



Together with his parents and his six siblings, Robert William Johnston arrives in Halifax on April 3, 1927. A few days earlier they had celebrated his seventh birthday aboard the Aurania, which had taken them from Belfast to Canada.

The Johnstons thus followed in the footsteps of many emigrated Irish. They came from Fintona, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. Robert was born there on March 30, 1920.

They settled in Toronto. Almost immediately after finishing primary school, he started working as a carpet weaver.

On July 23, 1941, he volunteered for the Canadian Army and is, not surprisingly, assigned to the Irish Regiment. During training in Canada, he learned to use various weapons, such as a rifle, a brengun, a stengun and a mortar. He is promoted to sergeant at the end of December 1942.

On October 5, 1944, he travels by troopship to the United Kingdom, where he arrives on October 11. He is quickly moved to the battle scene on the European continent, on November 4. There he is assigned to the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's), an infantry-unit that was stationed around Steenberg (West Brabant) at the time. They guard the static front line in the Den Bosch area in the winter of '44-'45. At the beginning of February 1945, the Allies began an offensive from the Groesbeek region towards the Rhine and the Ruhr area.

On February 22, 1945, the Argylls are moved towards the front and are involved in the battle for the Hochwald Gap a few days later. The Allies pushed the Germans further back to the north and northeast. On April 1, the regiment is back at the front near Lochem, on April 5 they are in Wierden and on April 6 in Meppen (Emsland, Germany). From there they further advance into Germany to the Friesoythe area on April 13.

On the night of April 13-14, the Argylls place a surprise attack on Friesoythe from the southeast. They overrun the German units in the city that did not expect an attack from that side. Later that day, the city is in Canadian hands and the German units are fleeing northwards to the Küstenkanal.

The same day, the beloved and highly distinguished Canadian Lt.-Colonel Wigle of the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada is killed in his provisional HQ by a German soldier. According to the War Diary by a German sniper. The Canadians are furious and spread the rumor that Wigle was killed by an armed

civilian or a German soldier in civilian clothes. That is sufficient reason for them to carry out a retaliatory action of which the city becomes the victim. She is largely destroyed.

The following days, the Argylls advance further to the Northeast, fighting fierce battles at the front.

On May 3, Berlin was in the hands of the Red Army, and many major German cities were in Allied hands. Yet there were still German units that stubbornly continued to offer resistance making victims all the while.

On May 4, 1945, the Argylls are located near Wiefelstede. In the morning they are lying under grenade and machine gun fire. Despite this, they manage to make 15 German prisoners of war, who turned out to come from various units. They were soldiers who had lost their unit and patients from a nursing home. They turned out to have been collected by a German officer.



*Infantry of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada Regiment on a "Kangaroo", an armoured personnel carrier at Werlte, Germany on April 11 1945.  
LAC Photo*

Also in the afternoon the Canadians encountered fierce defense and then it even turned out that they were the only unit of the 21st Army Group that still encountered opposition.

During these battles, Robert Johnston must have been injured. He was transported to a field hospital by ambulance.

At 8:40 p.m. on May 4, 1945, the message came that the Canadian troops had been waiting for since the beginning of the battle: the German army surrendered unconditionally, coming into force on May 5 at 8 a.m.

However, this message had not reached the German troops facing the Argylls. To prevent further Canadian victims, the Canadians first fired their remaining ammunition at the Germans and then retreated for a few kilometers to Wiefelstede. That evening, German prisoners of war with a white flag were sent to their own lines to pass on the news of the surrender.

On this last day of the war, Robert Johnston succumbs to his injuries in the field hospital. It is particularly regrettable to die on that very day. He belonged

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H.Q. 1772-39-1990

## CANADIAN PACIFIC TELEGRAPHS

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CASUALTY (REPORT DELIVERY) OTTAWA 8 MAY 1945

TO:-  
MRS MINNIE JOHNSTON  
218 A ST HELENS AVENUE  
TORONTO 4 ONTARIO

81060 SINCERELY REGRET INFORM YOU B79584 SERGEANT ROBERT  
WILLIAM JOHNSTON HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED SEVERELY WOUNDED IN ACTION  
FOURTH MAY 1945 NATURE OF WOUNDS NOT YET AVAILABLE STOP WHEN FURTHER  
INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED  
STOP WHEN ADDRESSING MAIL ADD WORDS IN HOSPITAL IN BOLD LETTERS OVER  
NAME OF ADDRESSEE FOR QUICK DELIVERY

PREPAID

DIRECTOR OF RECORDS

*Roberts moeder krijgt dit telegram met het bericht over de verwonding van haar zoon.*

to one of the units last involved in battle and he was one of the last Canadians to die during fighting in World War II.

His body is buried in a fairly large temporary cemetery with about 100 other Canadian killed in Friesoythe. In 1946 he finds his last resting place at the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten.

There are also two fellows of Robert's: Lance Corporal Romeo Ciccone (12B10) and Private Ubald W. Laneville (12B11), who both died on May 4.

In August 1947, his mother asked the army authorities if her son had military awards on him when he was injured and if they could send them to her. The military replies to her that these are not yet available and will be sent as soon as possible.

Honours:  
1939-45 Star  
France & Germany Star  
War Medal  
Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp



*SjB v1.1, september 2022*

*Sources:*

*ancestry.ca*

*<https://map.project44.ca>*

*Wikipedia*

*<http://www.argylls.ca/history/mitchell>*

*<https://www.canadiansoldiers.com/>*

*<https://www.cwgc.org>*