

War researcher looking to connect with family of soldier Barney McGuigan 1928-1945

By Charlotte MacAulay
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Private Barney Ruben McGuigan was killed in action in Germany on February 26, 1945. Born and raised in St Mary's Road, he was just 16 when he died.

Mr McGuigan is one of many Canadian soldiers buried in three Canadian War Cemeteries in the Netherlands: Holten, Groesbeek and Bergen Op Zoom, where a project is underway to further honour soldiers by finding more about who they were and placing photos beside their graves, Island war researcher Pieter Valkenburg said.

Mr Valkenburg is looking to the residents of eastern PEI in hopes of finding a photo of Mr McGuigan and more information about his short life.

From what has been gathered thus far, Mr Valkenburg said he was able to piece together the story that Mr McGuigan enlisted in Army at age 15. He somehow fooled the recruiters into believing he was 18 at the time.

Just a few short months after he was sent overseas, Mr McGuigan was killed in action in Germany near the Dutch border and was buried in Groesbeek Cemetery.

Mr Valkenburg has been successful in finding several photos of soldiers from PEI and Nova Scotia for the project over the past couple of years. Those names include Hennebery, Cannon and Auld.

A recent story on CBC Radio put Mr Valkenburg in touch with relatives of Mr McGuigan.

Regina Faithfull is the daughter of the late Aeneas McGuigan, who was Mr McGuigan's uncle.

When she was contacted about the story the name Barney Ruben hit a chord.

A short time ago she was putting all of her framed pictures into an album and for the first time saw the face of someone standing in a doorway behind her father and grandfather in an old photo.

"I had never noticed before that day there was anyone in the doorway of the house on St Mary's Road," she said.

"I remember saying oh, who is that?"

Ms Faithfull's mother, Cecilia, recognized Mr McGuigan and that was the first time Ms Faithfull had heard the name.

She sent the photo to Mr Valkenburg, but the image is quite small and most likely not usable.

She hopes maybe some other McGuigan descendants will be reached through this story.

"You never know who might have some pictures," Ms Faithfull said. "We have so many cousins."

Mr McGuigan was the son of Thomas and Sadie (Bisson) McGuigan and was raised for a time by his grandparents Roseann and Bernard.

Mr Valkenburg, formerly from the Netherlands who now lives in Borden-Carlton, spent his career in the Dutch Diplomatic Service where he met many



War researcher Pieter Valkenburg hopes to find a photo of Private Barney Ruben McGuigan to put by his grave in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands. Mr Valkenburg has traced the young soldier's roots to eastern PEI.

Submitted photo

veterans through his work.

He is also a veteran himself having served with the Dutch Royal Airforce for four years.

"I do it because I think it's important," Mr Valkenburg said.



The grave of Barney Ruben McGuigan in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands. Submitted photo

"I was born in 1944 and a good part of the Netherlands was liberated by Canadians. We feel it is our duty to make sure these men are not forgotten."

Anyone who has any information for Mr Valkenburg is asked to call 902-888-9696 or email casapiedar@gmail.com

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