

Private James Burnett
Royal Regiment of Canada

Introduction

James Burnett, was born on the 29th of June 1922 in Cullen, Banffshire, Scotland. He enlisted in Toronto, on the 29th of April, 1941. The date he left Scotland with his two parents, brother and sisters is unknown. He moved directly from Scotland to Scarborough, Ontario, just north east of Toronto. The family settled Aylesworth Avenue, the house number being 106, 14 kilometres east of downtown Toronto. A very, very wealthy neighbourhood. Right beside a massive four track railroad way. Houses listed for sale beside it are going for well over a million dollars in 2017. James grew up to his parents George, and Margaret Greta Burnett, along with his sisters Ruth, Lillian, Isabel and, Morganes along with a brother, George Burnett Junior. James' family grew up as practicing Presbyterians, which was arguably the most common denomination of Christianity at the time, which was incredibly common itself. He was about 5 foot 6 and three quarters. Weighing in at 119 pounds. He wasn't a big man. He had a fair complexion, blue eyes, fair hair, and a fairly good physical development. His chest measurement was 33.5 inches, with an expansion rate of 2.5 inches. He had very good eyesight, and good hearing as well. He had never had any illnesses or diseases before. He had a good dental record aswell, with good teeth and gums. James went to one year of highschool, and had no college or university education, though he had taken part in an apprenticeship to be a machinist. It is unknown when he and his parents migrated to Canada, from Scotland, but they were married on the 19th of September 1920, and James was born in Scotland, in the summer of 1922, which would lead me to believe he's not the oldest of his siblings. James' regimental number was B.68141, in the Central, Ontario regiment. There are no facts as to why James enlisted in the army, my assumption is that he wanted to explore the world.

Military Movements:

James Burnett enlisted in the army on April 19, 1941 in Toronto, he was only 19 years old. James was struck on strength on the fifth of October, 1941, to the Canadian Army on embark, as a private, he was then disembarked on the 19th. In between those dates, on the 6th of October, he was taken off strength to the Canadian Army overseas. Later in the month, of the Halloween of 1941 he was given a landing leave. On the ninth of November, 1941, he was suspended pay for all purposes. On December fifth, he was struck on strength to the 2nd Division Infantry Unit. The following day, he's taken off strength to the Canadian Infantry Division Unit. On January 30th, 1942, he was given a leave until the sixth of February. On the sixth, he failed to report back. He finally showed up two days later, on the eighth. He was deducted 4 days a pay, 4 dollars. On March 26th, he was struck on strength to the Royal Regiment of Canada. The following day, he was taken on strength to learn how to drive an ambulance. On May 13, he was administrated and discharged to learning how to drive an ambulance. Then, on the On July 31st, 1942, he was granted a week's personal leave, 19 days before the Dieppe raid. (I have no sources to back this up, but I personally believe that the leave had something to do with the raid coming up). He was to be back from the leave on the 29th of July, but wasn't back until the 31st. He was then forced to forfeit 21 days of pay, and was sentenced to two weeks of confined bunk time, meaning he was told to sit on the edge of his bunk and do nothing, for 14 days, all day. Then, on the eighteenth of August, 1942, he's embarked from the United Kingdom, and sent to France, for the Jubilee operation. Code name for Dieppe invasion. On the nineteenth he goes missing in Dieppe. The following day he's taken on strength with the Royal Regiment of Canada. He then, is considered killed in action on the nineteenth of August, 1942, in Dieppe, France.

War Diaries:

'Preliminary Report on Operation Jubilee, the raid on Dieppe, August 19, 1942.'

After a period of more than two and a half years from the time of landing of 1 Canadian Division in the United Kingdom, the Canadian Army Overseas underwent what was in a definite sense its baptism of fire in the Dieppe Raid. This raid was much the most extensive of the many combined operations which have put together against the enemy-obtained coasts in Western Europe since much of the continent was overtaken by Nazi Germany in 1940. This is an extremely hazardous operation involving an attack on a very strong position (the strength of enemy lines is greatly underestimated) and our losses were really quite heavy. A preliminary report indicates that the total number of Canadian troops embarked for the operation was 4,912 (304 officers, 4,608 other ranks) The number of soldiers left alive was 2,912 (109 officers, 2,038 other ranks). Canadian casualties in the operation amounted to 3,350 dead, wounded, and missing. The heaviest losses were suffered by the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade, which totalled to 94 officers, and 1,604 other ranks.

The Landing at Blue Beach, Captain G.A. Brown interview

As far as I know, R. Regt C suffered no casualties while approaching the beach, although we were fired on for about 10 minutes before touchdown by light weapons whose calibres I was not able to ascertain. We were met by intense, accurate LMG fire, sustaining heavy casualties. A and B coys, who were landed immediately in front of the Blue Beach wall, met intense and heavy MG fire from a number of posts on the wall, sustaining heavy casualties. The survivors were pinned to the face of the wall by enfilade fire from well-concealed positions on the flanks. C and D coys landed on the extreme right end of the beach, D coy EDWARD force and the PRIZE TROOP RCA WEST of the sea wall, under the cliffs. C coy, which impinged toward the right end of the wall where it meets the cliff face forming a kind of spur jutting out into the beach was caught in enfilade fire from both flanks. D coy and C.O's party were in sort of re-entrant on the western side of this wall's end spur. The Bangalore men of C coy were shot down as they jumped out of the ALC's onto the beach. A and B coy firing had dwindled down to nothing, their casualties were alarmingly large. From the center of the right flank we could hear intermittent bursts of German automatic fire and the steady detonations of their mortar bombs. Knowing this, we inferred that A and B coys had been knocked out, and C and D coy survivors were still held up against the cliff, being cut up by mortars. The Germans certainly had casualties on Blue Beach, but they certainly were nothing close to ours.

Interview with Sergeant P. Dubuc:

Sergeant Dubuc landed from an L.C.P (L) near the west end of the casino at 0700 hours. There was very heavy fire as the boats came in, but Sgt. Dubuc did not actually see any of the craft carrying his unit sink. One L.C.T. was burning on the shore. Sgt Dubuc landed, and ran forward about 150 yards, taking cover in a depression in the beach. He was in the depression for about an hour. In front of him were German pill boxes, heavy fire was coming, and being fired "everywhere". After sometime, Sgt. Dubuc and Private Daudelin crawled up to the pill boxes that were shown on their Intelligence map on the asplanade wall, west of the casino, and threw grenades at both of them. In the water, north east of the word 'ramp' on our intelligence map there was a tank. That tank had come off an L.C.T. in deep water and had been drowned. Sgt. Dubuc had seen the crew abandon it. Dubuc went to it, used it as cover as he fired his Bren gun. He entered the tank with another man, though he is uncertain of his name. The two fired away the whole of the tank two pound ammunition at the German positions up on the cliff. Sgt. Dubuc then left the tank and moved in towards the cliff, he there found a group of men that were from the Fus.M.R. With the men, Dubuc made his way east. He was with about 11 of the soldiers. Sgt. Dubuc saw Captain Vandelaie enter the front of the building on Boulevard de Verdun near the Forte du Fort d'Ouest, with his men. Sgt. Dubuc doesn't know what happened to his party afterwards. Sgt. Dubuc's party now ran forward through the gap in the road block across the Rue de Sygogne. There were some Germans here but Sgt. Dubuc says they had no rifles. The party advanced down the Rue de Sygogne as far as the intersection of the Rue Claude Groulard. Here, in a little green park at the intersection, which appears on 1;5000 and the 1;12500 maps. There was a machine gun pit manned by three Germans, the latter fired on Sgt. Dubuc's party. One man from the party threw a grenade at the Germans and their fire ceased. The party then advanced, finding the three Germans lying in their positions, seemingly uninjured, but they were then killed by Tommy gun fire from Dubuc's party. From this point, Sgt. Dubuc's party turned east and ran rapidly along the Rue Claude Groulard and the Qual Berigny past the public garden. Germans fired at them from the windows of a school building, the party returned their fire. The Germans stopped shooting. The party arrived near the North - West corner of the Bassin du Canada, they saw two men of "B" company, Fus.M.R., not belonging to their party, lying in the street and talking to some Frenchmen. In the Bassin du Canada were two "Commando boats" not unlike our L.C.A's, and two small submarines. There were guards on the "Commando boats". Sgt. Dubuc states that he remembers the cranes along the sides of the Bassin. While Sgt. Dubuc remained on the Bassin, some men went near the vessels, fired on the guards and thinks they were killed. When they reached the south-west corner of the Bassin about fifteen Germans suddenly appeared from different directions. Sgt. Dubuc now had no ammunition left, and his men were rapidly running out. Therefore, the party surrendered. The Germans made signs for the Fus.M.R. men to come with them, and the party was taken south west into a backyard. Here one of the Germans spoke to them in German, which the men of the party could not understand, and then the German told them to undress, in English. The party undressed, taking off their uniforms, undressing to their undergarments. The Germans lined them up, and told them to face the wall, the Germans took the uniforms, and departed, leaving one guard to watch them. After standing against the wall for several minutes with only one guard watching them, Dubuc asked the guard, in English, if he spoke English. The guard replied saying he spoke a little English and a little French. Sgt. Dubuc asked the guard if he could have a drink of water. He didn't have any plans at the time, but when the guard turned away to get him a drink, Sgt. Dubuc jumped on the guard, as did the other men. One man grabbed a long pipe, swinging it over his head he hit the guard in the head with it, cutting his head in half. Now, being released from captivity, the party immediately ran. Sgt. Dubuc recalls that it was strangely quiet. He and the party had split up, he never saw another member again. He ran past the Promenade, to the beach north east of the casino. He there found multiple tanks, with his commanding officer lying wounded on the ground, Colonel Menard. He also then saw Captain Vandelaie on the beach as well. Sgt. Dubuc found Corporal Cloutier, grabbed him and carried him. They were then both transferred to New Haven. Dubuc tended to the wounded during the trip back. During this operation at Dieppe. Sgt. Dubuc was struck in the back with a piece of shrapnel, he didn't realize until three weeks later. He discovered symptoms and was

sent to a nearby hospital. Dubuc stated that while on the beach in Dieppe he met some men for the Royal Regiment of Canada and they said that had come round by land from Blue Beach. Dubuc thinks they were lying. People have looked into Dubuc's story, and agree that it is an accurate account of what took place in Dieppe.

Lest We Forget:

In the will of James Burnett, it states that he's given his entire estate to his mother, his father isn't mentioned. The army compensated his parents \$211.28 after he was killed. In 2017 that inflates to almost \$3,300. Which I'm sure isn't enough to compensate for the death of your child. After reading through James's military files, I noticed that by the time the war was over, in 1945, and each soldier's awards and honors were sent out, his parents had passed away. Then, directly underneath that, it says that his mother was given his awards. Perhaps they were in his mother's name, then sent home for his sisters to divide up. While overseas for 10 months, James won the 1935-1945 star, the Canadian Volunteer Service medal, and the Victory medal, all as mandatory honors for his service. He then won the France and Germany star, the Defense medal, the War medal, and the C.V.S.M clasp. James' remains are buried in Des Vetus Cemetery, in Hautot-Sur-Mer, France, six miles from Dieppe. His grave number is 313. The cause of his death is unknown, none of his files say.