



## **EDGAR BEATTY BLACK**

**D/24092**

### **Family affairs:**

Edgar Beatty Black grew up in the city of Montreal in a large family. He had five brothers and one sister and his parents William Copeland Black and Catherine Mary O'Loone were originally from England and Ireland respectively. According to his file, the family was large and poor and Edgar left school at the age of 14. He worked for 7 years at the Canadian Pacific Railway in Montreal as a telegrapher/clerk and in his spare time he was busy with car mechanics by helping out in a garage.

His mother died in 1935.

All of Edgar's brothers participate in World War II, four in the army and the fifth in the navy, and they all survived the war. The family continued to live in Montreal and the surrounding area until their deaths.

Edgar's sister Catherine Mildred Black is the contact person for the army during and after the war, she dies in 1989 at the age of 75.

### **Military affairs.**

When Edgar enlisted in the Canadian Army on 01/07/1943 in Huntingdon, Quebec, he had already volunteered from 1940 to 1942 in the 3rd Battalion of the Black Watch Reserves in Montreal. This Royal Highland Regiment is one of the oldest regiments in Canada.

He then enlisted on 01/07/1943 at the Canadian Army Basic Training Centre No. 41 in Huntingdon, Quebec. Because of his experience with telegraphy and his interest in automotive engineering, he was appointed as a Signaller. After basic training, he went to the Canadian Signals Training Centre No. A7 in Barriefield, Kingston, Ontario on 16/09/1944 for full training.

He was described in his assessments as an average student, of good behaviour, a quiet but efficient man, in poor physical condition but someone who did not give up easily. A good driver and gunner who took good care of mechanical maintenance but was not good at organising affairs and reading maps. Finally, on 08/03/1944, he went to the Transit Camp in Windsor, Nova Scotia, after which he embarked on 25/03/1944 to be transported to England.

On 03/04/44 Edgar arrives at the Signals assembly camp at 1st Canadian Signals Reinforcement Unit (CSRU) at Southwood-Blandford Camp, Farnborough, Hampshire, UK.

He is initially posted to 12 Signal Battalion for a short period but a month later on 06/05/44 he is posted to 1st Line of Communication (1 LoC).

Soon after he is embarked on 27/06/1944 to go to France where he is disembarked on 29/06/1944.

On the mainland he probably ends up with 5th Construction Section, which is busy laying cables at Grave at the end of the year.

There are no further entries in his pocket book until he is noted as "X-3" on 16/12/1944 (= All ranks evacuated on medical grounds behind Regimental Aid Posts).

That Saturday, December 16, 1944, was a dark day for the Allies and the inhabitants of Antwerp. Hoping to halt the Allied advance and regain control of the port of Antwerp, the Germans launched their Ardennes Offensive, supported by massive launches of V1 and V2 weapons aimed at Antwerp and Liège.

Antwerp had been bombarded with V-weapons since October 1944, but this day is known as the one with the highest number of casualties. There are records of at least nine other V-bomb impacts in the city that day, resulting in a total of 679 fatalities. In addition, many other bombs fell, causing only material damage.

The most dramatic was the V2 that struck Cinema Rex at 3:23 p.m., where some 1,200 spectators were watching the film "The Plainsman" starring Gary Cooper. The projectile's explosive charge, weighing over 730 kg, claimed 567 lives: 296 military personnel and 271 civilians.

That afternoon, Edgar Beatty Black was returning from leave in Brussels with others in a 60cwt truck when it was hit by a V1 flying bomb near Brasschaat/Maria-ter-Heide. He was hit and taken to the 8th General Hospital, which was stationed in Sint Michielgestel (NL) at the time. Edgar died there on December 17, 1944, from wounds to his neck and legs.

This V-1 killed 13 people and injured 9 others. Of the 13 victims, 11 were Signalmen from the RCCS, and the other two were from other regiments. Edgar Beatty Black was buried in Tilburg on December 20, 1944, and reburied at his current resting place on June 26, 1945. All victims of this V1 were ultimately buried in Bergen op Zoom. Six of the Signalmen are buried side by side in row 05 G, and the others are all buried in the surrounding area.

## **Remarks:**

Between October 1944 and March 1945, a total of approximately 9,000 V-bombs landed in Belgium, killing around 8,000 people. For Antwerp, this meant an average of 36 V-bombs per day.

The V2 that destroyed Cinema Rex was launched at 3:17 PM by Battery 500 from Hellendoorn in the Netherlands.

Edgar Beatty Black and his fellow soldiers were killed by a V1 impact.

Pieter Serrien's website about the V-weapon attacks on Antwerp lists it as Bomb 288, dated December 16, 1944, without mentioning the bomb type but claiming 10 victims. On the website "Vergeltungswaffen.be," it is listed as "V1 VB0463." In January 1945, two V2s (VB2568 and VB2569) landed near this location, destroying the military cavalry school located there, apparently without casualties.

According to the statement of his assets, Edgar bought government bonds from the 7th Victory Loan. After reporting his death to his sister Catherine, she had not received them back at the end of 1945 and she sent a letter asking where these bonds were. It is not clear how this ended.

In another letter, Catherine is looking for a Christmas package that she had sent him before his death but that does not appear in his list of assets.

After his death, the family in Canada receives \$215.84 for 536 days of service, of which 241 were overseas.

## **Sources:**

Abbreviations:

<https://library-archives.canada.ca/eng/collection/research-help/military-heritage/Pages/military-abbreviations.aspx#alpha-T>

War Diary (FCA – RCCS 12/1944) on truck incident near Brasschaat:

<https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Home/Record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=927473&ecopy=e010869091>

Location 8-General Hospital

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/themes/defence/caf/militaryhistory/dhh/official/book-1956-medical-services-1-en.pdf>

History families Black en O'Lone

<https://www.rootschat.com/>

Websites V1 en V2 attacks on Belgium:

<https://pieterserrien.be/boeken/elke-dag-angst/overzicht-v-inslagen-op-belgie/>  
<https://www.vergeltungswaffen.be/>

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