

In Memory of

Private

Donald Ewbank

5771938, 1st Bn., Royal Norfolk Regiment
who died on 10 November 1944 Age 25

Remembered with Honour
Overloon War Cemetery



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Donald Ewbank was born in Sculcoates near Hull in 1919 and was a foster child who lived with Oliver and Thurza Pinfold in number 4 Mill Cottages, Main Road, Lower Middleton Cheney. Donald was a Barnado's boy, one of two lads who was taken in by the Pinfold's when their own children had grown up and left home. The other child was also named Donald (Wood) and when they had both reached adulthood they returned regularly to visit their foster parents and regarded them with great affection. Donald Ewbank is still remembered (2012) as being, 'A good lad.' Donald joined the 1st Battalion, Norfolk Regiment and was given the service number 5771938. At that time he was living in Norwich. No further service records are currently available.

The Netherlands fell to the Germans in May 1940 and was not re-entered by Allied forces until September 1944. There was severe fighting in the vicinity of Overloon in October-November 1944, when the Germans were being cleared out of the region south and west of the Maas, in preparation for the final attack on the Rhineland. Suffering heavy losses the Allies captured Overloon and moved towards Venray. The advance on Venray resulted in many casualties, especially around the Looboek creek. This was swollen due to heavy autumn rains and was flooded and mined by the Germans. Casualties were heavy here among the First Battalion of the Royal Norfolk Regiment. During the battle, the village of Overloon was destroyed. In and around Overloon, some 2,500 soldiers died, making it one of the bloodiest battles in the Netherlands during the Second World War. It was also the only major tank battle ever fought on Dutch soil. Dozens of tanks, mainly British, were destroyed.

Donald died on the 10th November 1944 at the age of 24, his Commonwealth War Grave Headstone stands in Overloon Cemetery. Most of the burials in this cemetery are of men who died during these two months. The cemetery contains 280 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War, and one Dutch war grave.

Oliver and Thurza Pinfold, Donald's foster parents were very upset to learn of his death and his name is commemorated on the Middleton Cheney War Memorials. His foster 'brother', Donald Wood had also joined up when war was declared (regiment unknown) and lost a foot as a result of enemy action – he continued to visit the Pinfolds for many years after the war. It is not known if Donald Ewbank had any knowledge of, or was reunited with, his half brothers and sisters.

A memorial to the Norfolk Regiment has been erected between Overloon and Venray

Memorial 1st Battalion the Royal Norfolk Regiment



(see over page)

The text on the first stone:-

Dedicated to the men of the 1st battalion the Royal Norfolk regiment who suffered and died in the fields around this very place in October 1944. May peace and freedom be their living memorial. This monument was raised by their comrades and friends from Britain and the Netherlands.

The text on the second stone:

Also dedicated to all allied British and Dutch soldiers who died to bring liberty to this land and to all innocent victims of war, especially the 300 civilians who were killed in and around Overloon and Venray in 1944, we shall remember them.

Source: Text & Photos - Marcel Jans

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My grateful thanks to Mrs Josephine Harvey, great grand-daughter of Oliver and Thurza Pinfold for her memories of Donald Ewbank.

Research - Nancy E Long (Voluntary Village Archivist) 04/10/2012

POSTSCRIPT - 27/02/2017

Four and a half years after the initial search for Donald Ewbank a posting on the Ancestry Website led to the discovery of more information (half brothers and sisters) and a photograph taken when he was serving with the Norfolk Regiment.

It would appear that Donald was the son of Amy Ewbank who was unmarried when her eldest son was born. Amy was to marry Albert Victor Lucas in Sculcoates near Hull, reg. Dec 1920 and they went on to have 5 more children; namely Philip Henry Lucas (born 27/03/1921), Joan (15/09/1924), Twins - Donovan and Marjorie (23/12/1930) and Barbara (reg. Sculcoates Sept Q., 1934. Donald Ewbank married Kathleen A. Christian in 1943 at Walton in Thames in Surrey; registered Mar. Q 1943. Their only daughter Maureen A. Ewbank was born Dec Q. 1943.

Donald's half brother Philip Henry Lucas had enlisted in the Royal Air Force where he served as Wireless Operator/Air Gunner. Philip was killed, aged 19, on A cross country exercise from RAF Kinloss At circa 1640 hrs the Whitley P5006 emerged from the cloud cover, the base being given as 1,500 feet above ground level; crashed on Ben Aigen E.S.E. of Rothes, 24th September 1940.

The crew are listed as -

Flt Sgt C H Ashley

Sgt D S Proudfoot

Sgt N R Foley

Sgt E S Millard

Sgt P H Lucas DFM

Sgt I D S E Hay.

The citation for the DFM gained with 77 Squadron and Gazetted on 22nd August 1940, reads.. "Sergeant Lucas has shown exceptional keenness and efficiency both as an Air Gunner and Wireless Operator. He has been with the squadron since the outbreak of war and has completed twenty operational sorties. The example he has set has been of great value and an incentive to his brother operators and his work in the air obtaining fixes and loop bearings has been a deciding factor in the successful completion of a great many sorties. He is shortly to be sent to OTU for a rest."

"This Wireless Operator/Air Gunner has now completed 20 operational flights over enemy territory and his keenness and determination have been an example to other members of his squadron. Strongly recommended for the award of the Distinguished Flying Medal."

Philip was buried in a Commonwealth War Grave, Hull's Western Cemetery, Yorkshire.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Distinguished Flying Medal was instituted on 3 June 1918 and was awarded to non-commissioned-officers and men for an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty performed whilst flying in active operations against the enemy in the same conditions as the DFC for officers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

19 Operational Training Unit: Aircraft Master Page.



**COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVE**

**PRIVATE
DONALD EWBANK
5771938**

**1ST BATTALION
THE ROYAL NORFOLK
REGIMENT**

**DIED
AGE 24**

10TH NOVEMBER 1944

**OVERLOON WAR
CEMETERY,
NETHERLANDS**

