

Whitewater Region's WWII Casualties

Private Elmer Stephen KENNEY

Pte. Elmer Stephen Kenney, son of **James William Kenney** and **Laura Jane Goudie**, was born on 1 Jul 1921 in Westmeath Twp., Renfrew, Ontario, Canada. His father was born in Westmeath Twp., and his mother in the U.S.A. They farmed just outside of Beachburg. Elmer was the 3rd of three children. His siblings were Mildred (Mrs. Campbell) MacLaren and Robert James Kenney. Many of Elmer's father's siblings kept the spelling of their surname as 'Kenney'.¹

Elmer Kenney enlisted on 6 Apr 1943 at Parry Sound, Ontario. He was described on his Attestation Papers as 5' 7", weighing 160 lbs. He had a dark complexion, hazel eyes and black hair. He listed his occupation as laborer, and his mother Mrs. Laura Jane Kenney as next of kin. He signed his name Elmer Kenney. His education level was Grade 8, Public School. His last place of employment was at Nobel, ON making explosives for over a year. His service number was B/145700.²

Elmer had a busy military career, starting out in Toronto, then Brampton, and then Camp Borden where he did driver training receiving Qualified Dvr I/C Class II (wheeled) and later Qualified Dvr. Mechanic Group C (M.V.D.M.). He qualified Motor Transport Regiment (Mtr) Mech "B" on Jul 24, 1944. At this time, his rank was Trooper (Tpr).²

Tpr. Kenney disembarked on Aug 10, 1944 in the UK and earned Qualified DVR i/c Tank Class III on Sep 21, 1944; then Qualified Dvr Mech Tk "C" on Oct 25, 1944. In December 1944, his rank was changed to Pte. Kenney and he was transferred to Italy on Dec 24, 1944, and disembarked in France on Feb 21, 1945 with the Irish Regiment of Canada.²

Leading up to this phase of the WWII, there had been movement across France into Belgium and now onto Holland. In the early hours of Monday April 16, 1945, the Irish Regiment of Canada received orders to prepare to move to Otterlo, a village still occupied. Otterlo was liberated on the 16th but before travelling on, the divisional headquarters was set up and an infantry battalion was left behind in the village to keep it secure.^{3,4}

Meanwhile, the Germans were trying to get to safety in the west of the Netherlands. Somewhere between 600 and 900 German soldiers reached Otterlo on the evening of April 16th in that attempt. The battle that ensued resulted in the Germans taking ground.^{3,4}



Image 1: Pte. Elmer Kenney⁵

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Reinforcements were called in with Canadian tanks including two Wasp Flamethrowers. The battle of Otterlo was one of the last fights in The Netherlands. More than 300 Germans were killed along with twelve Canadians and four civilians. Forty-eight Canadians were wounded. The liberation of Otterlo came at a high price.^{3,4} Unfortunately, Pte. Elmer Stephen Kenney was one of the casualties, killed in action on Apr 17, 1945 in the Western European Theatre of War at Otterlo, Gelderland, Netherlands. He was temporarily buried there. His remains were later relocated to the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery and Memorial at Groesbeek, Berg en Dal Municipality, Gelderland, Netherlands.^{2,6,7,8} A memorial service was later held in St. Andrew's United Church, Beachburg.⁹

In addition to the grave marker at Groesbeek,^{7,8,10} Pte. Kenney's name is engraved on his parent's gravestone at Beachburg Union Cemetery.¹¹ His sacrifice is also commemorated on the Beachburg¹² and Westmeath War Monuments¹³; the Pembroke War Monument¹⁴; and the WWII Honor Roll at St. Andrew's United Church, Beachburg.¹⁵

Pte. Kenney's brother Robert was notified by the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys that the name Kenney was approved for a lake in Freeman Township, District of Muskoka, in honour of the late Pte. Elmer Stephen Kenney.¹⁶

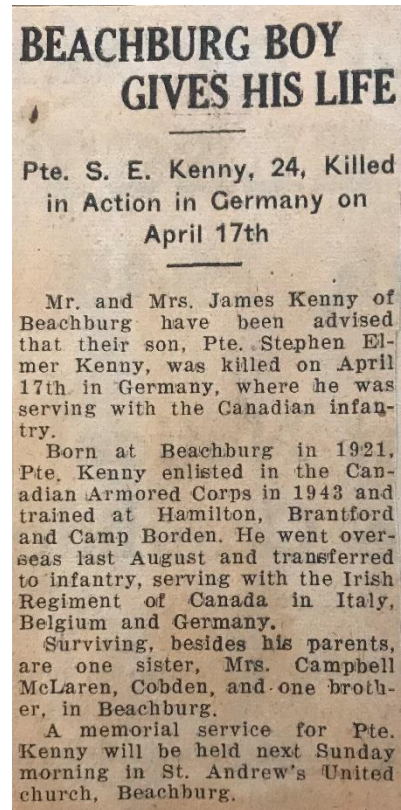


Image 2: Death Reported⁹

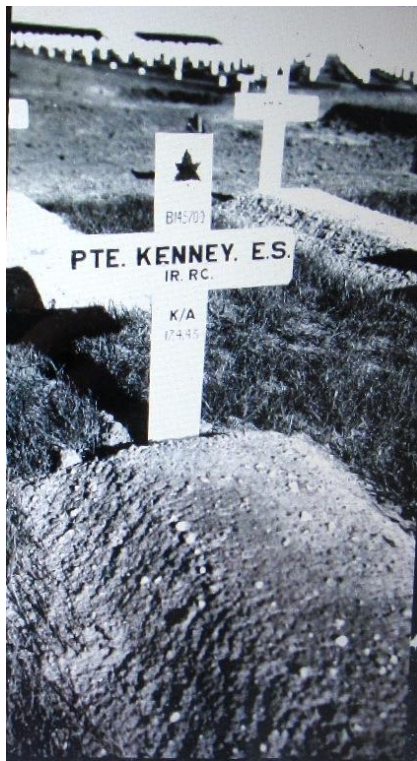


Image 3: Temporary Grave⁷



Image 4: E. S. Kenney Grave Stone¹⁰

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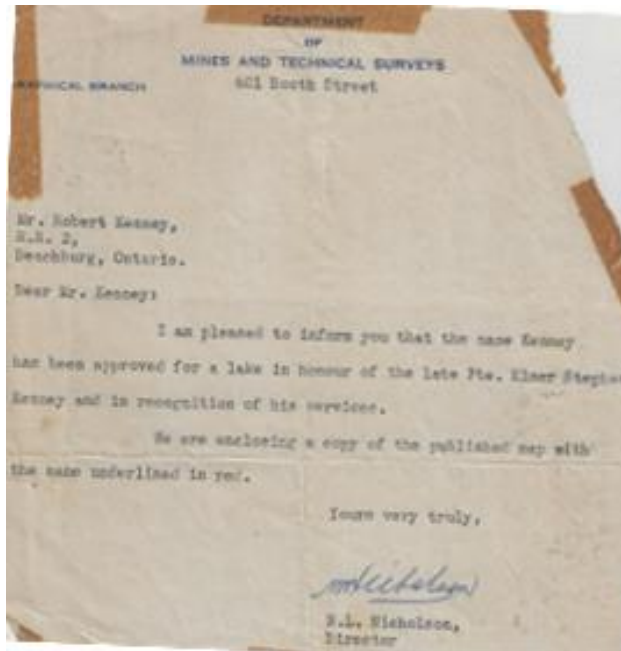


Image 5: Letter re: Kenney Lake¹⁶



Image 6: Letter from Buckingham Palace¹⁷



Image 7: Kenney Family Grave Stone¹⁰

Pte. Kenney was eligible for the 1939-45 Star; Italy Star; France & Germany Star; War Medal; and Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp. His mother was entitled to the Memorial Cross.²

The family of those killed in action received letters of condolences from military and government officials. A letter from the King was one in the family collection.¹⁶

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Of approximately 60 young men connected with Whitewater Region who lost their lives, at least 4 are buried in Groesbeek Canadian Military Cemetery. Sgt. Lorne Campbell Price died in Nov 1944. Pte. John Thomas Mellish died in March 1945; and Pte. James Archibald Code died two weeks earlier than Pte. Kenney. Of the 60 men, only Sgt. Harold Edward Eady served with the Irish Regiment of Canada. He was killed in action in December 1944.

Sources:

1. Bennett, F. (2022). *Faysgenealogy.com*. www.faysgenealogy.com. family history database & images; 2001-present. Cobden, ON. (Original sources noted in database)
2. "Service Files of the Second World War - War Dead, 1939-1947." . Digital images. Library and Archives Canada, Government of Canada. *Library and Archives Canada*. https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Home/Record?app=kia&IdNumber=18466&ecopy=44485_83024005548_0256-00248
3. *Faces to Graves*. (n.d.). <https://www.facestograves.nl/lifestories.php?lang=EN>
4. *The Irish Regiment of Canada*. (n.d.). https://pipesforfreedom.com/webtxt/0515THE_IRISH_REGIMENT_OF_CANADA.htm
5. *Photograph of Pte. Elmer Stephen Kenney*. From the Kenney family history collection of Karine Akre.
6. The Canadian Virtual War Memorial: Veterans Affairs Canada. "The Canadian Virtual War Memorial (CVWM)." Database. Veterans Affairs Canada. www.veterans.gc.ca/eng. <https://veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2663715>
7. CWGC. *Private Elmer Stephen Kenney | War Casualty Details B/145700 | CWGC*. <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2663715/elmer-stephen-kenney/> Accessed Nov 2024.
8. Private Elmer Stephen Kenney (1921-1945 – Find a grave. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12904090/elmer-stephen-kenney>
9. "Beachburg Boy Gives His Life", Newspaper article, *The Cobden Sun*, April 26, 1945, Newspaper clipping from the scrapbook of Viola Price, provided by Nancy England.
10. ten Dijke, Peter. *Photograph of Pte. E. S. Kenney Gravestone*, Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery Stone, The Netherlands; used for this purpose with the photographer's permission <http://lestweforget1945.org/>
11. Bennett, Fay. *Photograph of the Kenney Family Gravestone*. Beachburg Union Cemetery, Beachburg, Ontario.
12. Bennett, Fay. *Photograph of The Beachburg War Memorial*. Beachburg, Ontario. November 2022.
13. Bennett, Fay. *Photograph of The Westmeath War Memorial*. Westmeath, Ontario. November 2022.
14. Bennett, Fay. *Photograph of The Pembroke War Memorial*. Beachburg, Ontario. November 2022.
15. Moratz, Rev. Kevin. *Photograph of The WWII Honor Roll*. St. Andrew's United Church, Beachburg, Ontario. November 2022.

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16. *Letter advising that the name Kenney has been approved for a lake in honor of Pte. Elmer Stephen Kenney.* Letter from Department of Mines and Technical Surveys. From the Kenney family history collection of Karine Akre.
17. *Letter from Buckingham Palace.* Letter from the King to the Kenney family. From the Kenney family history collection of Karine Akre.
18. Book of Remembrance, Veterans Affairs Canada
<https://veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/books/page?page=530&book=2&sort=pag eAsc>

Any additional information and photographs would be greatly appreciated.