

HOLLINS, Christopher Wordsworth

Service Number 81397

Rank Major

Veterans Guard of Canada

Born May 28, 1893, Tufnell Park, London, England

Died April 5, 1945, Medicine Hat, Alberta

Occupation Farmer

Marital Status Married to Elfrieda; four children

Born in London, England, Christopher "Charlie" Wordsworth Hollins was the son of Reverend W T Hollins of Clapham Park. He trained as an officer before emigrating to Canada in 1910 to farm. He settled in Lloydminster, Alberta.

Enlisting in Winnipeg in 1914, Charlie served with several battalions in England and France. At Ypres in 1916, he was wounded in the face. He recovered and returned to duty, receiving multiple promotions. By the time he was demobilized in 1919 he had achieved the rank of Lieutenant.

After the war, he returned to ranching, married and started a family, moving to Parksville in approximately 1940. The same year, he was called to service again, but was too old for active service. He joined the Veteran's Guard of Canada and served as a sergeant instructor at a training camp in Regina before being posted to various positions, and in 1945, Camp Field Officer at internment camp #132 at Medicine Hat.

The Medicine Hat internment camp held thousands of German prisoners, transported to Canada so they would be distant from Europe. They far outnumbered the guards. In the camp, something approaching civilian life carried on, with prisoners working in their trade, or sports or education; or participating in arts, culture and social activities. However, the Nazi hierarchy was a dark undercurrent. A covert camp Gestapo existed and committed acts of terror, including murder, on certain prisoners. In spite of this, guards strived to maintain a friendly relationship with their prisoners and the outside community.

It's unclear how Major Hollins died. The Camp 132 war diary entry for April 5, 1945, states "Major C W Hollins, Camp Field Officer died as a result of a gunshot wound at about 1600 hours."

There was a service and military parade as his coffin was borne into Medicine Hat for transport back to Parksville. In Parksville, he received full military honours as he was laid to rest in St. Anne's church yard, Parksville.

Sources: Photo: Michael O'Hagan, POW's in Canada
Personnel Records of the First World War, Library and Archives Canada
Books of Remembrance, Veterans Affairs Canada
Michael O'Hagan, POW's in Canada
Imperial Vancouver Island, by J F Boshier
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