



Harold Francis Norwood was born on November 10, 1917, in the village of Glenavon on the prairie of the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, about 100 km east of the capital, Regina.

Harold's father, Walter Norwood (1889–1967), was born in England and emigrated to Canada in 1910, where he initially lived with a brother in Manitoba. Harold's mother, Lavinia Mary Ashby (1885–1948), was also born in England and emigrated in 1912. Harold's parents married in 1914 and had four children: Elsie, Cecil (d. 1916), Eric, and Harold. The family belonged to the Church of England.

Harold's father worked for various railroad companies. He likely began his career working on the construction of the *Glenavon Subdivision* line from Regina to Kipling, Saskatchewan. Later, he joined a maintenance crew. In the late 1930s, the Norwood family moved to Regina and settled in a house within walking distance of the city's railroad yard.

Harold attended the village school in Glenavon. He left school in 1932 during his eighth grade.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, it was difficult to find work. Harold worked for a year as a farmhand and five years as a truck driver. He ended up in Vancouver, British Columbia, where he worked as a pipe fitter's helper at Leek & Co, a large plumbing, heating installation and engineering business. On October 24, 1942, he married Agnes Irene Cook from Regina. In April 1943, Agnes and Harold left for Regina, where Agnes moved in with her parents-in-law and Harold volunteered for the Canadian Army.



Harold had previously served in the military. In 1940, he was drafted under the *National Resources Mobilization Act*. He then served for a month with the Royal Rifles of Regina, where he received basic training.

On April 19, 1943, Harold underwent a medical examination, and he officially enlisted that same day. The examination revealed that he was in good health, but he did have an indirect inguinal hernia, for which he needed surgery. On May 11, he was admitted to the hospital. Four weeks later, he was discharged and was then granted an additional six weeks of sick leave to fully recover.

In August 1943, Harold began a training period in Canada. After completing basic training in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, he left for Aldershot, Nova Scotia, for infantry training, specializing in the use of machine guns. In Aldershot, he also underwent four weeks of training to become a non-commissioned officer, but this was discontinued — he had the necessary qualities but lacked sufficient self-confidence. He then completed training at Camp Borden, Woodstock, and London, all in Ontario. On May 17, 1944, he qualified at the highest level (Group "C") as a *Driver Mechanic Carrier* — a driver of carriers who is also capable of performing repairs on his vehicle.

On June 26, 1944, Harold left Canada for England, where he arrived a week later. He was assigned to the *No. 6 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit* in Aldershot, Hampshire, where he underwent further training in preparation for his deployment to mainland Europe. On October 16, he embarked for France, but it was not until January 10, 1945, that he joined the *Toronto Scottish Regiment (MG)*. The regiment supported the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division with medium and heavy machine guns and heavy mortars. The *Toronto Scottish* were deployed as needed to the nine infantry battalions of the 2nd Infantry Division.



*Belgium, 1944.
Soldiers from the Toronto Scottish
Regiment in a carrier equipped with
a machine gun.*

*Source: Library and Archives Canada,
PA-177653.*

Photo: Kenn Bell.

The 2nd Infantry Division spent the winter near Nijmegen. After operation Market Garden, a static front had developed there, with a bulge into German territory — the *Nijmegen salient*. On February 8, 1945, the Rhineland Offensive began, which aimed to capture the west bank of the Rhine north of the Ruhr. On February 17, the 2nd Infantry Division was deployed to the front and fought heavy battles until Xanten was captured on March 11. The Canadian Army suffered heavy losses during the Rhineland Offensive. Twelve soldiers from Harold's regiment, the Toronto Scottish, were killed.

After a rest period in the Reichswald Forest, the 2nd Infantry Division crossed the Rhine at Rees in late March. A rapid advance into the northern Netherlands began. On April 13, after Assen had been liberated, the division advanced toward Groningen. In the afternoon of that day, the Battle of Groningen began, which would last until April 16.

On April 15, B Company of the Toronto Scottish — consisting of the 5th, 6th, and 7th platoons — was under the command of the 6th Infantry Brigade, which was attacking Groningen from the south. At 6:00 p.m., the 6th Platoon was awaiting orders on the south side of Helpman on Verlengde Hereweg, roughly where the Espad meets the road. They were warned that the 5th Platoon had previously come under fire from snipers in that area. The soldiers were ordered to load their rifles.

Harold was the driver of a *Bren Gun Carrier*. He was standing in the vehicle. Behind the carrier stood a soldier who had joined the Toront Scottish as reinforcement in early April. After loading his rifle, the soldier pulled the trigger, assuming the weapon to be half-cocked. The bullet he fired struck Harold in the left buttock and exited his body through his abdomen. Harold lost a lot of blood. He was immediately dressed, given morphine, and evacuated to the first-aid post of the Fusiliers Mont-Royal regiment. However, by the time he arrived there, he had already died.

On April 16, a medical officer examined his body and drew up an official death report. The following day, a Court of Inquiry investigated the events that led to his death. During the investigation, four witnesses were questioned under oath. The court concluded that Harold was on duty and that he was accidentally killed. The soldier who fired the fatal shot was later court-martialed and acquitted. On April 19, Harold was buried in Eelderwolde, a few kilometers southwest of Groningen.

NO. L. 105767	Rank Private	Name NORWOOD, Harold Francis
	(M.G.)	
Unit Toronto Scottish Regt	Date of death	15th April, 1945.
Died at	Holland	
Cause	Died of ACCIDENTAL INJURIES.	
	wounds received in action.	
Death occurred on strength of Forces H.Q.	405-N-2768	
N/K	Mrs. Agnes I. Norwood,	Relationship Widow
Address	203 Edward 455 Forget Street, Regina, Saskatchewan.	
Remains buried in	Cdn. Mil. Cem. Eelderwolde, Holland	Cemetery
	MR 202100 (Auth. 54-27-88-2 Vol. 15)	
	Dated 25/6/45.	Grave 1 row 2 p 1
Grave location		

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After his death, Harold's family received conflicting messages. First, a telegram stating that he had died on April 16 from wounds received in action against the enemy. Then, a letter stating that he had died on April 15 of accidental

injuries. Finally, a letter from his commander stating that he had been fatally wounded on April 15 in action against the enemy.

On June 25, Harold's mother wrote to the *Records Office*, an administrative unit of the Canadian military headquarters in Ottawa. She wanted to know what had really happened. "Until I do, I feel I will never know real peace of mind. Please help me, if you possibly can." An inquiry was sent from Ottawa to the Toronto Scottish. On July 17, she received a reply:

"A Court of Inquiry was held on the accidental death of L.105767 Private Harold Francis Norwood and placed his death as 15th April, 1945. The accident occurred at 3.00 p.m. [*sic*] 15th April and he died very shortly after being evacuated to 10th Canadian Field Ambulance the same day. This was reported as accidental death which was correct. However, the Commanding Officer when writing the letter of condolence thought it best to make no mention of the accident and let it be assumed that the death was in the face of the enemy which to all intents and purposes it was."

That did not answer the question — what had *really* happened.

In 1946, Harold was reburied at the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten, where he rests in grave 03.H.03. The inscription on his headstone, which has no emblem, reads "TILL WE MEET AGAIN." The same text appears on both his mother's headstone and his father's headstone at Regina Cemetery.

After his death, Harold Norwood was awarded the following Canadian military decorations: the *1939–1945 Star*, the *France and Germany Star*, the *War Medal 1939–1945*, and the *Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp*.

In 1958, a lake in northern Saskatchewan was named after Harold: Norwood Lake.

After the war, Harold's widow, Agnes, remarried Sid Hildred (d. 1960) and Jim Moore (d. 2011). She passed away in 2018 at the age of 95 in Regina.

