



Born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on January 1, 1920.

Son of Francis Joseph Purcell and Hellen Purcell, née LaPierre of Musquodoboit, Nova Scotia.

Arthur's mother died in 1929. Arthur had a brother and three sisters. The family was Roman Catholic.

Arthur attended school until he was 12.

His primary language was English.

It is unknown exactly what kind of work he had done before he reported for duty.

When Arthur enlisted on April 20, 1944, he reported that he had worked for several years as a driver for the Garden Taxi Company in Halifax.

His medical report was unremarkable. He was 1.80 m tall, weighed 60 kg, had brown eyes, and dark brown hair.

From May 1942 to April 1944, he had been registered as a "conscript" under N.R.M.A. regulations.

To clarify:

The National Resources Mobilization Act was passed 21 June 1940 by Parliament. It represented the government's response to the public clamour for a more effective Canadian war effort that arose in the wake of the stunning German victories in Belgium and France. The Act enabled the government to requisition the property and services of Canadians for home defence. An earlier promise made by PM Mackenzie King in 1939 not to introduce conscription for overseas service was honoured, but it was reversed in August 1942 following the national plebiscite of April 1942. The amended NRMA permitted the sending of conscripts overseas in addition to the existing regular volunteer forces. The NRMA was important politically as it attested to the government's determination to intensify the war effort. It tended to appease the conscriptionists without antagonizing the anti-conscriptionists. In military affairs the Act created a duality in Canada's military that was to last until the war's end. It also resulted in the training of a large body of men for military duty. From 1940 to 1944 close to 60 000 NRMA soldiers ("zombies") volunteered for general service, and several thousand more were sent to the front after the use of conscripts for overseas service actually began late in 1944.

In accordance with N.R.M.A. regulations, Arthur served in several locations in Canada. After initial training at Camp Aldershot, Nova Scotia, he was transferred to the 52nd Coastal Battery on McNabs Island near Halifax. He would remain there for a year. He qualified for his wheeled vehicle license there and was once "Confined to barracks" for seven days because of: "Absent Without Leave".

(a disciplinary measure in the military where a soldier is restricted to their living quarters, typically as a punishment).

On January 1, 1943, his pay increased to \$1.50 per day.

In June 1943, he was granted three days' leave, which he spent with his family in Musquodoboit, Nova Scotia.

This was prior to a transfer to St. Johns, Newfoundland, where he was assigned to the 103rd Coastal Battery. More specifically, to



One of the guns in 2015

the men of the battery on Cape Space.

A coastal defense post with two 10-inch guns.

Arthur would remain there until he was transferred to the active-duty military in April 1944. In the meantime, he had also qualified for his motorcycle license.

After transferring to active duty, Arthur's transfers came in quick succession.

He crossed over to the United Kingdom, where he arrived on July 27, 1944, and landed in France 5 weeks later, on September 4.

Initially assigned to a reinforcement unit, Arthur was transferred to the South Saskatchewan Regiment (SSR) on December 25, 1944.

His army file provides no further information than: "killed in action on April 7, 1945."

Arthur Frances Purcell surely has witnessed the entire SSR campaign in 1945.

After the offensive through France and Belgium, the Rhineland Offensive began.

Following the relative calm of the winter of 1944/45, Operation Veritable started on February 8, 1945.

After the heavy fighting in the Rhineland Offensive, including in the Hochwald Forest and near Xanten, Arthur and the South Saskatchewan Regiment advanced into the north of the Netherlands early April 1945.

Throughout this advance, the Nazis continued to offer fierce resistance; at every canal and river crossing, bridges were blown up, and fighting ensued.

From the regiment's war diary, we can deduce that the crossing of the Schipbeek Canal, on the border of the provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel, began shortly before 3:30 a.m. on April 7, 1945.

The regiment lost four soldiers in the crossing.

One of them must have been Arthur Frances Purcell.

He was given a temporary grave near the Schipbeek crossing before being interred at the CWGC Canadian Cemetery in Holten.

The grave reference: plot 1, row A, grave 5.

He was awarded:

The 1939-1945 Star; the France-Germany Star; the War Medal 1939-1945 and the Canadian Volunteer Medal with clasp.

