



**NAME: Burtch, Douglas A. (BB2059)**

**BRANCH OF SERVICE: R.C.A.S.C. 17<sup>th</sup> Light  
Field Ambulance**

**SERVED FROM: April, 1934 TO: January, 1946**

**THEATRE OF WAR:**

The 17<sup>th</sup> Light Field Ambulance was comprised of 170 Officers and men. The personnel who drove and serviced the vehicles were R.C.A.S.C. and the rest were R. C. A. M. C. who were the doctors and paramedics. We were part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Armoured Brigade. There were four sections within the unit and I was in section "B". Each section was assigned to an infantry or tank regiment. They would attend to the wounded and/or evacuate them back to Headquarters for hospitalization.

"B" section was held back from the D-Day invasion as a reserve, however shortly after; we joined the headquarters group just prior to the assault on Caen. We followed our tanks through Caen the day of the battle. The city was severely bombed by our Air Force for a day or two before the troops went in. The Fourth Canadian Division came in and the infantry men were anxious for battle, shouting "Where's the shooting gallery?" Within hours we were treating their wounded.



We continued advancing down the Caen/Falais highway looking after our casualties and evacuating them back to Headquarters. We took severe cases further back either to a C.C.S. or a general hospital. We continued following our troops as they advanced. Wherever they went, we went.

*Chapmans, Working with R.A.F., Evacuate Wounded of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, Caen, France, 18 July 1944.*



Ambulance Delivers Wounded Soldier, Caen, France, 8 July 1944.

Members of the 14th Light Field Ambulance unit aid a casualty from Le Régiment de la Chaudière

In mid October, 1944, "B" section was assigned to a British Commando Unit, in the City of Brugges, Belgium, near the port of Ostend. We took Commando training for two weeks, which included lots of running and soccer playing, as well as landing craft drills. This was our own D-Day training.

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1944 we left Ostend in the early morning in landing craft. We were packed in amphibious tanks and headed out to sea. We headed for Walcheren Island and our destination was a village on the seawall called Westkepelle. The island had been flooded by breaching the dykes and the Germans were forced out to the perimeter of their defences. We were the second craft to hit the beach, and although casualties were high, we were spared. We were on the island for ten days. A newspaper item describing what the medical units went through during this time is attached. "B" section then returned to the mainland and continued their action with various infantry and tank regiments.

On VE day our section was encamped in a bush just outside of Odenburg, Germany. There was a great celebration there. There are many stories yet untold, but time and space will not allow their telling.

I am very proud to have been a Canadian soldier, and thankful to have returned in one piece.