



Rifleman Francis William

WELBURN

03-F-15

Francis William Welburn, The Royal Winnipeg Rifles from Winnipegosis, Manitoba, was killed on 20 April 1945 at the age of 20. He was the son of Charles and Winnifred Welburn.

His youngest sister recalls on 23 June 1997:

We were born at a farm at Rokeby, Saskatchewan, a few miles from Yorkton. My family moved to Camperville-Winnipegosis area in 1937. Although it's many years since he has been gone, it is still very painful to me. I was fourteen years old at the time and remember very vividly the day we received the sad word. He was so alive in all the letters, relating the bad times of war. He talked so optimistic about coming home in all his letters. He had a girl friend whom he loved dearly and mentioned her always fondly in all of his letters. Her name was Margaret from Gull Lake, Saskatchewan. She also lost her brother just shortly before Francis was taken, so it was a bad time for her too.

During the advance in the spring of 1945, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles saw action in North-West Europe. A close friendship was developed between Francis William Welburn and Digby Smith. As true friends they were inseparable. During the heavy fighting in North Germany both were seriously injured. Francis Welburn fell into the arms of the equally affected Smith and died.

Wilby Smith was severely wounded but recovered and returned to Canada. But he could not forget his friend. When Wilby Smith died in 1982, his last wish was to be buried with his friend Francis Welburn. In an exceptional case this was allowed and the ashes of Digby Smith was buried in the grave of Joseph William Welburn on December 4, 1982

Welburn Lake, west of Nejanilini Lake is named after him in 1975.

