

Soldat James Ralph Main (matricule # G22152)

James Ralph Main was born July 21, 1914, on a farm near New Carlisle, Bonaventure County, Quebec. He was the son of Amos Main and Elizabeth Jane (Gallon). The family was of Irish and Scottish descent and Amos was a butcher as well as a farmer. James was baptized at nearby St. Andrews Anglican Church at age two. He was one of seven children and the oldest boy. James attended New Carlisle High School that, despite its name, taught students in elementary grades as well. Records show that he left school at age thirteen. This was common at this time.. James went to work full-time on his father's farm. Five years later his father died when James was eighteen. He had several young siblings, and to help the family he now took on more responsibilities on the farm and in the butcher shop.



War broke out in September 1939 and the following June, James enlisted with the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment in Campbellton, New Brunswick. Records indicate that training began in Newcastle followed by further training at Camp A30, the Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Sussex. To help the family back home James assigned \$20/mo. of his pay to be sent to his mother. A year later on July 18, 1941, the regiment sailed for Liverpool on the *Duchess of York*. Now in the United Kingdom, the regiment spent almost three years in intensive physical training and rehearsing beach landings in England and Scotland. James was promoted to Lance Corporal in December 1942. During this

time James also served with the Military Police and at some point, he prepared an application to work for the RCMP upon his return to Canada.

On D-Day (June 6, 1944), James landed in Normandy near Saint Aubin-sur-Mer with D Company under the command of Major Ernie Anderson. 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 across the beach. Most made it to the wall but they now stalled and soon D Company was coming in behind them. Using explosives and wire cutters, B Company cut a path into the village. They now pushed into the streets with orders to eliminate a large defensive strong point that included 75 mm guns, 50 mm guns, as well as mortars and machine guns. All were firing on the beach and the landing craft. The German snipers were also deadly and using a network of tunnels and trenches they kept moving to different positions. B Company's progress was temporarily halted by the defenses but eventually, with the combination of mortars, and anti-tank guns, the strongpoint was silenced.

D Company orders were to follow and pass through B Company, push to the southeast of the village, and capture the railway station. Despite snipers and machine guns, D Company made their way to the back of the town, captured the station, and set up defenses along the rail line. They also began the task of clearing houses and streets with grenades and flamethrowers. The War Diary records that by 11:15 a.m. Hitler's Atlantic Wall had been broken, all Company objectives had been achieved, and the NS(NB)R was in control of Saint Aubin.

That morning, L/Cpl Main had shared the same landing craft as Major Anderson. Anderson stated, "I did not see anyone on my craft hit on the way to shore; however, Cpl Main who was in my craft, never got ashore". Lance Corporal James Main was declared Missing in Action.

For his service to Canada, L/Cpl James Ralph Main was awarded the following medals; the 1939-45 Star, France and Germany Star, Defense Medal, War Medal 1939-45, and Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

In the Bayeux Cemetery in Calvados, Normandy is a memorial that commemorates more than 1,800 casualties of the Commonwealth forces who died in Normandy and have no known grave. L/Cpl James Ralph Main's death is recorded on panel 23. His name is also engraved on one of the monuments to the Canadians that were killed on D-Day and that stands along the seawall in Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer.

The Bayeux Memorial,
Calvados France

