

Searching for a hero: Faces to Graves project hunts for photo of Winnipeg soldier who died in the Netherlands



By: [Kevin Rollason](#) Posted: 6:47 PM CST Monday, Nov. 10, 2025

Charles ‘Gordon’ Erickson had already had a hard life when he enlisted in the Second World War.

Born on July 27, 1919, to Frank and Helen in Winnipeg, Erickson died at age 22 on Oct. 27, 1944, about three months after he was wounded, while serving in war-torn Europe with the Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders.

He and his sister, Nancy, were turned over for adoption and when that didn’t work out, were placed with the Children’s Aid Society in 1930.

Two years later, Erickson became a farmhand in the Manitoba community of Holland. He enlisted on Jan. 2, 1940.

He died while serving in the Netherlands and he is buried in the Canadian War Cemetery in Bergen Op Zoom, near where he was wounded.

There is no known photograph of Erickson — perhaps due to his childhood experiences — but a retired Dutch diplomat is on the case.

Pieter Valkenburg, a resident of Prince Edward Island, has spent years helping the Faces to Graves digital project at the Canadian War Cemeteries.

Over the last 13 years, Valkenburg has unearthed 462 photographs of Canadian soldiers for the project, including 45 Manitobans.

The hunt for an image of Erickson continues.

“I sent a message to the son of his sister on Facebook, but he has never come back to me,” he said. “I find it a bit odd because his mother must have had a picture of her brother. I’m hoping someone in Manitoba has one.

“This project really depends on the descendants to come forward for us to get many of the photos. I’ve found before that families are very grateful for the work we do when we find a picture.”

Erickson was one of 5,000 Canadian soldiers who were deployed as part of the Dieppe Raid and one of 2,200 who returned to England. More than 900 lost their lives and about 1,950 were taken prisoner by the German army.

Erickson's medical records state he suffered a puncture wound that went to the bone, which took two weeks to recover.

His sister also served, enlisting with the Royal Canadian Air Force and being posted to England.

After the war, she married and became Nancy Vincent and had two sons.



Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The gravestone of Charles 'Gordon' Erickson at Bergen-op-Zoom Canadian War Cemetery.

While the search for a photo of Erickson has so far proven fruitless, miracles can happen.

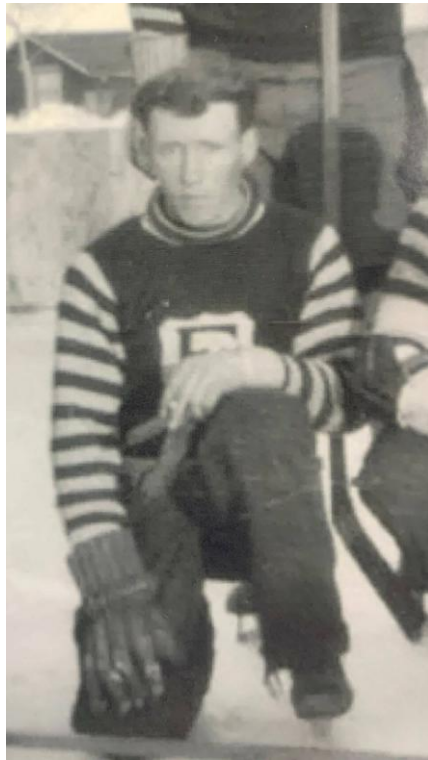
A 2023 *Free Press* profile of Pte. John Lewis Hughes asked readers to help locate an image of the Eriksdale man.

Judy Gleich, who was born in Eriksdale and grew up in nearby Lundar, read the story and made it her mission to find a photograph.

"I made a couple of phone calls and came up with nothing the first year," Gleich said.

Next, she pored through two history books compiled about Eriksdale residents but came up empty. She finally struck gold when she located a distant family member of Hughes who had a

photocopied photo of a pre-war Eriksdale hockey team featuring the medic who would die on a Second World War battlefield.



SUPPLIED. A photo of Eriksdale Pte. John Lewis Hughes was unearthed after years of searching.

“I’m still hoping for a better photo — maybe someone will come forward with the original — but at least we have something,” she said.

Valkenburg asks anyone who finds a photograph of Erickson or Hughes to email it to:
memorialtrail@gmail.com

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Kevin Rollason
Reporter

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