

Pte John Thomas Mallaley (Service # G23340)



John Thomas Mallaley was born January 1, 1914, on a farm near Lorne Settlement, Restigouche County, New Brunswick, the son of Thomas Mallaley and Clara Jane (Carrier). Johnny, as he was known, was one of twelve children. A sister Matilda died at birth and brothers Tommy, David and Raymond would also serve with the Canadian Army in WW2. After leaving school in his early teens, Johnny worked for thirteen years for a Lorne Settlement lumber business owned by a Mr. Gilman.

On October 2, 1935, John married Mary Opal Murphy. Documents show that they owned their own home and that together they had four children, daughters Emily, Alma, Marie, and Linda.

On July 9, 1941, he enlisted with the Canadian Army at Jacquet River. Basic training was completed at Camp No.70 at Fredericton followed by further training at Camp A14 at Aldershot NS. In March 1942, John was transferred overseas and placed with the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). The following two years were spent training in the United Kingdom with both the CIRU and the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment. Beach landings were rehearsed repeatedly in England and Scotland.

On D-Day (June 6, 1944), Pte John Mallaley landed in Normandy near Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer with B Company of the NS(NB)R under the command of Major Bob Forbes. A and B Companies were the first units to come ashore. At about 8 a.m. their landing craft doors opened and the men poured out under heavy fire from artillery, mortars, and machine guns. They scrambled over barriers and mines and ran for the security of the seawall.

For B Company there were few casualties during the dash to the beach, but they now stalled, and soon D Company was coming in behind them. Now using explosives and wire cutters, B Company cut a path into the town. It was soon apparent, however, that the approaches to the big guns were well protected by additional machine-gun positions. It appears that Maj Forbes then gave orders for two platoons to move south into the village to attack from the rear thus avoiding some of the machine guns. Many of the streets were choked with telephone poles, felled trees, and other obstacles to impede the movement of tanks. Despite the resistance B Company platoons advanced along the streets behind the German strongpoint. However, the strongpoint, the gun positions, and some of the houses were connected by a network of tunnels and trenches, allowing the Germans to easily relocate men to strengthen a position under attack. Snipers were also deadly and kept moving to different positions. Progress stalled and attacks on the eastern 50 mm gun failed repeatedly. Capt Bill Harvey wrote that B Company, No. 6 platoon had also been unable to silence one of the deadly 75 mm guns. In response, Lt McCann's men brought in a two-inch mortar. They blasted the gun a dozen times and put it out of commission. After a while, the Germans started flying white flags to surrender, but it was a trick. As B Company moved in closer, the Germans opened fire again.

Meanwhile, around 10:00 a.m. some of the tanks and antitank guns were now ashore. The landing of the tanks had not gone well. Some were lost at sea, and three were destroyed on the beach. Now, the noise of the battle was so loud and unrelenting that soldiers could not hear their tanks, and as a result, some of them drove straight over their own men. At this point, Flail tanks, which detonate mines, were to take the lead, but unfortunately, they were still not available and the regiment could not wait. Historian Marc Milner wrote that the Fort Garry tanks now took charge without the Flails and pushed through the minefield. In doing so three tanks were lost to mines or antitank fire, but the gap was now breached. Tanks, carriers, artillery, and other vehicles and platoons could now assist the rifle companies.

Lt Richardson stated that by this time B Company had suffered seventeen casualties killed or wounded by snipers. They needed help. B Company now launched another attack on the strongpoint, this time with the help of tanks and petards. White flags flew again, but this time they were ignored. Progress was still slow, but much of the strongpoint was captured and heavy casualties were inflicted. To eliminate the only remaining 50 mm gun at the east end of the strongpoint, a building was demolished to create an unobstructed line of fire. The now available antitank guns were brought in and quickly put the last enemy gun out of commission. The captured bunker with the 50 mm gun, still stands today along the seawall in Saint-Aubin. The war diary records that by 11:15 am the strongpoint had been silenced and all company objectives had been achieved.

At this point, B Company was tasked with clearing all remaining resistance from the town, while the regiment pushed inland to capture the village of Tailleville.

B Company suffered thirty-six casualties on D-Day. Eight were fatal. Records indicate that John Thomas Mallaley was wounded and died later that day south of the village of Tailleville. He was thirty years of age.

For his service to Canada, Pte John Thomas Mallaley was awarded the following medals; the 1939-45 Star, France & Germany Star, Defense Medal, War Medal 1939-45, and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp. Pte John Thomas Mallaley is buried in Bretteville-sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery in Calvados, France, Plot XVIII. D. 1. His name is also engraved on one of the monuments to the Canadians that stands along the seawall in Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer.



Top: NS(NB)R, B Company attacks the main German defensive strongpoint from Rue Gustave Canet, Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer, June 6, 1944

Bottom: The 50 mm gun in the main German strongpoint still stands at the Saint-Aubin beach today. It was the last of strongpoint guns to be silenced by the NS(NB)R on D-Day.