



## **THOMAS SAVAGE**

**3309991**

Sergeant

### **Personal matters.**

Thomas Savage was born in Dover in 1908. He was the son of Robert Savage and Grace Muir and had a sister, Beatrice. He was married to Mary Beatrice Savage of Buckland, Dover, and was the father of Ronnie, Angela, and Patrick.

On July 29, 1936, he completed a course in map reading and mathematics with the English Army & Empire.

He undertook vocational training in painting and wallpapering from September 1, 1937, to January 20, 1938.

Unfortunately, we know nothing about his hobbies or sports interests. Prior to 1936, he worked as a caretaker alongside his wife, Mary, at Mansion House, Old Barracks, in Dover. Mansion House was donated to the Ministry of War in November 1938. The building was demolished in the 1960s.

### **Military affairs.**

Zijn regiment was 1Bn Highland Light Infantry, City of Glasgow Regiment. Hij kwam om in actie in de buurt van Eindhoven op vrijdag 22 September 1944. Hij was toen 36 jaar oud.

Zijn tijdelijke begraafplaats destijds was in Middelbeers maar op 14 mei 1946 werd hij herbegraven in Bergen Op Zoom, graf 11.A.2

Hij kwam om in Operation Market Garden

### **Details.**

The family did not know where Thomas was buried. In 1950, his daughter wrote a letter to Santa Claus asking where her father was buried—and it was successful. Read the newspaper article from October 1951 below:

## **Santa Claus Found Angela's Father's Grave**

(From one of our reporters.)

**SCHIPHOL, Oct. 16, 1951** — Three weeks before D-Day, British soldier Thomas Savage spent a few days of leave with his wife and children in heavily battered Dover. Their time together was brief. Thomas Savage had to take part in the invasion of the Normandy coast. He survived that, but in early September, he was killed in action just across the Dutch border. The farewell in Dover had been for the last time.

No one could say where Savage was buried, until Santa Claus provided the answer last year. The frail, dark-haired girl Angela Savage (12)—who arrived at Schiphol today via KLM with a group of pilgrims visiting war graves, carrying a wreath of paper poppies—spoke of the story with touching innocence.

"Without telling my mother, I wrote a little letter to Santa Claus last year—addressed to Greenland, Denmark—saying I wanted so much to know where my father was buried, because I wanted to lay a flower on his grave." The note ended up at the Copenhagen post office and, like all such letters, was forwarded to one of the hundreds of Danes who answer them and include a small gift.

### **Elderly gentleman at a loss**

However, the elderly gentleman in Aarhus who received Angela's letter didn't know quite what to do with it. He contacted a well-known Danish journalist, and with true detective spirit—and considerable effort (he even flew to England and the Netherlands for the task)—the reporter succeeded in identifying Private Savage's grave in a British cemetery in Bergen op Zoom.

"Here is the telegram I was sent." And Angela fishes a crumpled slip of paper out of her handbag. "Your father's grave is in Bergen op Zoom, the Netherlands; and Mrs. Pistorius, who lives there, has taken charge of its care."

Today, Angela's wish was fulfilled. She arrived at Schiphol Airport—accompanied by her mother and carrying flowers for "Daddy"—after a quiet, reflective flight to the Netherlands. This was a compassionate gesture by the British Legion in collaboration with the Dutch War Graves Committee; thanks to the proceeds from Poppy Day on November 11th, they are able to carry out such initiatives.

Mrs. Pistorius, from Bergen op Zoom, invited the mother and daughter to stay at her home and was waiting at the foot of the aircraft steps to welcome her guests.

An article about this special event—the visit to the grave—also appeared in the newspaper \*Dagblad de Stem\*:

### **In the golden autumn sun, Angela laid flowers**

#### **On her father's grave in Bergen op Zoom**

#### **"Father Christmas" gave her the most beautiful gift**

"Dear Father Christmas, my Daddy was killed in the war, but I don't know where he is buried. Finding the grave would be the best gift you could give me."

That, more or less, was the message the English girl Angela Savage wrote some time ago to Santa Claus in Denmark. Her touching plea was answered, and yesterday she stood by her Daddy's grave at the cemetery on Wouwseweg in Bergen op Zoom.

#### **"He lives in our hearts"**

Accompanied by her mother and four other English women, she arrived at the Scheldt city's railway station on the 10:15 PM train on Tuesday evening—two hours later than originally expected. Mrs. Savage and her young daughter were hospitably accommodated by the Pistorius family at 32 Ruisdaelstraat; the family has adopted Savage's grave.

Angela hardly slept a wink the night before the visit to the cemetery; her thoughts kept turning to her father, who had found his final resting place in British soil, far from home. She was about seven years old when Savage gave his life for his country's freedom. Angela has since grown into a fourteen-year-old girl, and her mother has married the brother of her first husband.

### **In the golden autumn sun.**

At a quarter past eleven yesterday morning, a B.R.T. bus pulled up at the English cemetery. A small group stepped off and passed through the white gate of "The English Cemetery." Among them were Mrs. Savage, Angela, and Mr. Pistorius. The cemetery—with its beautifully green lawns, white headstones, and hawthorn—shone in the clear, golden light of the autumn sun, and the dewdrops glistened like pearls.

Angela stood by the grave with her mother for a long time; she will undoubtedly have etched the words on the headstone deep into her heart. The stone reads: 2362891 Sergeant T. Savage. The Highland Light Inf. 27th September 1944. Age 26. "To live in our hearts is not to die." Loving wife Mary, Ronnie, Angela, and Patrick.

"Living on in our hearts, they have not truly died—your loving Mary, Ronnie, Angela, and Patrick."

Angela has now returned to her home in Dover. We believe she will not soon forget Bergen op Zoom—and certainly not that golden autumn morning of Wednesday, October 17, 1951, when she stood by the grave of her "Daddy," who rests amidst hundreds of other fallen soldiers.

Articles about this also appeared in the *\*Daily Mirror\** and *\*De Telegraaf\**.

With thanks to great-granddaughter Sophie Jerden and Francien Bierbooms.