

## **Pym, Bruce Donald. Sergeant.**

**12-H-2**



Bruce Pym was born in Oshawa, Ontario, on August 8, 1923. He is the second son of Charles Arthur and Florence Catherine (Catharyne) Pym, née MacLean.

Bruce's older brother is serving in the Royal Canadian Air Force when he reports for active duty on May 15, 1942, in Toronto.

Bruce completed elementary school and three years of postgraduate study. He worked as a clerk, but his employer is not listed.

English is spoken at home, and the family is a member of the United Church.

Before enlisting, Bruce had already some experience as a reservist with the 11<sup>th</sup> (Reserve) Tank Battalion.

His medical report states that he is 1.75 m tall and weighs just over 64 kg. He is listed as having blue eyes and blond hair, and he has a scar on his left ear.

After a month at the district depot in Toronto, Bruce was transferred for basic training to the training center in Simcoe, Ontario.

In August 1942, he was commissioned as a Lance/Corporal.

Bruce was then assigned to the Home War Establishment (HWE), the unit designated to protect Canadian territory.

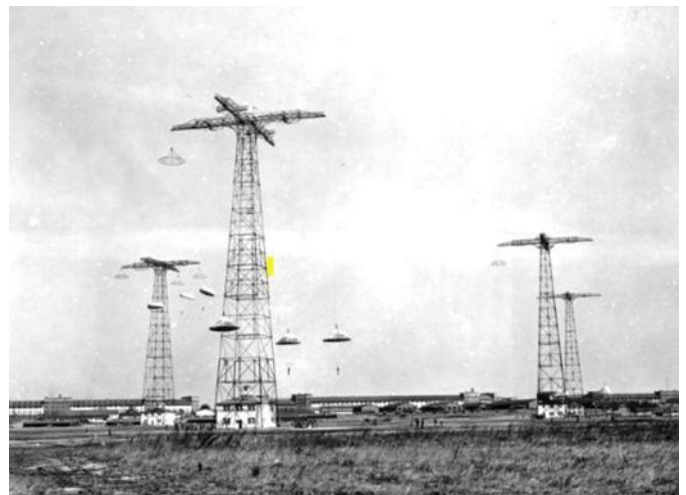
He was granted two weeks' leave during the first half of December.

In January 1943, Bruce was 'Privat' again and was drafted into the district depot in Montreal.

He was assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Parachute Battalion (1CPB) and departed for Fort Benning in Georgia, USA, on January 21, 1943.

He attended paratrooper training there.

As early as February 22, 1943, his file noted that he had successfully completed all training and made the required jumps from an airplane. He was officially a paratrooper.



**Training towers Fort Benning**

After further training at Fort Benning, Bruce was granted leave for the first half of April 1943 and returned to Canada.

He reported to Camp Shilo, Manitoba, on April 15<sup>th</sup>, where the 1CPB Paratrooper Training Unit was accommodated.

From May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1943, Bruce was authorized to serve as an Acting/Corporal, pending his official promotion.

He received embarkation leave before crossing to the United Kingdom.

On July 28, 1943, he arrived in the UK.

In August, Bruce was officially promoted to Corporal.

After a month stationed at a transit station, Bruce reported to the Airborne Forces Depot/School at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, the training center for parachute troops, at the end of September 1943.

He was expected to familiarize himself with British equipment and disciplines. Tactical training for parachute troops was also provided here.



Training at Ringway

Bruce received his final jump training at the Airfield Detachment at RAF Ringway.

In December 1943, he also successfully completed the training in the UK and was promoted to Acting/Sergeant.

Bruce's files continued in February 1944. A minor reprimand cost him a few days' pay.

Then came the harsh reality for the men of 1CPB.

The battalion, with Bruce in its ranks, was dropped into Normandy during the night of June 5-6, 1944.

On the afternoon of June 30, 1944, Bruce was wounded; "gunshot wounds in the right thigh" was noted in the Field Dress Station. He was evacuated to a hospital further behind the frontlines.

On August 8, 1944, Bruce was back with his unit in France.

A few weeks later, he was promoted to be a Sergeant.

In September 1944 1CPB returned to Bulford, England.

The timeline in his file then jumps to late December 1944.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Parachute Battalion was alerted in connection with the German Ardennes Offensive.

*Explanation:*

*On December 16, 1944, the Germans launched a final large-scale offensive on the Western Front. No fewer than 24 German divisions were involved in the offensive.*

*The objective of the German attack was a breakthrough through the Ardennes that would split the Allied forces. The German forces would then push on to Antwerp and recapture this port city.*

*The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Parachute Battalion was the only Canadian unit to see action in the Ardennes Offensive, which was primarily an American-German battle.*

On December 26, 1944, due to poor weather conditions, the troops arrived in Belgium by ship and were transported to the Ardennes by truck.

By then, the German advance had virtually ground to a halt.

The task for the men of 1CPB then became patrolling and clearing the area of enemy groups. In doing so, the paratroopers were also confronted with the brutality of some enemy units.

*Explanation:*

*During their march through the town of Bande, the men discovered one of the many atrocities that had taken place during the war. Thirty-seven elderly men, children, and women were herded into the cellar of a house and then slaughtered by rifle fire and grenades.*

On February 26, 1945, the battalion returned to Carter Barracks in Bulford, England, and Bruce was granted leave until March 6.

Bruce's file then contains only two more entries:

1. On March 24, 1945, he boarded an aircraft and was parachuted into Germany.
2. The last entry is from March 31, 1945: Killed in Action.

The paratroopers had by then penetrated deep into Germany. A little more information about the movements of 1CPB:

*On March 26 and 27, 1945, the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Parachute Battalion began moving from Bergerfürth, near Wesel, Germany. Their final destination: the Baltic coast near Wismar, if feasible.*

*Their primary objective was to keep the Red Army out of Denmark, and preferably even further away. Over the next six weeks, the men of 1CPB covered the 480 kilometers. On May 2, 1945, they arrived in Wismar, just hours ahead of a Russian reconnaissance group.*

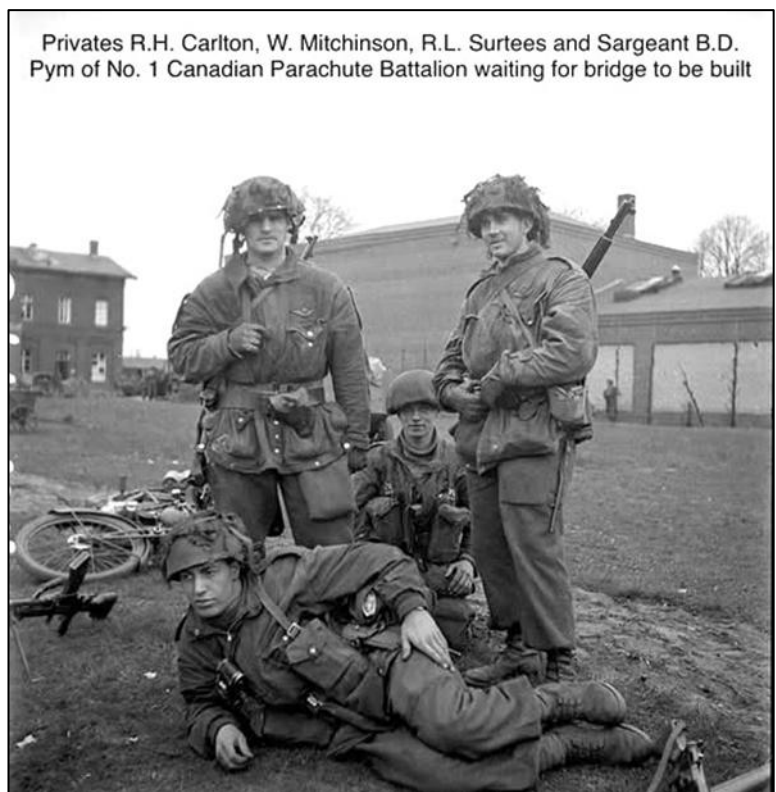
Where was the unit on March 31, 1945, the fateful day for Sergeant Bruce Donald Pym?

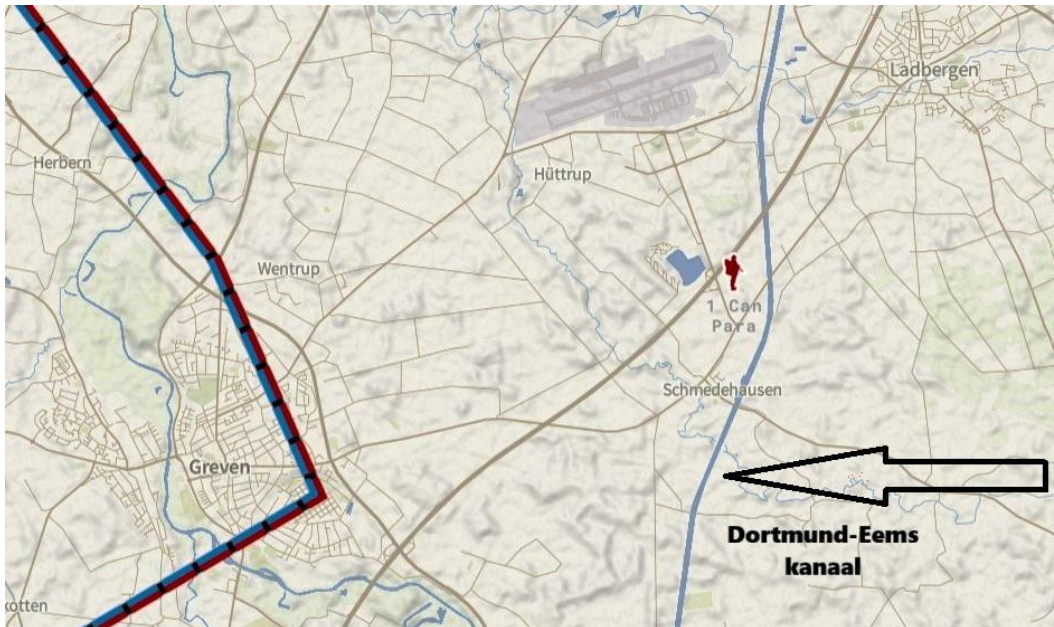
The previous day, the town of Greven had been reached.

The first bridge near the town was intact and passed, but the second was blown up, forcing the troops to halt their advance and wait for the Engineers to build the bridge. They had to stay at Greven overnight.

On March 31, the advance continued towards Ladbergen, with the Dortmund-Ems Canal once again posing an obstacle.

Already en route, the men of 1CPB encountered heavy enemy fire.





According to the war diary, several casualties were sustained.

Sergeant Bruce Donald Pym was most likely one of them.

He was given a temporary grave in the church cemetery in Wunstorf, near Hanover.

Bruce final resting place is Holten, at the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery.  
The grave reference is: Plot 12; Row H, Grave 2.

*He was 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:

**He died that others  
Might live**



Sources:

[www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org); [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); [www.canada.ca/library-archives](http://www.canada.ca/library-archives), project '44