

Swain, John Tovell

Trooper

**1st Canadian Armoured Carrier
Regiment**

Royal Canadian Armoured Corps

B/148774



Return Man's Parade and Port Credit Harbour, Port Credit, 1919

John ("Jack") Tovell Swain was born 28 June 1925 at Lakeview, now part of Mississauga, Ontario (ON). His father John Swain was from Wales, emigrating to Canada in 1913. John enlisted with the Canadian Mounted Rifles (4th Battalion), Canadian Expeditionary Force and served overseas in World War One. He returned to Canada after the war and married Myrtle Florence Law, who was Canadian of English descent, at Port Credit, next to Lakeview, ON in 1920.

The Methodist couple had six children: Mary, Dorothy, Gwen, Jack, Roy and Edythe. John worked as a labourer in the grocery business in the 1920s, then moved his family to Toronto where he was a building labourer during the Great Depression. The Swain family were members of Trinity United Church and Jack attended Wellesley Public School in Toronto where he completed grade 8 before going to work age fourteen. Jack was a farm labourer for a while with an ambition to become a motor mechanic. He found employment as a hat finisher with Holt Renfrew Hat Company in Toronto and had been working there two years when he decided to join the Army on his 18th birthday.

Jack attested 28 June 1943 at Toronto. He was then 5'9" tall and 144 lbs. He was sent to Brampton, ON for basic training where he spent three days in the military hospital there August 1943 with a throat infection. Jack was allocated to the Canadian Armoured Corps (C.A.C.) and joined the C.A.C. Training Regiment at Camp Borden, ON 7 September 1943. Jack qualified as Driver Class III (Wheel) at Borden 12 November 1943.



Camp Borden, ON Armoured Training WW2



Trooper J.T. Swain was shipped overseas the next summer when he was eligible following his 19th birthday, disembarking in the UK 19 July 1944 where he reported to the C.A.C. Reinforcement Unit. Jack received additional training that fall and was qualified as Driver Mechanic upon successful course completion 27 September 1944. The head of the training establishment commented about Jack: "This student is a good driver and very good on maintenance. Will make a first class driver".

<u>REMARKS:</u>	Theory test (Tank) 88% Final %88% Dr Time (Tank) 180 Miles. Final Award. Dr 1/C (Tank)
This student is a good driver and very good on maintenance. Will make a first class driver.	
<i>M. J. Parrell</i> O.C. D & M ("I" Wing) S.C.A.C.R.U.	
S.O.S. 25 Sept 44 Date 27 Sept. 44. <i>P. J. Welch</i> Head of Training Establishment.	

Trooper Jack Swain

Jack disembarked in Northwest Europe 12 November 1944 and was taken on strength five days later with 1st Canadian Armoured Carrier Regiment.

1st Canadian Army had converted 72 Priest tanks to Infantry Carriers in August 1944, which became known as Kangaroos. They were effective in reducing infantry casualties during the Battle of Normandy and the squadron was formally attached to The Elgin Regiment (25th Canadian Armoured Delivery Regiment) in September 1944. They were involved in the capture of Le Havre that month and carried 9th Infantry Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division into battle. In late September/early October they saw action at Calais with 7th and 8th Canadian Infantry Brigades.



The well worn Priests were replaced by Canadian made Ram tanks in October 1944, with turrets removed and other modifications made allowing them to accommodate 10 infantrymen plus the crew as armoured personnel carriers. They were merged into the 1st Canadian Armoured Carrier Regiment (1CACR or "Kangaroos") 25 October 1944 at Tilburg, Netherlands and placed under the command of the British 79th Armoured Div.

Six "Kangaroos" Tilburg, Netherlands Oct 1944

Trooper Jack Swain served in "A" Squadron, Number 3 Troop as a driver. A Troop had three Sections with three tanks in each Section, so a Troop of tanks could carry a platoon of infantry. They were carrying British infantrymen around the Nijmegen Bridge area approaching the Siegfried line by the end of January 1945.



*Kangaroos Number 3 Troop, "A" Squadron December 1944
Jack Swain is #1 kneeling front row, far left. His Troop Sergeant Bettcher is #2*

The Allied offensive Operation VERITABLE was launched 8 February 1945. Orders were received for "A" Squadron to go into action carrying Scottish soldiers and the convoy moved out at 21:45 hours. The Kangaroos suffered three casualties the next day, mostly from enemy mortars.

Scottish Division on Kangaroos, Kranenburg, Germany



In Carrier Unit

For some time now Mr. and Mrs. J. Swain, of 168 Gladstone avenue, have been wondering what kind of regiment their son, Trooper Jack Swain, of the Canadian Armored Corps, was serving in.



Tpr. J. Swain

His letters showed his regiment as the 1st Canadian Army Personnel Carrier Regiment, and it was not until The Telegram's war correspondent on the Western Front, Allen Kent, told the whole story of how the carriers, or Kangaroos, took the Canadians through the mud and slush through the Siegfried Line and into Kleve, that Mr. and Mrs. Swain finally understood.

Ordinarily the mention of carriers brings to mind the bouncing universal carrier, which in addition to driver and his mate, carried three men with mortar and Bren gun. This carrier regiment uses tanks converted into armored troop carriers.

Tpr. Swain enlisted at the age of 18 and went overseas in November, 1944. The annual armistice service was held on the ship taking him over, and the engines were stopped for two minutes in honor of the dead.

Toronto Telegram February 1945

Operations BLOCKBUSTER and PLUNDER followed, with the Allies finally crossing the Rhine River by the end of March. On 9 April 1945 the Kangaroos "A" Squadron was tasked with carrying Companies from 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade Battalions to an area near Haarle, Netherlands. Their War Diary for that date mentioned that the roads were very bad with enemy pockets left behind the so-called forward line.

From "A" Squadron's Action Report on 9 April 1945 for Number 3 Troop: "As the column neared their objective, several craters were blown in the main road which necessitated travelling in the field which was rather soft. This resulted in the last Kangaroo in the column bogging down". It was flanked by an enemy self propelled gun and fired upon, killing an infantryman and wounding Trooper Jack Swain. His co-driver and Troop Sergeant Bettcher remained with him until their vehicle was recovered. Jack Swain died soon after reaching the Regimental Aid Post, age 19.

News of his death reached his Troop the next day. From "A" Squadron's 10 April 1945 Action Report: "This was a shock to everyone, as Swain was very popular with all members of the Troop. He was always bright and cheerful,

no matter how hard the going and willingly tackled any job given him. He will be a great loss to all members of the Troop both as a friend and a comrade in arms".

M.F.M. 267
SOM-3-44 (2024)
H.Q. 1770-38-1989

**CANADIAN NATIONAL
TELEGRAPHS**

ABS FILE H.Q. 405-3-32,777

CASUALTY (REPORT DELIVERY) OTTAWA 17 APRIL 1945

TO:- MRS MYRTLE F SWAIN
168 GLADSTONE AVENUE
TORONTO 3 ONTARIO

728730 REGRET DEEPLY B148774 TROOPER JOHN TOVELL
SWAIN HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION NINTH APRIL
1945 STOP YOU SHOULD RECEIVE FURTHER DETAILS BY MAIL DIRECT
FROM THE UNIT IN THE THEATRE OF WAR STOP TO PREVENT POSSIBLE
AID TO OUR ENEMIES DO NOT DIVULGE DATE OF CASUALTY OR NAME OF
UNIT.

48H
PREPAID

DIRECTOR OF RECORDS

The Toronto Star May 28, 1945, page 14



J. T. SWAIN
Killed

TPR. JOHN TOVELL SWAIN, 19, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. John Swain, Gladstone Ave., was killed in action, April 9, in Holland. His parents have received word that he was killed by shell fire when his tank bogged down and the crew were seeking shelter. He enlisted in July, 1943, with the 1st Canadian armored carrier regiment and went overseas in July, 1944. Born in Toronto, he attended Wellesley school and was a member of Trinity United church. His father served with the 4th battalion in the last war. Besides his parents he is survived by one brother, Roy, with the Canadian Infantry Corps, and four sisters, Mrs. Mary Worrall, Dorothy, Gwen and Edith, all of Toronto.



Trooper J.T. Swain was temporarily buried at Haarle, Netherlands and later relocated to Holten Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands, grave reference **III. D. 2**.

Photo courtesy Canadian Virtual War Memorial

The inscription on his headstone:
MAY YOU WAKEN, JACK, TO A NEW DAWN
FIRED WITH SUN, NOT WAR.
EVER IN OUR MEMORIES

Jack Swain's campaign medals:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France-Germany Star
- War Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

Trooper J.T. Swain is listed on the War Monument at Haarle, Netherlands along with nine other fallen Canadian soldiers.

War Memorial at Haarle, Netherlands



Biography by Jim Little, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources Consulted:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Veteran Affairs Canada – Canadian Virtual War Memorial

Ancestry public trees

Newspapers.com

Port Credit, ON photo <https://www.insauga.com/100-years-ago-port-credit-in-mississauga-looked-a-bit-different/>

Camp Borden, ON Canadian Armoured Corps training picture ww2
https://www.aviaeology.com/store/p157/Camp-Borden_A-Century-of-Service.html#/

Kangaroo pictures <http://www.theelginmilitarymuseum.ca/the-kangaroos.html>

1st Canadian Armoured Carrier Regiment information - CanadianKangaroos.ca

Bill Miller – Canadian Kangaroos photos and Jack Swain information

Grodzinski, John R. (1995) Kangaroos at War – The History of the 1st Canadian Armoured Personnel Regiment

Haarle, Netherlands War Memorial photo
<https://www.tracesofwar.com/sights/78608/Memorial-Killed-Canadian-Soldiers.htm>

COPY FOR HQ 405-S-32,777

18 June 1947.

Mrs. Myrtle F. Swain,
168 Gladstone Avenue,
TORONTO 3, Ontario.

Dear Mrs. Swain:-

This Department recently received advice that Mr. Pierre Dupuy, the Canadian Ambassador in The Hague, Netherlands, had the honour of attending a very simple but touching event - the unveiling of a memorial erected by the people of the tiny village of Haarle to the memory of ten Canadian soldiers who gave their lives in the fight for its liberation.

As your son was one of the ten Canadian soldiers who fell on this occasion, I feel that you will be interested in Mr. Dupuy's account of the ceremony, which is repeated hereunder:-

"Accompanied by the Military Attache and Mrs. de Rome, the first Secretary and Mrs. Feaver, I motored on Sunday, May 11th, to 'Sprengenberg,' the home of Mr. J.U. de Kempenaer, Chairman of the War Memorial committee. 'Sprengenberg' is a large country house with an exceedingly high tower on the top of a hill which so dominates the surroundings that it provides a view almost twenty miles in every direction. It was natural that such a magnificent observation point attracted the approaching Canadian artillery with the result that the Germans were driven out by the use of shells. Far from bearing any resentment, however, the owner expressed deep gratitude for the fact that the armour-piercing shells (which made comparatively neat holes as they entered and passed through the tower) were used rather than high explosive shells which would have demolished the edifice. During my visit I made an inspection tour of the premises and was delighted to see how completely war damage had been repaired - a mark of Dutch initiative and energy which is so generally observed.

Mr. de Kempenaer described to me the fighting which took place and the surrender of the German forces in front of his garage. 'Sprengenberg' was afterwards occupied for a considerable period by Canadian troops who apparently left behind a very happy impression.

SWAIN, John—At his home, 149A Campbell Ave., on Thursday, May 27, 1948, John Swain, beloved husband of Myrtle Florence Law and dear father of Mrs. N. Worrall (Mary), Dorothy, Gwen, Ray and Edythe. Resting at the Chapel of McDougall and Brown, 646 St. Clair Ave. W. Service Saturday, 3 p.m. Interment Prospect cemetery.

Toronto Star May 1948

Roy Swain's first child was named after his brother Jack.

Toronto Star Nov 1985

SWAIN, Roy G. — At Oshawa General Hospital on Wednesday, November 13, 1985, Roy G. Swain (formerly of Toronto). Beloved husband of Anna Marie McKay. Dear father of Jack, Waterloo University and Barbara, at home. Son of Mrs. Myrtle Swain and the late John Swain. Brother of Mary, Dorothy, Gwen and Edythe, all of Toronto. Friends are invited to call at the McIntosh-Anderson Funeral Home, 152 King St. East, Oshawa on Saturday, November 16, 1-3 p.m. Service in the chapel Saturday 3 p.m. Cremation.

SWAIN, Myrtle— Peacefully at St. Joseph's Health Centre on Friday, November 13, 1992. Myrtle Law, predeceased by her husband John. Dear mother of Mary (Mrs. N. Worrall), Dorothy (Mrs. F. Elliott), Gwen (Mrs. S. Melton), Edythe Le Clerc, all of Toronto, predeceased by her two sons Roy and Jack. Survived by her sister Kathleen McGlone and predeceased by her brothers Harry and Fred Law and her sister Maysle Phillips. Cherished grandmother of eleven grandchildren, seven great grandchildren and three great great grandchildren. Friends may call at the Giffen-Mack "Danforth Chapel", 2570 Danforth Ave. (at Main St. subway) from 7-9 p.m. Saturday and 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. Sunday. Service in the chapel Monday morning at eleven o'clock with interment at Prospect Cemetery. By request, donations in Myrtle's memory may be made to the Arthritis Society.

Toronto Star Nov 1992

Swain family headstone Prospect Cemetery Toronto, ON where Jack Swain is also listed

