

Whitewater Region's WWII Casualties

Private Harry Louis Philip GERVAIS

Pte. Harry Louis Philip Gervais, son of **Moise Gervais** and **Henriette May Gervais**, was born on 21 Nov 1925 in Lapasse, Renfrew, Ontario, Canada. Harry's father was born in Fort Coulonge, Quebec; his mother was born in Lapasse. Fourteen children were born to Moise & Henriette Gervais. Of the six girls and eight boys, Harry was the 4th born.¹ His dad had served in WWI and his brother Roy retired from military service as a Lt. Col. His sister Viola was a Private in the Women's Army Corp.²

Harry Gervais enlisted April 8, 1943 in Ottawa, Ontario. His attestation papers described him as 18 years old; 5' 10" tall; 139 lbs.; fair complexion with brown eyes and brown hair. His education was listed as Grade 9 with one month of Grade 10. The explanation was he left school because his dad was sick and he had to go to work. His occupation was described as laborer. He farmed for about one year and then was a machine operator in a box factory, Pembroke Shook Mills for about one year. He played hockey and softball on local teams, and liked skating, swimming, hunting and fishing. His desire was to join the paratroops. He listed his next of kin as his mother, Mrs. Hattie May Gervais, Lapasse. There was a small glitch in his enlistment. He would not be 18 years old until Nov 21st (7 months away). Notation on his service file indicates that his birth certificate was requested from the Provincial Secretary. There is also a letter ordering the delay of his deployment until he was of age.⁴

Pte. Harry Gervais #103294, underwent basic training at Cornwall, then to Camp Borden and was posted to the 1st Battalion Midland Regiment, Canadian Army at Prince Rupert, B.C.^{4,5}. While there, he was admitted to hospital in Comox, British Columbia. Pte. Gervais had sustained an injury to his eye while on the anti-tank firing range, Nov 27, 1943. A hearing to investigate determined that it was an accident. He and his colleagues were at the protocol-specified distance behind the gun when it was fired. Some debris blow back, grazed his cornea.⁴

Pte. Gervais embarked for overseas on Dec 19, 1944. He was taken on strength to the Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry Highlanders on March 27, 1945. Just over a week later he was killed in action on April 4, 1945 in the Battle of Zutphen.⁴ A website dedicated to the area around Zutphen, Holland from 1940-1945⁶ and a website dedicated to the troops who died in the Battle⁷, describes the actions of the Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry Highlanders on April 3rd & 4th in advancement towards Zutphen. Pte. Gervais was in Company B and lost his life near the farm Klein Have on 4 Apr 1945, aged 19 years old.^{6,7} He was initially buried at Wichmend, approximately 5 miles SE of Zutphen, Holland. His remains were later buried in Holten Canadian War Cemetery, Holten, Overijssel, Netherlands.^{4,7,8,9,10}

In Holland, Pte. Gervais is commemorated on a monument at Kerkhofweg in Warnsveld¹¹ and on a plaque at the "Klein Have" farm. In 2005, a street was named "Gervaisstraat" in his honor.^{7,11} In Canada, Pte. Harry Louis Gervais is commemorated



Image 1: Pte. H. L. Gervais³



Image 2: Kerkhofweg¹¹

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on the War Memorial at Westmeath and Beachburg^{12,13}; the War Memorial in Pembroke¹⁴; the War Monument dedicated to the young men who gave their lives in WWI & WWII from Our Lady of Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Church, Lapasse, Ontario¹⁵. His name is also engraved on his maternal grandparent's gravestone at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Cemetery, Lapasse, Ontario¹⁶.

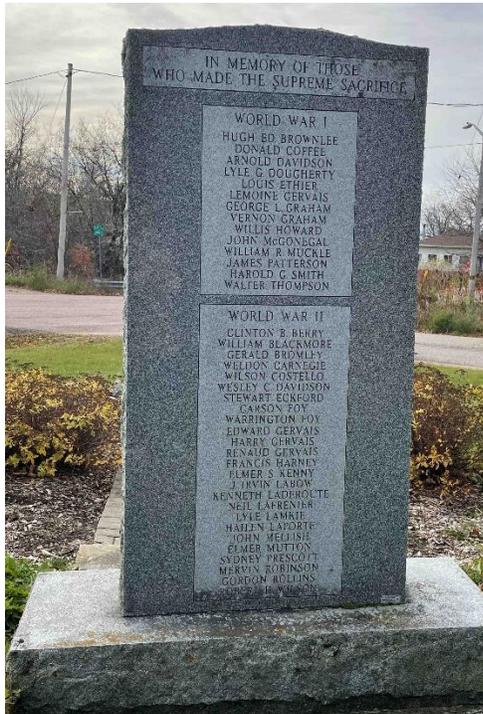


Image 3: Westmeath War Memorial¹²



Image 4: Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cemetery War Memorial¹⁵



Image 5: Pembroke War Memorial¹⁴

Pte. Gervais was eligible for the 1939-45 Star; France & Germany Star; War Medal; CVSM & Clasp.⁴

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For a number of years, Harry's mother Hattie May Gervais was the Silver Cross Mother representing other mothers by laying a wreath at Remembrance Day services.²



Image 6: Silver Cross Mother²

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