Stuart, Donald Private 11-A-5



Donald Stuart is born on September 19, 1925, in Tory Hill, Ontario. He is the son of William Roy Stuart and Leata Stuart (née Dewey). Donald is the third son and the fifth child in a family that would eventually include twelve children. The family is Presbyterian, and English is the language spoken at home.

On March 7, 1944, in Kingston, Ontario, Donald enlists for active service in the Canadian Army. By that time, he has already been working for over a year as a lumberman for F.W. Reid in Bobcaygeon, Ontario.



The Reid family operated a major logging camp north of Bobcaygeon. At the time, this camp served as a hub for logging crews, who would spend months felling timber in the surrounding Kawartha forests before returning to Bobcaygeon.

Before Donald is officially enlisted, the military medical officers want to see him. The medical report contains standard details: height 5’7”; weight 128 lbs; blue eyes, and light-brown hair. No specific physical characteristics that could be used for identification purposes are noted.
However, there is a remark stating that he still "comes across as very immature." At just 18 years old—the minimum age—he is cleared fit for all services.

After spending a few weeks at the district depot in Kingston, Donald is transferred to St. John’s, Newfoundland, for basic infantry training.



Donald does not seem to fit into the rigid structure of the army at all. By June 1944, he has already been "AWL" (Absent Without Leave) for more than 16 days.
In mid-June 1944, he is transferred to Farnham, Quebec.
Apparently, things do not work out for him there either. During the first half of July 1944, he is once again AWL.

The amount being withheld from his pay is already mounting up. All in all, he has spent more than two months in uniform without receiving any pay for it.

When he is absent again on October 1, 1944, his superiors intend to report him as a ‘deserter.’ However, he returns on October 2, 1944, and is immediately sentenced to 14 days of detention.

In the first week of January 1945, Donald is granted a few days of embarkation leave; the crossing to the United Kingdom (UK) is scheduled for him at that time.
He is transferred to Camp Debert in Nova Scotia, where the troops, bound for the UK, are being assembled.

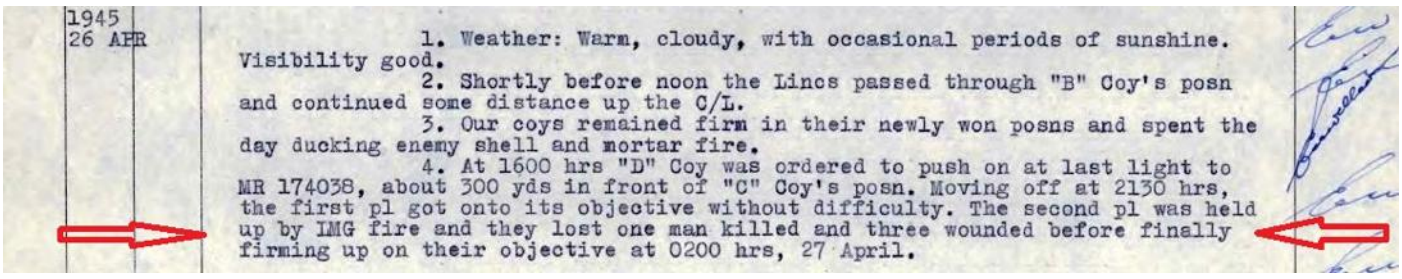
On January 31, 1945, Donald and thousands of others board a troop ship bound for the UK, arriving there on February 8, 1945.
Donald is assigned to a reinforcement unit and he continues his training in the UK.

The harsh reality of front-line service draws closer when he disembarks in Antwerp on April 14, 1945.
A week later, he was officially assigned to the Algonquin Regiment.
The final two entries in Donald's file state:
- April 26, 1945: listed as wounded;
- April 27, 1945: died of wounds.

The war diary of the Algonquin Regiment provides some insight into what Donald experienced during his few weeks at the front.

In April 1945, the Algonquin Regiment takes part in the advance through Northwest Germany.
They reach the town of Esterwegen on April 11, 1945. Further north lays the Küstenkanal (Coastal Canal), which becomes the regiment's next objective.
Following the crossing and the establishment of a bridgehead, the route toward Edewecht and Friesoythe has to be secured.
During this crossing and the establishment of the bridgehead, the Algonquin Regiment suffers significant casualties.

The regiment's advance continues toward Edewecht–Bad Zwischenahn.
Near Edewecht, the regiment is tasked with clearing a wooded area on both sides of the main road.
For the German forces, this terrain is well-suited for defense.
Although the resistance is not exceptionally fierce, it takes the Algonquins several days to bring the area under control.
An excerpt from the regiment's war diary describes how, in the late hours of April 26, 1945, Donald's C-Company suffers one fatality and three wounded.


1945
26 APR

1. Weather: Warm, cloudy, with occasional periods of sunshine. Visibility good.
2. Shortly before noon the Lincs passed through "B" Coy's posn and continued some distance up the C/L.
3. Our coys remained firm in their newly won posns and spent the day ducking enemy shell and mortar fire.
4. At 1600 hrs "D" Coy was ordered to push on at last light to MR 174038, about 300 yds in front of "C" Coy's posn. Moving off at 2130 hrs, the first pl got onto its objective without difficulty. The second pl was held up by IMG fire and they lost one man killed and three wounded before finally firming up on their objective at 0200 hrs, 27 April.

One of the wounded is Private Donald Stuart.

He is transported to the aid station, where it is discovered that he has sustained an open chest wound from shrapnel.
Efforts to save his life prove unsuccessful; Donald passes away on April 27, 1945.

He is given a temporary grave near Friesoythe, where a cemetery has been established for those who fell in the region.
On 9 March 1946, he is laid to rest in his final resting place at the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten, plot 11, row A, grave 5.



He is awarded:
the 1939–1945 Star, the France and Germany Star, the War Medal 1939–1945, and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

His tombstone reads:
In memory of our beloved son
Gone from this world
But always in our hearts.



Sources:
www.cwgc.org; www.ancestry.com;
www.canada.ca/library-archives; wikipedia, wartimesproject.com; War Diary Algonquin Regiment, project ’44.