



RUSSELL HAIGH CLAPPERTON K/42470

Family affairs:

Russell is born on 09-05-1920 in western Canada in Kamloops, British Columbia, close to the Rocky Mountains. His parents John Alexander Clapperton and Isabella Duncan Clapperton-Smith have a farm in this rugged region and eventually have a total of 10 children, namely 3 daughters and 7 sons.

Russell is the 8th child in the line, one of the earlier sons dies at a very young age and Russell never knew him. Of Russell's brothers, 3 more serve in the army during the war.

After primary school, Russell only goes on to High School in Victoria B.C. for only 2 years, the parental home burned down and there was no money left to pay for further education.

Before he volunteered for the army in July 1940, he taught at a school for 6 months and then went to work for Douglas Lake Cattle Co. in Douglas Lake, Merritt B.C. for about 18 months. This company -which still exists- is one of the largest ranches in Canada and nowadays also a tourist resort. Russell first went to work there as a warehouse clerk and later as an assistant store manager. In the period 1939-1940 he followed a number of administrative courses, which explains his later preference for the army.

Military affairs:

His career in the army has an erratic course. He himself wants a position as a clerk in the CSMC (Corps of Military Staff Clerks) but a few years later he ends up in Signals. He starts in the infantry of the Rocky Mountain Rangers, after various training courses in British Columbia he is promoted to L/Cpl (Lance Corporal) on 15-09-1942 and is shipped to England in February 1943.

There he ends up in the 1 CIRU, the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit. On 30-04-1943 he is demoted to Private for unknown reasons and at his own request. On 14-06-1943 he is temporarily promoted to A/Cpl (Artificer Corporal, a designation for certain specialists). On 18-09-1943 he becomes Private again and is transferred to the Signal Corps, to the 1 CSRU in Cairn, Southwood/Blandford Camp, UK.

In 1941 he had already followed a Signals training in Canada. On 24-10-1943 he was assigned as a "Sigmn" (Signalman) to the 1st Canadian Army Signals, where he started working on 1-12-1943 as Cypher Clerk "C". On 15-12-1943 he was then promoted to the rank of A/L/Cpl.

In the meantime, he received a Good Conduct Badge on 02-07-1942 and on 15-01-1944 he was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp.

Finally, on 12-7-1944 he was appointed Corporal, 5 days before he arrived in France to take part in the invasion.

Russell Haigh Clapperton was promoted to Sergeant, but after August 10, 1944, no further records remain in the archives, so it is unclear when his last promotion took place and where he was during that period.

Saturday, December 16, 1944, was a black 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 began 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 day 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 that caused only material damage.

The most dramatic was the V2 that struck Cinema Rex at 3:23 p.m., where approximately 1,200 visitors were watching the film "The Plainsman" with Gary Cooper. The projectile's explosive charge, weighing over 730kg, caused 567 fatalities: 296 soldiers and 271 civilians.

On that afternoon, Russell Haigh Clapperton and others were returning from leave in Brussels with a 60cwt truck when it was hit by a V1 flying bomb near Brasschaat/Maria-ter-Heide. Thirteen people were killed, including Russell, and nine others were injured. Of the 13 casualties, 11 were other Signalmen from the RCCS, and the other two soldiers were from other regiments.

He was initially interred at the Holland Vredenhof cemetery in Tilburg, but was soon after reburied at the Canadian Cemetery in Bergen op Zoom.

They were all ultimately buried in Bergen op Zoom. Six of the Sigs are buried next to each other in row 05 G, while the others are all buried nearby.

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, Netherlands.

Russell Haigh Clapperton and his fellow soldiers are killed by a V1 impact. Pieter Serrien's website about the V-weapon attacks on Antwerp mentions Bomb 288, dated December 16, 1944, without mentioning the bomb type, but with 10 victims. On the website "Vergeltungswaffen.be," it is listed as "V1 VB0463." Two V2s (VB2568 and VB2569) landed near this location in January 1945, destroying the Cavalry School located there, apparently without casualties.

After 1629 days of service, of which 671 in Europe, Isabella Clapperton-Smith receives C\$ 688.99 war gratuity.

Sources:

Photo Russell Haigh Clapperton (standing):

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2641574>

Photo Russells father: John Alexander Clapperton (1880-1966):

<https://www.familysearch.org/nl/tree/pedigree/portrait/KJWB-LK3>

Photo Russells mother: Isabella Duncan Clapperton-Smit (1888-1986):

<https://www.familysearch.org/nl/tree/pedigree/portrait/KJWB-LK3>

Same for family details.

Photo 1 CSRU camp at Cairn, Southwood/Blandford Camp, UK:

http://www.rcsigs.ca/index.php/RCCS_WW2_Cairn_-_United_Kingdom

Russell Haigh Clapperton in Books of remembrance:

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/books/page?page=273&book=2&sort=pageAsc>

Three other pictures from:

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2641574>

Tekst War Memorial – Kamloops Cenotaph, Memorial Park, Battle Street and 2nd Avenue, Kamloops, British Columbia. Includes honour roll tablets

listing 189 names for World War I and 92 names for World War II.
Unveiled on May 24th, 1925. Inscribed: C.E.F. - NOR TIME NOR TIDE CAN
EVER EFFACE THE MEMORY OF OUR GLORIOUS DEAD.

Websites V1 en V2 attacks in Belgium:

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

<https://www.vergeltungswaffen.be/>