

Private GEORGE JOHN DARBON – Vanessa

Canadian Army

Regiment Service # B43314

1st Battalion Dufferin & Haldimand Rifles C.A.S.F.

Birthplace: London, England Residence: Vanessa, On

Died: April 14, 1945, age 35

George Darbon (Jr.) was born in Hanworth, Middlesex, West London, England on May 5, 1909 to George William Darbon and Fanny Catherine Darbon (Bird). He was one of seven children who were all eventually put into care homes in England. In 1917, at the age of 8, George was admitted to one of Dr. Barnardo's Children's homes where he lived for the next 4 years. His mother died a few years later of tuberculosis in 1920.

In 1921, at 12 years of age, black-haired and blue-eyed George emigrated to Canada through the Barnardo Charity Foundation.



Photograph of George the day he left England for Canada as a British Home Child.

His first destination was Quebec, then Toronto and he eventually made his way to Vanessa, Ontario. There, he was to attend school and help with chores on a farm. He enjoyed reading adventure and detective stories and he liked to hunt and fish. His athletic interests were playing soccer and baseball. At the age of 14, George quit school after completing Grade 7 to take up farming full time. Six years later at age 20, George married Irene Depew 23, who had a 7 year old son Ralph. At this time, George was farming tobacco and other crops. He and Irene did not have any children together.

George's father had served with the British Army in South Africa in 1898-1901 and re-enlisted in 1914 and served his country during the Great War until 1917. Following in his father's footsteps, George Jr. reported to Niagara-on-the-Lake to enlist with the Canadian Active Service Force, Niagara Camp, on the 9th of October, 1940. George stated at that time that he would like to "be a rifleman" or to "learn some mechanical skills" so he could pursue that field when he returned home from the war. He completed Basic and Advanced army training, attended a Signaling course the following year, and in 1942 became a qualified MT Driver Class III (I.C.). George was described by Army Captain W.C. Green as being "above average intelligence" and was a "quiet, serious man, stable and reliable". He doubted that it was "worthwhile to give him trades training" and thought he was "better suited as a rifleman or driver".

In March of 1942, he left from Debert, Nova Scotia with the 48th Highlanders and proceeded overseas arriving in the U.K. on the 4th of April. After further training over the next two years, they were ready to disembark for France. George was assigned to the Lake Superior Regiment (LSR) which had been converted to a motor battalion. They landed July 26th and 27th, 1944 as part of the infantry support for the 4th Armoured Brigade, 4th Canadian (Armoured) Division. The LSR (M) headed by Corporal Charles Byce traveled in trucks and light armored, tracked vehicles known as universal carriers.



They saw their first fighting on the Caen-Falaise road in August, 1944 and played a role in closing the Falaise Gap, an escape route for encircled German troops in Normandy. The unit moved across France and Belgium during the general Allied advance engaging in many battles and in early 1945 they were fighting in the Netherlands. They advanced into Germany and continued across the Westphalian Lowland reaching the outskirts of Friesoythe on the 13th of April, 1945.

Friesoythe was considered a strategic crossroad as the allies needed to secure it to continue their advance. Since it was early spring, they needed to use the main roads

as the wet ground made it difficult for the heavy vehicles to operate. At first light on the morning of April 14th they attacked the town of Friesoythe where most of the civilian population had since deserted. George's unit, Company "B", were ordered to send a patrol out to meet the Lincoln & Welland Regiment but were unable to make contact due to a bridge being blown out. Here they encountered the enemy and George was killed by sniper fire. Two other soldiers in his patrol were wounded.

Private George John Darbon is buried in grave 15, row F, plot 8 of the Holten Canadian Military Cemetery in Holten, Holland.



Commemorated on page 507 of the Second World War Book of Remembrance.

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Norfolk Remembers
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