



## **Simms, Kenneth Charles,**

Lieutenant

### **Family affairs**

Simms, Kenneth Charles, Lieutenant Kenneth (Ken) was born January 21, 1914 in Grand Mere, Quebec. His parents were Henry (1866 - † 23-11-1947) and Emmelin (1873 - † 19-09-1947). Emmelin was born in Kent, England. They were married on November 14, 1894 in Philadelphia. They had 7 children: Marjorie (1895-1972), Marion Emmelin (1897-1996), Francis Edythe (1902-1995), Geraldine Nora (1905-1991), Francis Henry (1906-1916), James Robert (1911-1996) ) and Kenneth Charles (1914-1944). James served in the Canadian Air Force in WWII until joining Human Resources as a selection officer. Father Henry served as a reserve captain in the Royal Scots and was bank manager until his retirement. Ken attended Public School for 8 years, then 3 years High School and 5 years college, Bishops College in Lennoxville Quebec. He graduated there, BA, in 1936. He then attended the High School Teacher training which he graduated in 1937. He was bilingual, English / French. From 1938 he taught mathematics and physics at the High School in Drummondville, Westmount, Quebec.

Ken was 1.72 m. tall and his weight was 67 kg. He had brown eyes and brown hair. He was wearing glasses. He had a scar on his left knee. His hobbies were sports (skiing, rugby, golf, badminton) and games (school theater director).

### **Military affairs**

In August 1941 he joined the Non-Permanent Active Militia and trained as a reserve 2nd lieutenant at the Officers Training Centre of Loyola College. In December 1941 he became reserve 2nd lieutenant in the 3rd Battalion of the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada. On September 24, 1942, he applied for active duty in Montreal South.



He received officer training in Tree Rivers until February 18, 1943 and became a 2nd lieutenant. After further training, he became a lieutenant at the A12 Training Center of the Black Watch on March 19, 1943.

On September 13, 1943 he embarked on the boat to England, on September 20, 1943 he became a lieutenant with 5 CIRU, a reserve unit of the infantry. He stays there until March 16, 1944, when he switches from 5 CIRU to 4 CIRU. On August 13, 1944, he arrived in France, where he was posted as a lieutenant with the North Nova Scotia Highlanders. Until August 29, 1944, when he rejoined the Black Watch, the Black Watch had already suffered heavy losses before October 1944. It had more casualties than any other Canadian infantry battalion in northwestern Europe. Disasters seemed to follow the Regiment almost every battle. During the Battle of Verrières Ridge on July 25, 1944, there were 97% casualties. Of the 325 men who left the starting line, only 15 came back into their own lines. The others were killed or wounded, and a company of 90 men had only four survivors. Another 40% were killed 10 days later in Operation Totalize. A month ago they lost 60 men in 36 hours from September 12-14. In October, the Regiment expected to be fully staffed and resupplied, but that was not to be the case. The regiment that had lost many trained men in recent months was replenished with inexperienced infantrymen and was still below original strength.

#### **War Diary Black Watch: Oct. 8 Sunday.**

Weather - foggy, clear in the afternoon. The attack started in the early morning mist. Because the starting line (red: crossing Scheldeweg / Nieuwe Weg / Duinstraat; the Verwoeste Hoek) was not safe, it was necessary to hold an O-group (military council) to change the plans. This meeting was held in the open air, in the fog, under mortar fire, at the windmill at MR 631192 (red: Huybergsebaan, the mill of Schoutens, near the current sports fields) with the vehicles parked along the side of the road. The battalion headquarters was located in a large school building (ed: the old monastery, now the site with primary schools and town hall) in Hoogerheide, but was not yet fully equipped. Contrary to earlier guarantees, the attack had to be launched under the prevailing circumstances.



Because of the need for caution, it was decided that C, followed by A. Compagnie, would take the left or west side of the road and D followed by B the other side, with the aim of crossing the Scheldeweg / Doelstraat / Zandfort intersection, towards Korteven. At 10.30 am. the attack began, supported by tanks, artillery and heavy mortars.

From the moment the attack started, there was fierce resistance. At night, the Germans had put the area around the Zandfort in a state of defense and infantrymen were buried in the houses on Antwerpsestraatweg (Scheldelaan). D Company reported at 11.23 am.

"OSHAWA 2 plus 500". The 17th platoon of D Company, commanded by Lieutenant Lewis, had managed to cross Doelstraat and settled in three houses in the street 500 meters from the starting point. (Ed: the D company moved up on the right side; after crossing the Doelstraat (this part of the Doelstraat is now the Zandfort) they arrived in the Wolfbossen) That meant that the other companies had not yet reached their goal. They were forced to fight every inch of the way. There was fierce opposition, it was impossible to get through. The C Company was forced to withdraw to their starting line after suffering heavy losses. Lewis's 17th Platoon was ordered to withdraw to prevent this group from being cut off from the rest. That worked without losses. (Ed.: In a statement by Sgt. Davis, courier of the 17th, he tells us that the 17th was pinned down by mortar and machine gun fire. The remnants of the company withdrew from the woods. A few men were unable to crawl back and were left behind. This is confirmed by Pte Stobbs and Richards (both of the 16th platoon) This happened around 10:30 am Pte. Palumbo was taken prisoner, along with 6 or 7 others<sup>1</sup>) Maj. Popham, Commander of C Company. reported to battalion headquarters that the enemy was well buried, in well-positioned places, and was supported by artillery, mortar, heavy machine guns and dozens of snipers. At 1.35 pm. reported the C. company to the headquarters 88 mm gun at MR 622210 (crossing Scheldeweg / (Oude) Steenstraat.). This gun was knocked out by a Sherman tank. In the end, with the help of the Calgary Highlanders, they managed to repel the attack. An O Group was held early in the evening. Around this time, the enemy succeeded in infiltrating our positions in small groups in various places. Part of the reconnaissance platoon was on patrol for D. company, and was with them when the enemy launched a counterattack Since they could not return, they stayed with the company throughout the fight.



Part of the counterattack came from the direction of the Wouwbaan, and went in the direction of the Carriers of the regiment. The Carriers made no movement and held their fire until the enemy was 50 to 60 meters away. Then they opened fire with everything they had and killed more than fifty. This counterattack was widespread across the industry.

Very fierce fighting ensued and it took more than two hours for the enemy to decide he had had enough. We did not lose any ground and eliminated many Germans in the battle. A general order to hold out was issued by Regimental Commander Megill of the Calgarys: "dig in and wait for the assault."

The regiment counted 81 casualties in Hoogerheide, killed, wounded or missing. Ken, 30 years old, was killed on 8 October 1944. He was first on the list of missing, later he was reported as a KIA. It is not clear from the documentation to which company Ken belonged. Ken was temporarily buried north of Kapellen, on the Kapelsestraat that goes to Putte, in the garden of castle Boterberg of mr. Vansillart. A reburial follows on 19 July 1945 at the Canadian cemetery in Bergen op Zoom. Ken was buried in Plot 10, Row C, Grave 1. Ken has been awarded the 1939-1945 Star, the French-German Star, the Defense Medal, the War Medal and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp.

### **Sources:**

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