



**Welby Lloyd Patterson, MM, B-139427,
Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada,
'C' Company, (Princess Louise's), R.C.I.C**

My grandfather, Welby Lloyd Patterson, was born to his parents Thomas and Sarah on 10 June 1922 in Ohsweken, a village on the Six Nations of the Grand River Reservation , Brantford, Ontario.

He was one of 10 children – Wesley, Elias, Thomas, Melita, Hazell, Mable, Diana, Agnes and Laura – and attended the Mohawk Institute in Brantford, leaving at 18. His father was a farmer and Welby had worked with him on his farm. After some time spent playing professional lacrosse, he took up an apprenticeship and became a steelworker with Republic Steel and Bethlehem Steel in Buffalo, New York State where Thomas Snr was then living.

He enlisted on 29 January 1943 and completed basic training at Camp Borden, Ontario. His soldier's qualification card lists his hobbies as swimming, hunting, fishing, basketball, hockey and lacrosse and that he spoke English, Mohawk and Tuscacora.

In his attestation papers, it is remarked that he *'is cheerful, good natured, tall, finely built, has played professional lacrosse and is a fine combatant type ... he is well educated, eager to learn more, interested. He is well balanced, says he was a regular church attendant and that he sang in the church choir. He is quiet, reserved, has a definite dignity about him and should do well'. It's also noted that 'he and his brother own a Harley-Davidson motorcycle ... and has been riding for a few years ... and has the eagerness and alertness to make a good motorcyclist'*. Heartbreakingly, in answer to the question in the papers asking him to quote his reason for joining up, he wrote *"adventure"*.

After completing his basic training he arrived in the UK in September 1943. In October, he joined 'C' Company of the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, (Princess Louise's), R.C.I.C as a rifleman and motorcyclist.

At some point thereafter Welby met my Gran, Thomasina (Ina), at a dance in Glasgow. They fell in love and planned to marry after the war.

On 21 July 1944, 'C' Company landed in France August 1944 and were immediately plunged into the horrors of the war at Falaise, fighting on through Moerbrugge, the Scheldt, Kapelsche Veer, and the Hochwald Gap to Friesoythe and beyond.

On the 9 September 1944, 'C' Company were tasked with holding a crossing over the Ghent Canal at Moerbrugge in the face of three battalions of Germans. The regimental history records that *'it is impossible to convey any real idea of what Moerbrugge was like on the 9*

September, *It must have been as close to hell on earth as anyone there will see*’. It was here that Welby won his Military Medal for heroism – the citation reads:

‘On the night of September 9 1944, an infantry company was among other sub-units which had successfully set up a small bridgehead over the canal at Moerbrugge, Belgium. The enemy counter-attacked in great strength and, acting on his own initiative, Corporal Patterson worked his way through the intense mortar and machine gun fire to a position behind two stumps where, for three hours, he fired with such coolness and devastating accuracy that the enemy was unable to effectively counter-attack the main position. The courage, initiative and complete disregard for personal safety shown by Corporal Patterson was undoubtedly responsible for the defeat of repeated enemy thrusts at his unit’s position’.

He was the first person from the Six Nations Reservation to win the Military Medal in World War 2.

Welby was injured in September 1944 and was brought back to the UK for treatment and to recuperate, returning to Glasgow to visit Ina whenever he could.

He was sent back to Europe in January 1945 and fought with the unit through to Germany.

Tragically he was killed on the 16 April 1945 at Freisoythe, Germany. From the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada book *‘Argyll casualties in numbers were light, but of the few who were killed one or two were practically irreplaceable. Corporal Patterson, who had won the Military Medal at Moerbrugge was killed by sniper fire while helping to place the plank bridge over the river Soeste’*. With his commander, Lt. Col Frederick E Wigle, and Privates Brown and French *‘he was buried in a small, white fenced plot on the bank of the Soeste, where the main road enters Friesoythe’*.

As she was not his next of kin, Ina heard the news of Welby’s death from one of his sisters. She was pregnant with his son and when he was born, she gave him the name his father had wanted, Richard Welby.

My Gran adored my Dad who was the spitting image of Welby and, although throughout his life people have called him Ricky, she never once called him anything other than the name his father had wanted.

Families being the messy, complicated things that they are, Welby’s story wasn’t told until 1994. By then my Gran had moved house numerous times and, along the way had lost all Welby’s letters and photographs of them together. She did, however, tell my Dad that when she watched him walk down the road away from her house it was like watching his father walk away from her as they had the same gait and he had many of his mannerisms.

Due to gaps in the information we had, it took until April 2012 for us to actually see the picture shown here and over the months that followed we made contact with our very large, far flung family in Canada. They have been so lovely and welcoming to us.

Although none of Welby’s brothers or sisters were alive when we made contact with our relations, his family have never forgotten him and at least one member of the family has been named after him. Every year on Remembrance Sunday a wreath is laid in his honour,

along with one for his relatives Carl and Lee, at the Six Nations-Mississauga War Memorial in Ohsweken .



I received invaluable help in my online research from Geoffrey Moyer of Brantford Library near Ohsweken. The most exciting thing he found was an article written in January 2012 for a local paper in Saskatchewan by someone who had served with Welby and who mentioned him in the article.

A couple of phone calls later I was talking to Robert (Bob) Mason from Perdue in Saskatchewan who had been a radio operator, originally in 'A' Company, but who was attached to 'C' Company for a time and who, at 93, could still recall conversations he had had with Welby – I cannot describe how incredible it was to speak to someone who knew him personally and I was privileged to receive from him a book of poetry that he had written about his war experiences and his life thereafter.

I also found references to my grandfather in an audio article on the Canadian Memory Project which is very moving <http://www.thememoryproject.com/stories/1298:robert-bob-appell>

When I found the film on you tube of the candle lighting ceremony at the cemetery that has become a tradition in Holten on Christmas Eve , I wept. I cannot tell you how much it means to us to think that these acts of remembrance have happened and how grateful I am to the people of Holten for this <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQr9Z8Dnxyo> .

We are also indebted to the people who photographed every grave in the cemetery in Holten and uploaded them to the internet so that relatives of these men and boys across the world can see their final resting place.

My Dad, Mum, my husband Stuart and I visited Holten just after the 70th anniversaries of Holten's liberation and Welby's death. We stayed the night at the beautiful hotel Hoog Holten and were touched to learn the story of the planning and building of the visitor centre , the twinning of the schools from Holten and Canada so that young people learn of the sacrifices made, and to hear of the very deep respect the people of Holten have for those who fought and died to liberate their country from tyranny and evil.

The walk through the woods to the cemetery was beautiful and the cemetery itself is a lovely place with a sense of great calm and reverence, immaculately kept and, on the Sunday we were there, we noticed that there were very many Dutch (we presumed, local) families who were visiting – one of the many things from our weekend that we were touched by.

The visitors' centre is very well done and, again, the people we met who were manning the information desk were kind, helpful and interested in my grandfather's story.



Although he never knew his father, my dad shares with him his good looks, a love of motorbikes as a young man, a job as a steel worker (in the shipyards of Glasgow) and a passion for the outdoors.

He never got to meet his daughter-in-law, grandchildren or great grandchildren but finally getting to 'know' Welby has touched our lives. We are all incredibly proud of him and of our links to our Canadian family and their heritage.

We will never forget him.

Wendy Johnson

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