

SAPPER JOHN (JACK) ARTHUR WALES – (1916 – 1985)
Regimental # M/67154



Jack Wales was born in 1916 to Ross and Annie Wales. The senior Wales' family members originated from Omagh, Ontario. Upon hearing about the promising agricultural opportunities available in the Peace District, the family came over the Edson Trail and settled in an area east of Grande Prairie known as Glen Leslie. Jack's father, Ross purchased more land and by 1940 it was a large farming operation.

In May 1940, Jack married Florence Smith from Grande Prairie. Jack enlisted in the army on January 5, 1942 at the #13A District Depot in Edmonton. Jack was subsequently transferred to the Chilliwack Canadian Engineer Training Centre in Sardis, BC. Florence accompanied him there for the two years Jack spent in training. The Camp was created two months after the bombing of Pearl Harbour and was intended to be a Canadian Army post to defend the lower mainland of BC. However, as it became apparent that the threat to BC

was minimal, the camp was designated as a recruit training centre and hosted the No. 112 Canadian Army Basic Training Centre as well as the A6 Canadian Engineering Training Centre which was moved from Camp Dundurn in Saskatchewan. Jack completed his training as an Engineer therefore his rank was listed as a SAPPER. Jack sailed for England and his unit was subsequently sent to France with the invasion of Normandy in June 1944. Operation Overlord was the codename for the Battle of Normandy – an operation where the Allies successfully invaded the German occupied Western Europe countries during WWII. There were over a million troops all under British command that hit the beaches in the Normandy landing. By the end of the Battle of Normandy, there were more than 18,700 Canadian Casualties and over 5,000 deaths. It is regarded as the single most important event in WWII and led to the war's conclusion in Europe as the Allies opened a western front against Hitler. Jack's responsibilities as a SAPPER were to breach fortifications, demolitions, bridge-building, laying and clearing minefields and preparing field defenses as well as working on road and airfield construction and repair. He was very lucky as he was wounded once during war-time. Jack served in Canada, United Kingdom and Continental Europe. On demobilization, Jack sailed home and arrived in Canada in October 1945. He was discharged at the No. 13 District Depot C.A., Armoury, Calgary on November 14, 1945. Jack received the volunteer service medal and clasp.

In the spring of 1946, Jack purchased NW 36-71-4-W6 from Ed Leslie. The property contained the Glen Leslie Store and Post Office. The store burnt down in August 1955 following which Jack built a new store in September 1955. Once rural route was established in the area in 1956, the post office was closed down which seriously curtailed the store business. The store closed and was sold to Bob Sharpe in 1957 who moved it to Grande Prairie where he operated a trucking business out of it for a short period of time. The store building is still standing and is now known as Enterprise Rent-A-Car. The area where the "Store" was located is still visible at the corner of the property however with the construction of Highway 670 and widening of side-roads taking place, the spot has shrunk considerably.

Jack Wales

Florence and Jack had three children, Lynore, Janice and Alex. Jack continued to farm and worked as a carpenter for Johnson Trusses and other companies while Florence taught school at Montrose and St. Clements. They retired in 1978 and moved to Grande Prairie.

Jack passed away in Edmonton on May 26, 1985. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge, Grande Prairie and the West Smoky Royal Canadian Legion. Florence passed away on January 28, 1981. Both are buried in the Glen Leslie Cemetery.

Reference

Smoky to Grande Prairie History Book,

Glen Leslie History Book

Wikipedia

Janice (Wales) Dorscheid