

Durrington

Roll of Honour



Lest we Forget

World War II



6296664 PRIVATE

H. SPREADBURY

GORDON HIGHLANDERS

16TH JULY, 1944

Harry SPREADBURY

Harry Spreadbury was born in 1911 to parents Andrew & Mary Elizabeth Spreadbury. Harry's birth was registered in the district of Amesbury, Wiltshire in the June quarter of 1911. His parents – Andrew Spreadbury & Mary Elizabeth Baugh had married in 1888 in All Saints Church, Durrington, Wiltshire.

The 1911 Census records Harry Spreadbury as a 1 month old baby living with his family in a 4 roomed dwelling at Durrington, Wiltshire. His parents were listed as Andrew Spreadbury (Roadman, aged 50, born Durrington) & Mary Spreadbury (aged 41, born Winterslow). Harry's parents had been married for 22 years & had 14 children, one deceased. There were 11 children listed on this Census – all born at Durrington with Harry being the youngest listed. The children listed were Thomas (Farm Labourer, aged 20), Alice (Servant, aged 17), David (Shepherd, aged 15), Beatrice (at school, aged 11), Jamce (at school, aged 10), Edward (at school, aged 8), Edgar (at school, aged 7), Andrew (at school, aged 6), Mary (aged 4), Rosine (aged 1) & then Harry.

Harry Spreadbury enlisted with the Infantry of the British Army. He was given the rank of Private & a service number of 6296664. His place of birth & residence were both listed as Wiltshire. Private Harry Spreadbury's records show that at the time of his death he was attached to 2nd Battalion, Gordon Highlanders. Theatre of War – Western Europe Campaign 1944/1945.

Private Harry Spreadbury died on 16th July, 1944, aged 33 years. He was killed in action during the Allied Invasion of Normandy (D-Day).

Private Harry Spreadbury was buried in Banneville-La-Campagne War Cemetery, France – Grave reference – XII. A. 26. His death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The CWGC lists Private Harry Spreadbury, 6296664, aged 33, of Gordon Highlanders. He was the son of Andrew and Mary Elizabeth Spreadbury, of Durrington, Wiltshire; husband of Margaret Spreadbury, of Durrington, Wiltshire.

Banneville-La-Campagne War Cemetery, France

Banneville-la-Campagne is a village in Normandy, which is 10 kilometres east of Caen.

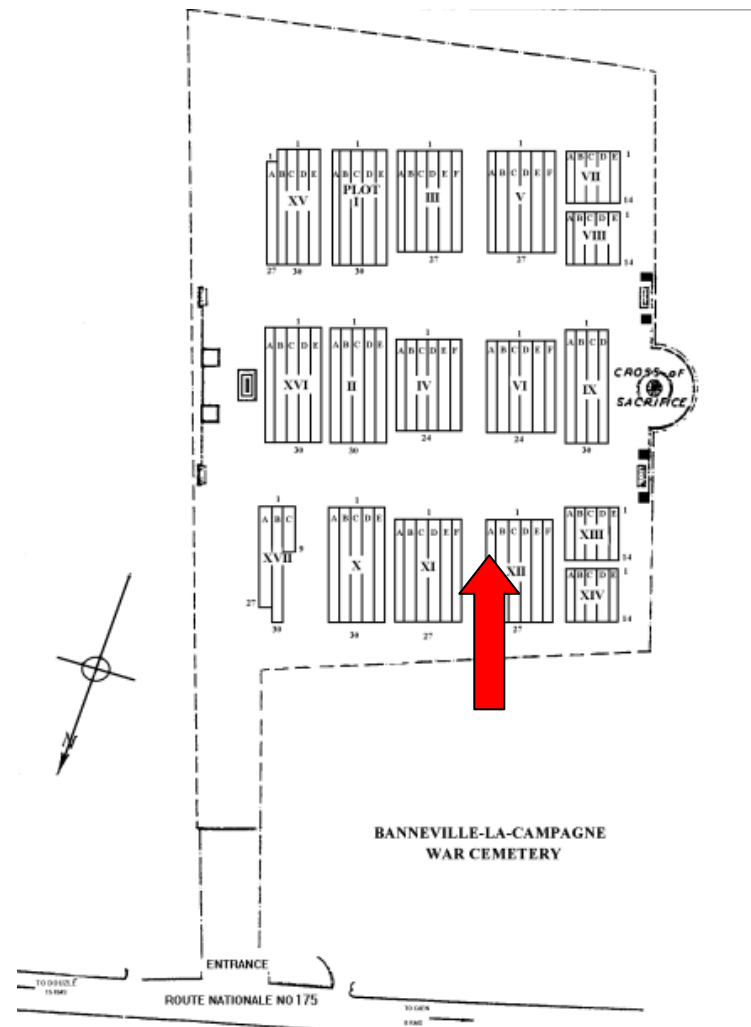
The Allied offensive in north-western Europe began with the Normandy landings of 6 June 1944. For the most part, the men buried at Banneville-la-Campagne War Cemetery were killed in the fighting from the second week of July 1944, when Caen was captured, to the last week in August, when the Falaise Gap had been closed and the Allied forces were preparing their advance beyond the Seine.

The cemetery contains 2,170 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War, 140 of them unidentified, and five Polish graves.



Banneville-la-Campagne War Cemetery *(Photos & information from CWGC)*





2nd Battalion, Gordon Highlanders:

The Battalion was based in Malaya as part of the Singapore garrison

February 1942: It fought in the battle for Singapore.

15 February 1942: It surrendered along with 130,000 other British Commonwealth soldiers. The battalion suffered more casualties as Prisoners of War in Japanese captivity than they did during the fighting on Singapore Island and mainland Malaysia.

May 1942: It was reformed from personnel of the 11th Battalion and fought with the 15th (Scottish) Infantry Division.

06 June 1944: Battalion fought its way, along with the 1st & 5th Battalions, from Normandy, through France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

April 1945: Victory in Germany.

War Diary of Sgt. James Simpson Robertson, 2888211, 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders

15th July, 1944

Left Verson and after a forced march reached the outskirts of Baron to be met with heavy mortar fire. Dug-in as fast and as quickly as possible in an orchard. We were mortared on and off all day. Just lay in our trenches and hoped for the best. Put in a night attack at 2200 using Monty's Moonlight for the first time (i.e. search lights in the rear shining on the clouds giving an eerie light to help us on our way). Went through heavy machine gun and mortar fire to reach our objective about 2000 yards from our starting point. Dug-in as fast as we could before daylight arrived.

16th July, 1944

Dawn arrived. Found that we were on our own. "C" Company managed to reach their objective, "A" and "B" Companies failed to get through the machine gun and mortar fire. They were supposed to pass through our positions and capture the cross roads at Esquay to allow a two Brigade attack on the enemy strong hold at Evrecy. This meant that "C" Company and our Company were out on our own.

Enemy infantry appeared to our front - I think they were a strong fighting patrol looking for our position. Gave the Platoon the order to fix bayonets and be prepared to charge. Delivered five rounds rapid fire and charged. The Company brought in 45 prisoners. It was the first time I ever felt in a killing mood, must be part training and tradition.

Sent the prisoners to the rear and prepared for the main attack. Could hear tank engines starting in the woods to our immediate front. Six appeared on our left flank to cut us off. Fortunately the anti-tank officer tried to get his guns up to give us support but his carriers were knocked out by mortar fire leaving the guns stranded in the cornfields. They were not noticed by the German tanks. Five were put out of action before they could find out where the firing was coming from. The sixth tank was knocked out by a PIAT of "A" Company.

Our positions were heavily mortared and shelled. It was becoming impossible to hold. When the main attack came in "D" Company's Commander had a victory call put through, by wireless, giving a map reference whereby all guns in the Corp area would concentrate on the area given. Then we waited. First the 25 pounders, then the medium and heavy guns barrage came over the whole area. The area in front of us erupted which stopped the German attack before it got started. Churchills of the Guards Armoured Brigade tried to help. Some knocked-out, the rest retired. The Brigadier was killed when his jeep took a direct hit from a mortar bomb. Still in the same position at midnight being mortared on and off.

17th July, 1944

Battalion CO, Colonel Colville has taken charge of the Brigade. The acting CO, Major Sinclair decided, owing to our own and "C" Companies exposed positions to withdraw the two Companies and take-up a defensive position around Company HQ and to be dug-in before first light. The failure of "A" and "B" Companies to reach their objectives meant that the attack by 44 and 46 Brigades had to be cancelled.

(Diary entries from the [Gordon Highlanders](#))

H. Spreadbury is remembered on the Durrington War Memorial, Wiltshire.



Durrington War Memorial (Photo courtesy of Ian King 2010)