

Lewis, Thomas Cripps, Lieutenant-Colonel



- Thomas Cripps Lewis was born on 9 February 1911, in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. He was 33 years old when he was killed in action during the Battle of the Scheldt in the Netherlands on 17 October 1944. At the time of his death, he was the acting brigade commander of the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade.
- On 29 September 1939, he enlisted for active service during the Second World War as a Second-Lieutenant in The Royal Montreal Regiment (M.G.). For fourteen years before that, he served as a reservist with The Royal Montreal Regiment, rising to the rank of Warrant Officer 1 and briefly serving as Regimental Sergeant Major.
- Thomas' parents, Rupert Norman Lewis and Frances Gertrude Horton were married at Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal, Quebec on 1 October 1905. They lived on Grosvenor Avenue in Westmount. At the time of his death, Thomas had three brothers and one sister: Wallace Norman (38), John Francis (31), Hubert Ernest (33), and Marjorie Elenor (25).
- On 9 September 1939, he married Betty Dorothy Margaret Yeates at Dominion Douglas Church in Westmount. They lived together at Apartment 205, 52 Academy Road in Westmount. Later they had a boy child, Thomas Yeates Lewis, born on 7 August 1943.
- Prior to enlistment, in civilian life, Thomas was employed by the Sun Life Assurance Company as an insurance statistician.
- According to his medical report on enrollment, Thomas was 5'10" tall, weighed 145 pounds, had blue eyes and brown hair. He was declared fit for active service.
- He was deployed to England with the 32nd Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment (Royal Montreal Regiment) arriving on 18 December 1939. In 1942, he returned to Canada to act as chief instructor on a company commander's course at Royal Military College, in Kingston. In May 1943, he returned to his unit in England. He was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel and commanded it from 21 June 1943 to March 1944. When, on 17 March 1944, the 32nd Reconnaissance Regiment was disbanded, he was transferred to the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment (17th Duke of York's Royal Canadian Hussars), along with five other officers and 89 other ranks. Concurrently, he was appointed as Commanding Officer of the 7th Reconnaissance Regiment succeeding Lieutenant-Colonel Victor Hugman, who was his cousin and Westmount neighbour.

- His body is buried in the Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Maldegem, Oost-Vlaanderen, Belgium. (Ref. IX. D. 11.) (Plot, row, Grave)

Context

- Lewis had an important impact on the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment. He encouraged smartness, even on active service, as he believed that a soldier's pride in his appearance often carried a man along when a scruffy unshaven feeling would have lowered his will to keep advancing. As well, he followed a practice of staying close to the lead elements when the regiment was advancing. This allowed him to quickly understand the tactical situation and take advantage of any opportunities. An example of a situation where this approach brought great benefits was the crossing of the River Laison during Operation Tractable in August 1944. The advancing 3rd Division was bogged down looking for river crossings, and the 7th Recce, under Lewis' direct leadership, was able to move two squadrons from their role of flank protection across the river ahead of the main body and secure two river crossing. Lewis moved even farther forward to a higher exposed spot where his radio could contact Division Headquarters and report the situation. Lewis received the Distinguished Service Order medal for his behaviour in this operation. His spirit and initiative allowed him to propel his unit forward during the subsequent liberation of France. After he was killed in October 1944, the French government also awarded him the Croix de Guerre avec Palme.
- Upon his arrival in Belgium on 3 October 1944, he was ordered to take over temporary command of the 8th Brigade, replacing a Brigadier who was evacuated to England for medical reasons. The 8th Brigade followed the 9th Brigade in its right-flanking manoeuvre and then took the lead advance westwards across the Scheldt lowlands.
- He was killed in an area called 'Balhofstede' at 'Oudemansdijk' near the crossing of Oudemansdijk/ Mollekotweg/Watervlietseweg in the Scheldt lowlands. Confusion about the location of safe lines contributed to his death. He and his driver were trying to locate the Régiment de la Chaudière. Their jeep drew fire from Germans hidden in farm buildings. Both men dived into a ditch, but were pinned down by machine gun fire, and moments later an artillery concentration hit their hiding spot. Lewis was killed instantly, and after the shelling stopped, his driver was taken prisoner and locked in a farm building but later released. It was subsequently concluded that the shelling was part of a Canadian defensive fire mission. Two days later, a funeral service for Lewis was held in Maldegem.
- His body is buried in the Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Maldegem, Oost-Vlaanderen, Belgium. (Ref: IX, D,11)(plot, row, grave)

Honour Roll profiles from the Second World War
 Members of the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment (17th Duke of York's Royal Canadian Hussars)

Receive Awards of Dead Heroes



High military awards won by three Montreal officers, who have since made the supreme sacrifice, were presented to their families by His Excellency the Earl of Athlone, Governor General of Canada, at an investiture yesterday at Government House, Ottawa, above is shown **MRS. T. C. LEWIS**, of Westmount, who received the D.S.O. on behalf of her husband, the late Lieut.-Col. T. C. Lewis. Flanking Mrs. Lewis are her father, **R. YEATES** (left) and her father-in-law, **NORMAN LEWIS**.

Promising Army Career Ends With Death of Col. T. C. Lewis

ONE of the most promising of military careers has been ended by the death in action of Lieut.-Col. Thomas Cripps Lewis at the age of 33. He was in command of a famous Canadian reconnaissance unit, after having commanded the 1st Battalion, Royal Montreal Regiment (M.G.), with which he went overseas nearly five years ago as a second lieutenant.

Colonel Lewis is survived by his wife, Betty, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Roland Yeates, of Westmount, and his young son, Thomas. He is also survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Lewis of Westmount, three brothers, Wallace, John and Hubert, and a sister, Marjorie.

18 Years in Army

Born in Montreal and educated at West Hill High School, Colonel Lewis joined the Royal Montreal Regiment 19 years ago, and had been awarded the Canadian Efficiency Medal while still serving in the ranks. From the modest beginning of private soldier he steadily rose to that of regimental sergeant major, a position he held shortly before the outbreak of war. His influence among all ranks was very marked, for coupled with his native ability was an outstanding character which impressed all with whom he came into contact.

In many ways, Colonel Lewis' career closely approximated to that of Major-General C. E. Price, D.S.O., D.C.M., also of Westmount, and of the Royal Montreal Regiment. General Price and Colonel Lewis were the closest of friends. While General Price went overseas in the last war in the ranks, Col. Lewis was commissioned before sailing in December, 1939, and went overseas as a second lieutenant.

Promoted Quickly

Promotion followed quickly. He was made a captain in September, 1940, and later received an appointment to the directing staff of the British School, South Eastern Command, Company Commanders' Course. He received his majority in October, 1941, and became chief instructor of the Canadian Company Commanders' and Junior Officers' School in England, in March, 1942.

In March, 1942, he was seconded for duty in Canada, and was appointed chief instructor of the

Returned Overseas

In April, 1943, he returned overseas to rejoin his unit which he was appointed to command. Still later he was given command of a unit in the Canadian Third Division with which he has been through all the fighting since "D Day" on the Western Front.

Colonel Lewis, whose home was at 52 Academy road, Westmount, was a member of the staff of the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada here prior to going overseas.



Lieut.-Col. Thomas C. Lewis