

Nixon Norman



Norman James Nixon. (Photo courtesy of Nixon family)

Norman James Nixon was born in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, the son of Edward A. Nixon and Winnifred Trafton, and lived in nearby Mayfield. A well-regarded schoolteacher before his enlistment, he married Berla Mae Lowery on July 29, 1940. In 1941 they welcomed the birth of their son, Vernon James.



Norman and Berla Mae Nixon with their son Vernon, circa 1943. (Photo courtesy of Nixon family)

On July 20, 1940 Norman had enlisted with the Reserve Unit of the Carleton & York Regiment, but was discharged due to illness. On February 6, 1942 he re-enlisted, this time with the Active Unit of the New Brunswick Rangers, and served with this unit in Labrador, and Canada from February 6, 1942 to July 12, 1944, and England from July 13 to August 21, 1944.

In 1944 he transferred to the Cape Breton Highlanders, and served in Italy from August 22, 1944 to February 19, 1945, and Northwest Europe in France and The Netherlands from February 20 to April 30, 1945. He was known as 'Nick' by his fellow soldiers.

After surviving action in Italy and France, Lt Nixon's luck ran out near the end of WW2, when he was killed by shrapnel on April 30, 1945 during the Battle of the Delfzijl Pocket.

A May 6, 1945 letter to Bella Mae, from Norman's Commander, Lt Colonel R B Sommerville, explained what happened. *"...Nick was killed in action at night by shell fire during a counter attack on his platoon position. He died instantly. At the time he was hit he was encouraging his men who were being hard pressed by fire from the part of Delfzijl on the Ems estuary...."*

He was initially buried in the village of Wirdum, as Lt Col Sommerville explains further in his letter. *"...his example and devotion to both his troops and duty won for him the affection and respect of officers and men alike..... At a little*

service in the village of Wirdum near Groningen with a brother officer and 17 of our men he was buried the next afternoon. We will all miss him...."

The other officer mentioned as being buried was Lt **B H NUNN** of Halifax.

On May 10, 1945, Major P J Stephen also wrote a letter to Bella Mae, providing more details on how her husband lost his life. *"...On the evening of the 30th of April we were holding a position which we had taken the night before. Things were quite bad as we were being heavily shelled. The men were getting jittery from loss of sleep and constant hammering.*

After each shelling Nick would jump from his trench and stroll about the platoon area as if he were in his own garden, joking with the men, caring with a smile for all their needs, setting the example to them of a first class soldier and leader. During one of these tours Nick was fatally wounded by shrapnel from a shell which burst a few yards away.

It was impossible to save him although we gave him medical aid immediately. Nick passed away without regaining consciousness..."



Initial burial of Norman Nixon in Wirdum. Photo sent by Lt Stackhouse. (Photo courtesy of Nixon family)

On August 19, 1945, Lt Ron V Stackhouse wrote to Bella Mae. *"...I was with 'Nick' on the last night about an hour before he was killed as we had both had*

supper together at Company Headquarters and he and I walked back to our platoons together as our platoons were right alongside of each other....” In a postscript he mentions enclosing a photo of the grave.

After WW2 ended, Lt Nixon was reburied in the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten, The Netherlands.



Grave of Norman Nixon at the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten. (Photo sent by Edwin van der Wolf.)