

**Armstrong, Frank Guy**  
**Sapper**  
**Royal Canadian Engineers**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Field Company**  
**C/35505**



Frank Guy was born on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 1902 in Toronto, Ontario. The son of James and Mary Armstrong, of Kingston, Ontario, his parents had been married on 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1894 in Toronto. Frank was the third of eight children: there were his brothers Clifford Henry, Arthur Norman, Jeffries Nelson and George Alexander, and he also had four sisters; Mary Gladys, Kathleen Grace, Annie Margaret and Viola.

Frank's family moved to Kingston, Ontario when he was five years old and grew up there. He attended public school until Grade VIII when he was 15 years old. After leaving school, Frank did some line maintenance and installation work at the Kingston Fire Department where his father was

working as a Fire Chief. He eventually worked for 17 years with the Kingston Fire Department and was an Assistant Electrician when he enlisted. The picture on the left is from the Kingston Fire Department archives and shows their fire crew in 1931. Franks father, James, is the Fire Chief shown in the centre.



Frank was much older than many who enlisted in 1941. He had been married to his wife Katherine on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 1931 and their son, James Frank Armstrong was born on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1935. His son was six years old when Frank enlisted at age 39.

Frank had previously served in the Militia in Kingston during the period 1915-19 in the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps and the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery and had achieved the rank of Corporal. He enlisted in the Regular Force with the Royal Canadian Engineers on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 1941 and was given the rank of Corporal. Less than two weeks later, he enlisted in the Canadian Army Special Force at the Kingston District Depot on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1942.

Frank was sent to No 31 Training Centre in Cornwall, Ontario for his Basic Training and, after completing this, he was transferred to No 5 Canadian Engineer Training Centre in Petawawa, Ontario on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July for his Royal Canadian Engineer Training. He was qualified as a Driver on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October and as a Field Engineer on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October. Frank was then posted to 5<sup>th</sup> Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers in Kingston at the rank of Sapper as he had asked to be reverted to that rank.

Frank deployed with his unit to Terrace, British Columbia in the Spring of 1942 for duties in the defence of the West Coast. In July of that year, he suffered a broken wrist in an accident while he was loading a large pump onto the back of a trailer. Frank was sent to the Prince Rupert Military Hospital by train for treatment. Later that Summer, the unit moved to Debert, Nova Scotia for their final preparations before embarking for the United Kingdom. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1942, Frank left from Halifax for England and arrived in the United Kingdom on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August.

For the next two years in England, 5<sup>th</sup> Field Company was occupied with training, helping construction of defences in England, and preparing for the eventual invasion of the Continent on D-Day. While the 5<sup>th</sup> Field Company was one of the four Canadian Sapper companies that were involved in the assault phase at Juno Beach on D-Day, Frank did not join his unit on the Continent until the 11<sup>th</sup> of June. At that time, his unit had re-assembled after the D-Day assault and had launched on the start of an 11-month campaign across Europe that led to the eventual defeat of Germany. For the advance across Northwest Europe, the 5<sup>th</sup> Field Company was involved in the major operations at Caen, Fauberg de Vancelles, The Seine, and Neder Rijn. During the advance of the Allied armies, he was involved in all the typical sapper tasks. Every existing bridge had become a target for the enemy in order to slow the advance of the Allies. The



sappers built improvised bridges or Bailey bridges to repair or replace them. The sappers were also busy detecting and removing German bobby traps and mines. As the front advanced, road repair was essential. Mobility was especially difficult in the winter and worse when the Germans flooded large areas of Holland. They used whatever rubble, stone, logs or steel matting was available to repair and maintain the roads.

In late January, 5<sup>th</sup> Field Company was fully engaged in the construction of a major bridge over the River Maas near the village of Mook in Holland.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January, Sapper Frank Guy Armstrong suffered a heart attack at the age of 43 and died in the unit lines. He was buried in the Canadian Temporary Burial Ground at Nijmegen.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1945, Frank was exhumed and reburied in the military cemetery at Groesbeek, grave reference **III. D. 6.**



His grave inscription reads:

LOYAL, EVEN UNTO DEATH

Sapper Frank Armstrong received the medals:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France-Germany Star
- Defence Medal
- War Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp



## FACES TO GRAVES

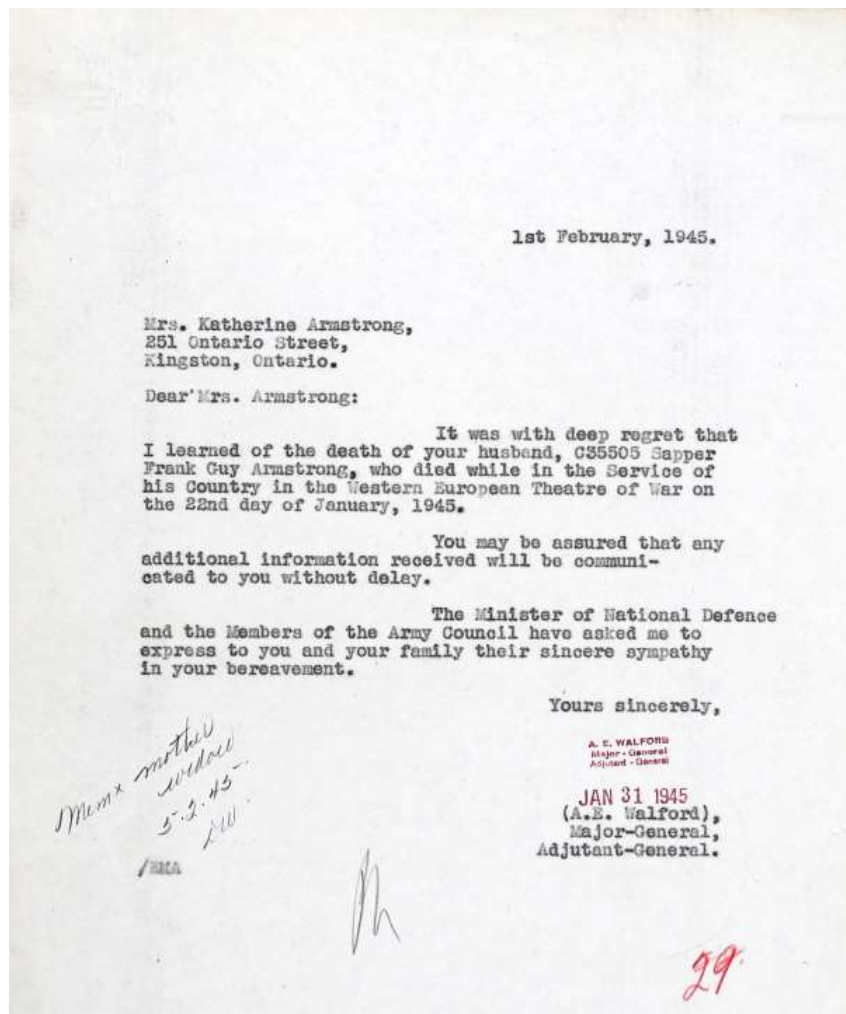
Stichting Faces to Canadian  
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story by Hennie Koster and Julie Allen, Research Team Faces To Graves, with additional information LCol Ken Holmes (Ret'd).

Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Library and Archives Canada
- Kingston Fire Department
- Newspaper clipping: Operation Picture Me

\* If you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact [info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl)



# G. Armstrong Died Jan. 22 In Holland

## Official Word Received Here

Mrs. Katherine Armstrong, Ontario Street, has been officially advised by the Department of National Defence, Ottawa, that her husband, Spr. Frank Guy Armstrong, a former member of the Kingston Fire Department, had died on active service with the Canadian Army in Holland, Jan. 22, 1945.

Spr. Armstrong, who was on leave of absence from the Kingston Fire Department, was a son of former Fire Chief James Armstrong and Mrs. Armstrong, Johnson Street.

The official message states Spr. Armstrong was serving with a company of Canadian Engineers



**SPR. ARMSTRONG**

in Holland. He was buried in the cemetery of the Second and Third Division of Royal Canadian Engineers near Nijmegen, Holland.

During the First Great War he tried several times to get overseas, serving with the Army Service Corps, Ordnance Corps and RCHA and several times he was placed on drafts but he was underage and was taken off. He enlisted in the United States Army for overseas duty as a transport driver, but did not succeed in getting overseas.

Returning to Kingston in 1924 he joined the Kingston Fire Department and remained with the department until he was granted leave of absence to enlist in the Canadian Active Army. He was electrician for the department at the time of his enlistment.

Mrs. Armstrong has received several letters from members of the unit in which her husband served. Lieut. W. E. K. Brown wrote to state that "Spr. Armstrong had been examined by the doctor ten days before his death after he had complained about not being able to sleep. The doctor had suggested that Spr. Armstrong go to the hospital for two weeks, but he did not go as he did not want to be separated

from his pals." Lieut. Brown said Spr. Armstrong tried to take things easy for the next ten days. On the morning of Jan. 22 he suffered an attack suddenly and died before he could be rushed to the hospital.

The funeral service took place the following day and was attended by many members of the units, especially the original members, who knew him and worked with him so long. He was buried in a Canadian Military cemetery nearby.

Mrs. Armstrong this week received a Silver Cross from the Department of National Defence, Ottawa, while his mother also received a similar cross.

He is survived by his wife and one son, James, also his parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Armstrong, Johnson Street; four brothers, C. H., Toronto; Arthur Norman and Jeffries, Kingston; PO. George A., RCAF, Ottawa, who was lost for 30 days in the desert near Bengazia, and four sisters, Mrs. S. Hector, (Gladys), Mrs. James Powell (Kathleen) Mrs. J. Baker, (Annie), and Mrs. W. Clifford, (Viola).