

**Armstrong, Robert Norman**

**Private**

**Essex Scottish Regiment**

**Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**

**C/75153**



Robert Norman Armstrong was born in South Mountain, a village in Eastern Ontario on November 12, 1921. He was the only child of Lorne Jacob Armstrong (1898-1992) and Nina May (nee Boyd) Armstrong (1901-1973).

Robert, an only child, started school at the age of five and completed Grade 11 at the age of 17. After leaving school he took a licensed embalmer's course and then worked for three years doing embalming and funeral work for his father at the Lorne Armstrong Funeral Home in South Mountain.



*Robert as a child with his father Lorne (approx 1923-24).*

Robert was a member of the United Church. He stood five feet four 1/2 inches tall and weighed 120 pounds. He had brown eyes and light brown hair. His personnel assessment report stated that Robert could drive a car and repair a motor. He said that he would like to be an automotive tradesman. He enjoyed fishing as his hobby.

Robert had served in the Canadian army reserve from December 7, 1942 until he signed up February 15, 1943 with the Canadian Infantry Corps. In March he was moved to the Canadian Infantry Training Centre at Camp Borden where he trained as a driver and qualified as Driver IC III (wheeled and track vehicles) on May 28, 1943. In August 1944, he was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.



He married Louise Bonnie (Bessie) Kirkwood (1925-2019) in Inkerman, Ontario. She gave birth to their daughter Gloria on May 10, 1945.

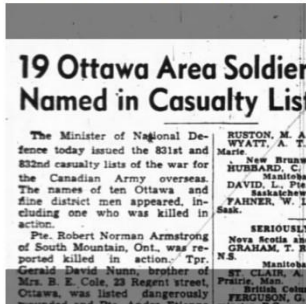
Robert Armstrong was shipped overseas on September 1, 1944 and arrived in the United Kingdom on September 6, 1944. He was assigned to the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit and sent over to France on October 10, 1944 as an infantryman with the Essex Scottish Regiment.

The Essex Scottish Regiment was a part of Operation Blockbuster, the major Allied assault on German forces which were entrenched in the Hochwald Forest, across the Dutch-German border.

On the morning of March 1, 1945, two infantry companies of the Essex Scottish led the assault and faced withering machine gun fire and heavy artillery barrages from German paratroopers.

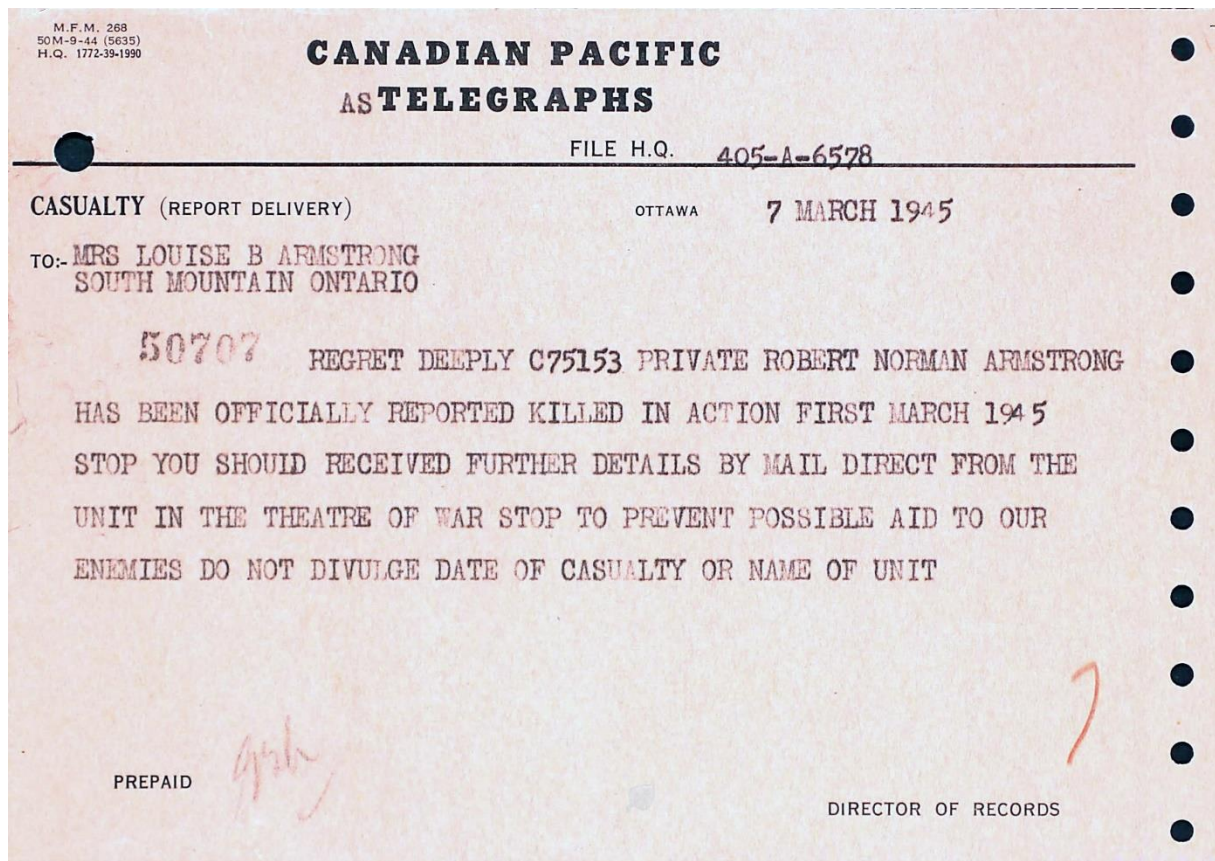
Robert Norman Armstrong was killed in action at the age of 23.

Newspapers.com - The Ottawa Journal - 4 Apr 1945 - Page 9



According to the Windsor Star, February 24, 2018 article, there were 31 young Essex South soldiers killed on March 1 as they charged 500 metres of open cornfields and masses of barbed wire. Major Frederick Tilston earned the Victoria Cross, the British Commonwealth's highest honour of bravery, for his valour and exemplary leadership of the Essex Scottish soldiers on the battlefield.

Robert's mother received the sad message by telegram...



Private Armstrong was buried in the military's temporary cemetery at Xanten, Germany and then was later reburied at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery with grave references **XXI. E. 8.**

The inscription on his headstone reads:

"Loved in life, remembered in death.  
Mother, Father, Louise and Gloria."

His wife, Louise Armstrong, was sent his medals: 1939-1945 Star, France-Germany Star, and the War Medal. He also had been awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

In his hometown, a framed photograph of Private Armstrong is part of the special memorial to five soldiers who had died during the Second World War. The others are Charles Gates, John Armstrong Johnston, Allen Clark and Bruce Ogilvie. Along with a brass plaque, the Fallen Five photographs hang in the South Mountain Library Resources Centre.



Biography: Drake Felstead, student from All Saints H.S., Kanata, Canada for Faces to Graves, courtesy of Vanessa Kirtz, All Saints H.S. Additional research and editing provided by Kurt Johnson.

Sources:

- \* Library and Archives Canada, WWII Service Files of War Dead, 1939-1947
- \* Veterans Affairs Canada, The Canadian Virtual War Memorial
- \* Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Casualty file
- \* The Ottawa Journal, engagement
- \* Windsor Star, February 24, 2018 article about the March 1 battle of the Essex Scottish Regiment in Hochwald Forest.  
<https://windsorstar.com/opinion/columnists/henderson-hochwald-battle-deserves-a-monument>

\* Picture provided by Ginette Tibben, South Mountain Library Branch Staff Member

\* Renfrew Mercury, June 18, 2011 article on the South Mountain memorial.  
<https://www.insideottawavalley.com/news-story/3797567-fallen-five-find-a-home-in-south-mountain/>

