, nearly 1000 men of both sides were killed, wounded or went missing in the snows of Kapelsche Veer.



Men of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment within the village of Kapelsche Veer - February 1st 1945. From left: Pte. F.L. Russell, Pte. J. Sneddon, Cpl R.S. Marshall, Unknown Man.

OPERATION VERITABLE

February 1945

Kapelsche Veer was seen as a turning point for the Regiment in that it sustained so many casualties. During the weeks after Kapelsche Veer the Lincoln and Welland Regiment received more reinforcements, while the battle hardened regulars shook off the physical effects of frost-bite, sustained during the battle. The regiment was now again located at Loon op Zand, Netherlands.

It was also in these days that the Commanding Officer, Major Swayze, was relieved by Lt. Col. Rowan C. Coleman. Coleman was seen as a "dare devil", who liked to have his command post close to the front. Coleman recalls the circumstances which brought him to the regiment: "It was obviously a period of intense reorganization.... I hitched in as fast as I could. I went through a period of interviewing the survivors, that is down to the rank of Company Sergeant Major, just to see what was left. At the same time we had 17 brand new officers sent up as reinforcements and they all had to be sorted out to see what calibre they were."

The day Coleman arrived in Loon op Zand a training regime was begun. The middle two weeks of February brought exercises such as small arms practice, field exercises and route marches, as well as the tactics of basic fighting. Combined arms training was also conducted at this time, dealing with the intricacies of working with armoured regiments.

On a foggy morning of 18 Feb 45, the regiment was relocated 10km northwest to Waalwijk, where they replaced the Argyll and Sutherland Regiment at the Maas River. Two days later the Regiment was to take launch OPERATION SCHULTZ, which consisted of a 36 man patrol over the Maas into German territory. Their objective was to capture a German prisoner for interrogation. Upon crossing the patrol encountered machine gun and mortar fire and returned after three hours with one man missing (taken prisoner) and five men wounded. This was the Lincoln and Welland Regiment's last foray over the Maas River.

Meanwhile, OPERATION VERITABLE, had bogged down short of it's original objective. A heavy snowfall, coupled with an early thaw, produced severe flooding south of the Rhine River. Mud was everywhere.

OPERATION VERITABLE

While the Lincoln and Welland Regiment rested and reinforced in the rear, an Allied operation was taking place titled OPERATION VERITABLE.

VERITABLE, which began on 8 Feb 45, was designed to overcome the three defensive German lines built within the 30 km gap between the Maas and Rhine Rivers east of Nijmegen. Also known as the Siegfried Line, the German positions consisted of trenches, anti-tank traps and wire belts which ran between towns and farmhouses. Behind the line was German territory, including the cities of Cleve and Goch.

The Germans fought very hard on their home ground, something the allied armies sometimes took for granted.

The Lincoln and Welland Regiment did not take part in VERITABLE, but the did take part in the continuation of the the operation, titled BLOCKBUSTER.

The Lincs are on the Move



The Lincoln and Welland Regiment is on the move again.

The Lincoln and Welland Regiment finally found itself on the move to the front on 22 Feb 45. The convoy moved through s'Hertogenbosch, Grave, Nijmegen and across the German border into Cleve. It was here that the Regiment spent the night near the historical German town which had recently been heavily bombed by the allies. The town had nearly been wiped off the map. South of Cleve, the regiment was put into an area which was jammed with troops and equipment being readied for the next operation, OPERATION BLOCKBUSTER.

Confusion reigned, as the Regiment was moved twice before the 26th of February, when the operation began. Also, the regiment was split up. Both the Lincoln and Welland Regiment and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders had been placed under Brigadier Moncel's Armoured TIGER GROUP which had been divided into five forces, each with it's own tasking during the operation. The initial assault was to be made by the JERRY and SNUFF forces. COLE and JOCK forces would follow up to reinforce their positions. SMITH force was then to push on further to high ground north of the German town of Udem. Each group consisted of two Infantry Companies and one Armoured Regiment. It is not known which group Private Loren Nelson was part of.

One Private describes the scene prior to the 26th of February:

"The area was a sodden field alright; it was mud. It was late winter and it was, I'll swear... a ploughed field. They had unloaded all kinds of supplies in that particular area; it was a staging area. They had fields full of crates of hard tack, bully beef, canned food, things of that sort... They loaded us onto troop carriers that were sort of tanks... and most of us... were suffering from diarrhea. That was basically because we had found some canned apricots and had gotten into them and it was disastrous, let me tell you. They loaded us onto these things and they took us on and dropped us off someplace in the dark in a barn and told us to sleep there for the night and we just dropped wherever we could. The next morning I woke up and I had dropped in a cow stall and I was covered with crap... You were dead tired, you didn't know where the hell you were."

On the night of the 25th the TIGER GROUP went to their start lines for the attack. There was an icy rain coming down which turned the ground again into mud. OPERATION BLOCKBUSTER began with the various groups struggling with stuck vehicles. At 0430 hours, after a 45 minute artillery barrage into enemy territory, the forces attacked under artificial moonlight. Their progress was slowed by the mud and small enemy groups armed with Panzerfausts (a German anti-tank weapon), which destroyed a number of Canadian tanks.

Mud, rain, darkness and the horror of war combined to confuse the situation. Still the Canadian's forged ahead improvising at the best of their abilities. Ken Hipel gave an account of that day:

"I remember stopping and asking this new lieutenant who had no battle experience where the hell the rest of the companies were. We were losing Shermans: they were running over mines; blowing tracks; getting stuck. I said, 'We'd better stop until we've got communications.' He had the radio . . . He says, 'I lost radio contact, but we've got to take the crossroads.' Well, I said, 'if that's your wish, we'll push on.' ... So we head up to the crossroads, and by the time we get there, we've got one lousy Sherman left and the Rams [armoured vehicles] we were in, the heaviest armour we had on them was a .50 calibre [machine gun]... There was a hedge. So we dug part of the platoon along the hedge. We kept the Rams in the back and the Sherman started moving around and they knocked it out. So there we were, sitting ducks, with no heavy armour . . . Then they started counterattacking. I had the driver from one of the Rams who had never had battle experience in one of the next slit trenches. When they started machine gunning, he stands up to see what 's going on, which is only reasonable, and he got a burst across the chest."



The Siegfried Line Defenses.

Later, on the afternoon of the 26th, JERRY and SNUFF Forces had reportedly reached their objectives near Todtenhugel, overlooking the Hochwald Forest. COLE and JOCK Forces came up from the rear and reinforced the position. A counterattack was mounted by the Germans, but was beaten off by the Lincoln and Welland B Company commanded by Major Martin, who was slightly wounded in the fighting. By nightfall, only A company was attached elsewhere, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was back together and had reached their objective.

On the evening of the 26th, while being relieved of their position by the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, both regiments were attacked again. This attack was again repelled.

On the first day of BLOCKBUSTER, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment acted as the "sharp edge of the sword" and lead the advance into German territory. The Regiment suffered 27 wounded and 8 deaths that same day. When compared with the Regiments losses exactly one month prior, at Kapelsche Veer, BLOCKBUSTER was cautiously declared to have gone "fairly well."

But the Hochwald Gap still lay ahead; Another trial for Private Loren Nelson and the Lincoln and Welland Regiment.

The Hochwald Gap

28 February - 1 March 1945



The Hochwald Gap from the air. The Canadians approached from the upper left into the Gap. Notice the rail line running across the southern forest fringe.

The Lincoln and Welland Regiment saw no action on the 27th of February, Day Two of OPERATION BLOCKBUSTER, although it suffered 11 casualties from "light mortaring." The unit was now back under the command of the 10th Infantry Brigade, which had just been tasked with the push to the Hochwald Gap.

While the Regiment was some distance from the Gap, the Algonquin and South Alberta Regiments fought their way to the mouth of the gap under stiff German resistance and artillery fire which did not come from their front. The German artillery fire came in from over the Rhine River, and was described as "unsettling" to have artillery fire come in over one's shoulder. Even under this resistance the Canadian Regiments advanced to the forest fringe, at the western edge of the gap. This is where the attack stalled.

Quickly new orders were given that reorganized the attack. In the plan the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was to advance to the southwestern edge of the gap and capture the railway line and the Tuschen Wald, a small woods to the south of the Hochwald Gap.

Again the soft ground hindered the advance of the tank forces, so the Regiment would have to go in alone. The Regiment made a two prong attack with two companies on either side of the gap to reinforce the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in their forward position, and to come to the aid of the Argyll's B company which was cut off. The remaining two companies would advance along the railway tracks and secure the Regiment's objectives. The attack went in on the 28th of February at noon.

Major Crummer's C Company and Capt. Barkman's B Company lead the attack. Major Crummer recounts the German artillery barrage that responded to their attack:

"We were in the middle of it, standing, trying to push forward. Well, we didn't stand long. We went to ground damn fast. You just lose everything. You can't do anything about that... You really hunker down and pray to God that you come out of it all right, because you can't do anything for anyone, really. You look around and see if anybody is wounded and help them, but I didn't see anybody. They were all pretty well experienced and had found rat holes or something like that ... I think at that point, I was buried a couple of times and got out of it. (The area was] mud, just mud ... I remember hearing the shelling and then after a while I didn't hear anything, but I saw it ... I remember the huge explosions all over the damn place. At that time I crawled under a tank to get away from some fire and I could sense the tank settling down in the mud, so I got the hell out of there . . [There was] no cover. Trees are no cover, especially in shelling because you get limbs and you get shrapnel coming down on you ... We didn't get any further than that."

This artillery barrage was later described by Field-Marshal Montgomery as the heaviest "...volume of fire from enemy weapons... which had been met so far by British troops in the campaign."



Looking into the high ground of the Hochwald gap from the western approaches.

The effects of the barrage are recalled by one Argyll who was in the area: "the black haze that hung over the place after the shelling stopped, and the feeling you had of being absolutely dazed and in a stupor; while a sudden, unreal quiet descended, broken only by the feeble cries of the wounded."

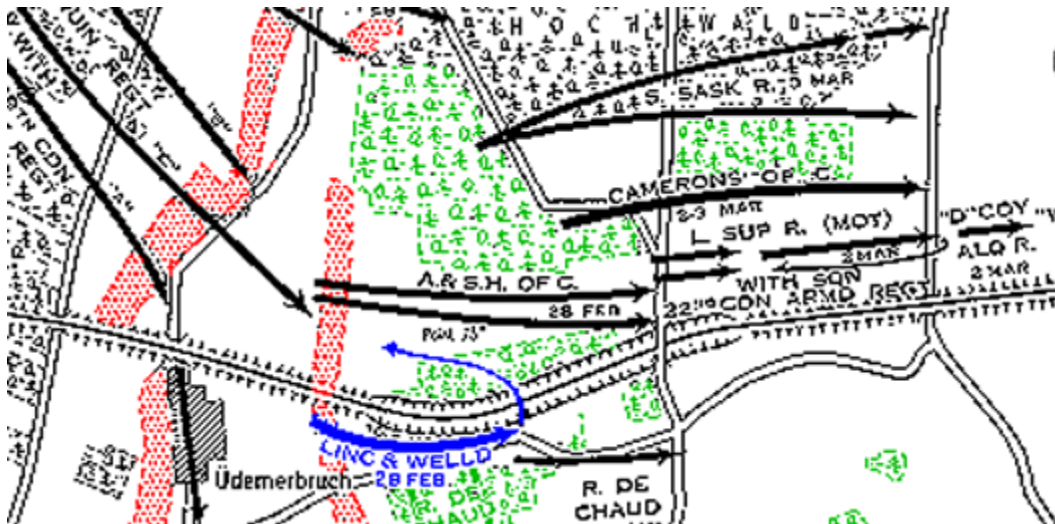
The Regiment's war diarist described the incident as: "Hy cas suffered [49 in total] and the attack disorganized, forcing the coys to retire to their dug-in posn [to the west of the gap]."

The Lincoln and Welland Regiment was relieved by the South Saskatchewan Regiment in the early morning of 1 March 1945. They were ordered back to some farm houses in the valley east of Udem. The previous three days of action had cost the Regiment 85 casualties. On March 1st a further 8 soldiers were wounded.

The Regiment stayed in the Udem area for the next five days, resting and regrouping. Further attacks into the gap were mounted and pushed back by the Germans. The Hochwald gap became a deathtrap for many soldiers and tank crews over the next few days.

An account by the German commander in the Hochwald Gap spoke out in the years after the war. His account was one of astonishment that the Canadian's did not attack across the whole front but concentrated their attacks in the Hochwald Gap area. This is where he concentrated his defenses. He stated that if the Canadian's would have attacked in more than one place the lines German lines would have crumbled sooner.

The Hochwald gap was not crossed until March 2nd, when the Lake Superior Regiment made a successful, but very costly, dash through the gap, and secured the western boundaries of the forest.



[Image Gallery](#)



German prisoners digging graves for Canadian casualties in the Hochwald Gap, 3 March 1945.

Veen, Germany

6-9 March 1945



The Lincoln & Welland Regiment passes through Sonsbeck Germany on March 7th 1945.

The heavy artillery barrage that the Lincoln and Welland Regiment received in the Hochwald Gap forced them to retreat and reinforce near Udem, Germany for three days. On the 6th of March the Regiment had its orders to return to the front line, which had advanced several miles west, deeper into the heart of Germany. On that cool and cloudy day, the Regiment moved to an orchard north of Sonsbeck. The next attack was to be "soon" and in the direction of Veen, Germany.

Veen was believed to be lightly defended, but when the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders made an approach on the town, they received very heavy fire. A new plan for the attack on Veen was put together, codenamed BASHER, a brigade strength attack. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment was tasked to the right flank, approaching the town of Veen from the south.

The Regiment crossed its start line at 1600 hours on 7 March 1945. Major Brady's D Company lead the attack followed by Captain Hickey's B company. Reports stated that D company was 2 kilometers from the town center by 1745, and under heavy machine gun and mortar fire. Soon, A and C Companies joined the rest of the regiment at this position. Captain Muir's A Company worked the advance to the east to a crossroads two kilometers east of town. The movement was

described as slow, but they had tanks in support. Twenty-seven German prisoners were captured in this action.

The situation was fairly good so far for the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. This was because the enemy was concentrating their efforts to the Northeast where the Algonquins and the South Alberta Regiment were fighting a hard battle. On the rainy night of 7-8 March, the L&W Regiment consolidated their position by capturing road junctions south and east of Veen.

On the 8th of March the Regiment moved into the southern outskirts of Veen. They met fierce opposition as they attacked into the town, fighting house to house. By nightfall some of the regiments held positions in houses adjacent to enemy held houses. There was also reports of two Sherman tanks being overrun and manned by the enemy. Overnight, tank lanes were cleared in preparation for a fresh assault on the morning of the 9th.

The next morning, with the Canadians attacking from all sides, the enemy opposition had virtually ended in Veen. The enemy was now in full retreat towards the Rhine. The L&W Regiment spent the next two days in the area of Veen clearing pockets of enemy resistance.

The battle for Veen was very costly for the Regiment. Loren's Regiment suffered losses which were only second to it's first day at Kapelsche Veer. On Thursday 8 March 1945, the Regiment lost 80 all ranks: 20 killed, 55 wounded and 5 listed as battle casualties.

[Image Gallery](#)



Sherman tanks of the Governor General's Footguards near Sonsbeck Germany on 9 March 1945. (National Archives Photo A113682)



German refugees near Xanten. (National Archives Photo

Brussels Photo

26 March 1945



The ravages of war show on a young man's face.

According to regimental records the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was located on the south side of the Rhine River near Best, Holland during the second half of March. It was a time of rest for the weary men.

It was during this time that that Loren sent a photo back from the war to his family in Sprague, Manitoba.

On the back of the photo is the date 26 March 1945 written in pen. There is also an ink stamp that reads "Photo 'Nice' - 144, Bd Adolphe Max - Bruxelles".

Through the address on the "ink stamp" it was easily discovered that this was taken at a photo shop on Boulevard Adolphe Max in downtown Brussels, Belgium. This location is next to The Plaza Hotel in Brussels.

The most surprising thing about this photo is how it shows a different Loren than the young man who originally left for war. There is a lesson to be had by comparing the photo on the right with the photo on the upper left of this page.

It is not known how long Loren was on leave for, who he went on leave with, and when he returned. All we know, at this time, is that he was in Brussels on 26 March 1945.

The Battle of the Twenthe Canal

2-4 April 1945



Looking across the Twenthe Canal, east towards Delden.

The last week of March 1945 found the Lincoln and Welland Regiment on the south side of the Rhine River near Best, Holland. This was a time that the Regiment received new conscripts. There was a training programme set up to bring the new men along. The morale of the regiment was fairly low at this time. Even though many men could see that the end of the war was near, the regiment was still getting too many casualties. Good friends and good men were still losing their lives.

The fighting in these late stages of the war was different. The German Army was now made up a small core of highly-trained soldiers and a larger part of older men and young boys. This made for an unpredictable and desperate foe, especially when the allies drove into Germany itself. This, the Canadian men could feel, and no one wanted to make a mistake this late in the war.

On the 28th of March the regiment learned of OPERATION HAYMAKER, the final thrust into Holland and then into Germany itself. On the 30th of March a regimental convoy pulled out of Best and moved back up through Nijmegen, and Cleve and across the Rhine River unopposed via the Black Frier's bridge at Rees.

April 1st, Easter Sunday, was spent on a rainy day in open country between Rees and Emmerich. This was where the Regiment learned that the enemy was in full retreat. They were expected to see no opposition until they advanced as far north as the Twenthe Canal. So the regiment moved up quickly, moving through Ruurlo on the 2nd of April and moving up to take the Twenthe Canal at dawn on the 4th.

The Lincoln and Welland Regiment was in place on the south side of the Twenthe Canal by 12:30 PM on the 3rd. As the Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Coleman, was taking the time to outline the next morning's attack, orders were given for him to attack as soon as possible. Fierce resistance was met at the canal to the west, and the regiment could avoid this resistance if it was to go at once.

Two companies went over the canal with little resistance. An artillery barrage had softened up the Germans, plus a strategy of providing machine gun covering fire made the crossing easy. Within the hour both companies were on their objectives over the canal, and a third company had been brought up to reinforce their position.



het Rannink This barn was where Dunlop's C Company were trapped on the night of the 3rd of April.

To the east C Company under Lt. John Dunlop was not having such an easy time. Once over the canal Dunlop's men had dug in around some farm houses, and were meeting a heavy German counter-attack from the north. By late evening the company was in a desperate situation, surrounded on all sides by Germans. Most of the company had taken refuge in a small farm house and a larger barn-like structure. Their only choice was to call artillery fire in on their own position. The strategy worked. The Germans, being outside the structures, absorbed the brunt of the artillery.

Two hours later reinforcements were ordered to C Company and help consolidate their position. By dawn on the 4th of April the battle was over. The regiment now moved in the town of Delden itself, which would become it's base of operations for the next 3 days.

The German Army was now on the run, and Loren and the Lincoln and Welland Regiment were part of the Canadian Army which was chasing them.



A jubilant crown meets the vehicles of 4 Division, which moved north through the village of Delden on the 4th of April 1945. Members of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment are already in town, many can be seen in the bottom right of this photo.

Delden, Holland

4-7 April 1945



The children of Netherlands show their joy of being liberated by Canadian troops.

Once the Lincoln and Welland Regiment fought their way north over the Twenthe Canal they entered Delden, Netherlands in on the 4th of April, 1945. They were hungry and tired and due for

a three day rest. Delden gave the Lincoln and Welland Regiment their heartfelt thanks for their liberation of the town.

There is no specific account from Loren of his time in Delden. What we do have is an account, written from the perspective of one of Delden's residents who had the opportunity to lodge some Canadian soldiers in those days of April 1945.

When Mrs. C. Hilsum-Beuckens looked out her window one morning she saw Canadian soldiers in the streets. Six tired men stood on her doorstep looking for a place to sleep. She took them in and later wrote a book about it entitled *Thank You Canada*.

Following is her account of the events:

..We examined them with interest and called them Tommies. Smiling tolerantly, they said that they weren't Tommies but Canadians. Six! Where was I going to find room for them all? We still had four people with us who had been hiding from the Germans. "Put a couple of beds side by side," the Canadian lieutenant advised us. "They're not hard to please."

A few minutes later our house was unrecognizable. Machine guns, rifles, shovels, grenades, kit bags lay everywhere and the soldiers were stretched out in our chairs.

One, Lesage, was of Belgian descent. He spoke a little Flemish, and at 21, had a wife and two children. He proudly showed us a snapshot of them. There was a boy who looked like Mickey Rooney. His name was Hearst and he was 19. Kelly and Garnett were the names of the two others. When they saw what we had to eat they immediately gave us food. Both had just had a birthday. Kelly was 29 and beginning to grow bald, Garnett was 19. The corporal, Podolski, was a friendly good-looking boy. I have forgotten the name of the sixth.

Lesage discovered our violin and scraped away happily on it. They took our children off to their unit's cookhouse, and brought back a large jug of tea, sugar and milk and thick slices of dazzlingly white bread. They sat and talked about "back home" and what they were going to do when the war was over. Then they went off to bed.

They'd been on the go for 40 hours without a break. I was to call them at seven o'clock. And I did. I shouted and knocked until my knuckles were red. At last one answered. While dressing they joked about my attempts to wake them: "I thought I was in heaven when I heard a woman's voice" and "Just like being back home." They washed and shaved all over the house as if they had lived there all their lives. They sang, punched and kidded one another, and laughed at me for asking whether they had slept well.

They did all sorts of things for us that day. Lesage scraped away on the violin, and the corporal had various jobs to do. Hearst slept. One wrote letters. Kelly and Garnett rustled up firewood and food, heaven knows where from, and we all felt completely at ease with one another.

In the evening a message came that they were to be ready to leave on five minutes' notice. Two went to bed fully dressed, four sat up with us. We told them about our resistance movement, they told us about their homes. I had to promise to write their families.

We sat in the dark, our glowing cigarettes signalling our positions like tiny beacons. Now and then we heard guns in the distance. My heart ached as I listened to their stories, plans and fears. All of them were afraid. Afraid that even now, at the eleventh hour of the war, something might happen to them.

Next morning the dreaded message came: they had to leave. Without a word they picked up their gear and put on their camouflaged tin hats. "Keep you fingers crossed," one of them said, and they left...

Note: According to regimental records, a Private by the name of "Lesage" was killed in action on 10 April 1945.

To Sögel and Beyond

8-10 April 1945

On the night of Saturday 7 April the Regiment departed Delden to catch up to the rest of the Division already advancing into Germany. The trek was very hard under heavy road traffic and a road surface which was breaking up. On April 8th the Regiment had caught up to the Regiment near Meppen, Germany.

The next day the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was given it's orders. It was to participate in attacks on Sögel and Werlte, Germany in order to clear the road northeast to Oldenburg, 80 km away. It was the L&W Regiment's primary job to mop any pockets of resistance which were encountered on the way.

By noon on the 9th, the Regiment moved into Sögel. There were light casualties as they cleared the south half of the town. By the afternoon, the Regiment waited for further orders. Would they continue east to Werlte or would they go north towards Lorup? On the evening of the 9th the orders were made to attack Werlte at first light on the 10th.

On Wednesday, the 10th of April, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment moved east in company with tanks of the Governor General's Foot Guards. The leading companies were within four kilometres of Werlte when they were met by an estimated 150 men dug in with bazookas, machine guns and 20mm anti-aircraft guns. According to Regimental history "a short sharp skirmish" took place in which B Company routed the enemy, who were later seen running back towards Werlte.

The Regiment again moved off to the east towards Werlte. They moved forward until they moved to a wooded area which bordered the town. Here the Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Coleman came forward to arrange the attack. Men under Major Brady were committed north of the main road into town, Major Martin's men were to travel to the south.

At 10 AM the advancing companies were pinned down under heavy fire. Brady's company was hit the hardest, fired upon by hidden machine guns in a forested area. His company was pinned down by enemy fire for nearly an hour before tanks could be brought up to quell the enemy. The regiment suffered many losses in this action, including (as far as anyone can tell) Private Loren Nelson.



The Lincoln and Welland Regiment clears snipers from the town of Werlte, Germany on April 10th 1945.



German children show a surrender signal in Sögel, Germany on April 10th 1945.
(National Archives Photo A113697)

Werlte, Germany

10 April 1945



It seems that this day was a day as same as any. The Regiment was near the end of it's journey. The war would be over within a short month. There was an upbeat mood around the Regiment, many of the men were sure they would be home soon.

As any war story often does, this one also ends in tragedy. No one is sure of what occurred on the 10th of April 1945. These recollections are lost. Clouded by time, bad memories, and certainly, a respect for fallen comrades.

This is an account of the day which ended Loren Nelson's life.

"I can remember the morning well. We came up the road...in trucks so far and then we got off and marched...It was pea-soup fog. It was thick and we were marching up and started to cross a ploughed field. And we hadn't got very far... when suddenly, it was almost as if somebody had pushed a button and the curtain went up. The fog lifted and the sun came out, just burned it off... Here we are in the middle of a ploughed field going towards a bush. We got so far out and someone opened up from the bush with a machine gun and we hit the ground..."

Rod McIntosh, as quoted from the Lincoln and Welland WWII Regimental History "The Lincs".

Private Loren Nelson is buried in Holten Canadian Military Cemetery, Holed Holland Grave 8 Row F Plot 8.

May the memories of Loren be of his life and accomplishments, not of his death.



Infantrymen of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment and a Sherman tank of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division awaiting orders to go through a roadblock, Wertle, Germany, 11 April 1945

Holten Military Cemetery

5 May 1956

Every year, on the 5th of May, the people of Holland celebrate their freedom. This date is more commonly known as Liberation Day. One such ceremony which took place in Holten Military Cemetery on the 5th of May, 1956 was documented by a young Dutch woman who had been caring for Loren's grave for many years.

The photos that were taken were then sent back to Canada along with the comments written in English on the back of each photo. These comments appear on this page alongside each photo in *blue italics*.

This was during the national songs of Canada and Holland. You see already the relations who visited the graves of their sons, brothers etc. and you see the high military men.



After the ceremony - you see the wreaths and garlands left by the Canadian and Dutch high military men and other high persons e.g. the Canadian ambassador.



Children of Holland put the flowers on the graves. Narcissus, white with an orange heart.

You see also the two little houses at the entrance to the Cemetery. This was built about two years ago.





*White narcissus were put on every grave, by children of Holten.
I myself put two red geraniums on Loren's grave, one on the left
and one on the right side of the white with an orange heart
narcissus.*

The Inscription:
H.22396 PRIVATE
L.N. NELSON
LINCOLN AND WELLAND REGIMENT
10TH APRIL 1945 AGE 19



1 May 1998

Holten, Holland

In 1998 the gratitude of the Dutch still alive in Holten. Over fifty years after the war is over the people still remember the Canadians who liberated their country. Celebrations and remembrance ceremonies still occur at the Holten Cemetery.

The photos on this page were submitted by **Alex and Marca van Haren** of Beneden Leeuwen, The Netherlands. They visited the ceremony on the 4th of May, 1998 and were kind enough to take some photos of Loren's gravesite for Loren's relatives in Canada. Many thanks go out to them for giving us these memories.

[The Story of Holten Cemetery](#)

Even until Autumn 1945 one could find crosses scattered all over the country in the Eastern and Northern parts of the Netherlands, marking the places where soldiers had been killed and buried. The crosses stood in gardens, pastures or just at the side of the road, in an area that has been cleared of five years of



oppression. For that reason the soldiers had given the greatest sacrifice, their lives.

One day, while passing Holten, it occurred to Lt. General G.G. Simonds, commander of the 2nd Canadian Army that the Holterberg area might be a suitable place for a Canadian War Cemetery. The soldiers who were killed in the spring of 1945 during the liberation of the Eastern and Northern parts of the Netherlands and the taking of the North German town Oldenburg could be buried here.

Some officers made contact with Mr. W.H. Enklaar mayor of Holten at the time. Mr. Enklaar immediately did everything possible to realize a cemetery. In a later stage negotiations were carried on by the Ministry of War. The result was that the grounds were given to the Canadian Government. It is still Canadian territory.

The Cemetery was constructed and carried out by Canadian soldiers who were waiting for their repatriation. They flattened and terraced the site. The first people buried were all Canadian soldiers, killed in the area of Holten. Their graves are in the first plot of the new cemetery, left of the entrance. Nearly 1400 fallen comrades were to follow. Until summer 1946 the bodies of Canadians killed in the Netherlands and Northern Germany were buried here.

Afterwards the planned area, 14 acres, turned out to be too large, so the front part was laid out as a beautiful heather garden. Until 1970 both cemetery and garden were kept by Mr. Reeves, an Englishman. He served in the Royal Hampshire Regiment. Now the work is done by Mr. Krieger. Among the rustling pines of the Holterberg lies the cemetery quietly with its hundreds of graves. Most of the men here were volunteers who gave their lives for our freedom.

Every year on May 4th a service of remembrance is held on the cemetery. Veterans staying in Holten or elsewhere in the country attend the ceremony. School children of the highest groups of the Primary School participate in the ceremony. Every 5 years Dutch and Canadian authorities are also present.

For some years the local school children put candles on the graves of the Canadian soldiers buried on the cemetery on Christmas Eve. This idea was began by Mrs. Van Dam, born in Finland and living in Holten. This is a custom introduced from her native country. More than 1,500 candle lights give the cemetery an impressive look.

The 1355 Canadians who are buried in Holten nearly all died during the last stages of the war in Holland and during the advance of the Canadian 2nd Corps into Germany.



Holten Cemetery - 1998

Here is a good view of Loren's gravesite (in the center of the photo). On each grave you can see a Canadian flag, a wooden cross and a bouquet of flowers which have been placed on the graves by Dutch school children. The crosses have been made in Canada through the generosity of Judy Stinson and Bill Webster of St. Thomas Ontario.



Here is a modern day photo of Loren's grave. You will quickly notice how beautifully cared for the site is. It is wonderful how the Dutch people have cared for these lost souls who never had the chance to return home.

The inscription:

H.22396 PRIVATE
L.N. NELSON
LINCOLN AND WELLAND REGIMENT
10TH APRIL 1945 AGE 19
THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD
PSALM XXIII.I



The Commemorative Names Project: Nelson Rapids



The Commemorative Names Project has named a Manitoban geographical feature after Loren. The feature is named Nelson Rapids, located in the northwest corner of Manitoba. These rapids are in the extreme northern part of the Province, it's latitude is more northern than Churchill, Manitoba. There are also no roads in this part of the province.

More specifically, Nelson Rapids is located on the North Seal River just west of Egenolf Lake. The closest town is the village of Tadoule Lake which is to the east downriver towards Hudson Bay.

Nelson Rapids is a very prominent feature. It forms a rapids in a narrow section of the North Seal River. In these narrows, the river is approximately 75 meters (3/4 of the length of a Canadian football field) wide and the entire rapids are nearly 700 meters (approx. 7 Canadian football fields) long.

A Fishing lodge is located on Egenolf Lake. For photos of the country around Nelson Rapids visit the [Ganglers North Seal River](#) Lodge site. A description, received from people who have fished at the foot of the rapids, describes Nelson Rapids as a spectacular site with boulders strewn across the mouth of the river.

Position of Nelson Rapids: 59° 03' 48" N - 100° 08' 24" W

Maps:

[Map of Nelson Rapids Local Area](#)

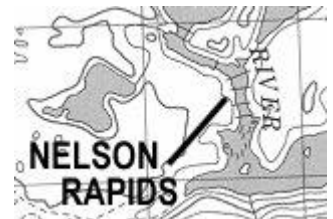
Photos:

[Geonames satellite image](#) of Nelson Rapids

[Aerial Photo of Nelson Rapids \(Survey Photo\)](#)

More Information:

[Read about the The Commemorative Names Project](#). The official site.



A Visit to Holten Cemetery

May 2004

In May 2004, Roy and Tammy Nelson visited Loren's grave at Holten Cemetery. Roy Nelson (*Pictured below*) is the Grand-Nephew of Loren Nelson.

In the gallery below you will see some of the photos that were taken during their visit. In addition Roy has provided some directions to anyone that is planning to visit Holten Cemetery.

Directions to the Holten Canadian War Cemetery:

From the train station take the path heading North on the East side of the train station. Walk about two kilometres until you reach an intersection with a restaurant and a museum on the left (West) side. Turn right (East) and walk another kilometre. Turn left (North) and walk another 100 metres to the cemetery. The route is well signed and is a very beautiful walk.





Written by Roger Nelson, nephew