

Burke, Augustine John

Private

North Nova Scotia Highlanders

Royal Canadian Infantry Corps

F/57767



Cos Cheum Nach Gabh Tilleadh - "Our footsteps will not allow us to go backwards"

Augustine John Burke was born on Wednesday 26 August 1925 in River Bourgeois, Richmond County, Nova Scotia, Canada. Son of Maurice (Morris) Burke and Alice Rose Blanchard, who was born in Newfoundland. They got married in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, Canada in January 1921. The family consisted of seven children: Aloysius, Maria Alina (Phyllis) Augustine John, Ronald, Marie Pauline, Leonard Anthony and Joseph Maurice. By faith they belonged to the Roman Catholic Church and resided in River Bourgeois, Nova Scotia. This place had a long history in fishing. Father Maurice also earned his money as a fisherman. It was a small community that was not on a river, as the name suggests, but on an extended arm of the sea called Bourgeois Inlet. It was located on the south coast of Cape Breton Island. Later, the family moved to nearby Cannes.

When Augustine was 16 years old, he left school and went to work. In addition to English, he also spoke French. His first job was as a cook at the Canadian National Railway in Halifax. He was an easygoing, gentle man, just like his older brother Aloysius.

He had brown eyes and brown hair. Augustine had a length of almost 5ft.6 and weighed 134 lb. Furthermore, he was a very healthy young man, his hobbies were playing baseball and ice hockey.



Parents of Augustine John Burke, Maurice and Alice Rose with one of their grandchildren.

On November 25, 1943, at the age of 18, he enlisted in the Canadian Army at No 6 District Depot in Halifax, the capital of the province of Nova Scotia. The depot was opened in November 1941 on the northern part of the municipal airport, which was undeveloped land. Each Canadian military district had a camp that was used as a shelter and transit facility. These District Depots were centers where recruits reported on call and were screened to see if they were suitable for the Canadian military. The men's qualifications were examined and they were placed in units where their ability and intelligence were best displayed. The medical board conducted thorough medical tests on every recruit, aiming to see that he was absolutely physically fit before being accepted.

Augustine John Burke
.....
(Signature of officer or man)

Augustine was found suitable and was posted to the No 60 Canadian Army Basic Training Center in Yarmouth on December 9, 1943.

He enjoyed a Christmas leave from December 22 to 26 that he spent at home. He then resumed his training and was assigned to the A14 Canadian Infantry Training Center in Aldershot, Nova Scotia, on February 13, 1944. From April 17 to 30 Augustine John was on leave and then he reported back to Camp Aldershot for further training. On September 16, 1944, he was assigned to the No 1 Training Brigade Group at Debert Camp to prepare for crossing the ocean to England.



On October 13, 1944 the regiment embarked and on October 20 they set foot in England. He was assigned to the No 4 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit.

Augustine John was posted to the No 3 Canadian Infantry Training Regiment on November 23, 1944 and arrived in Northwest Europe the following day. He was assigned to the North Nova Scotia Highlanders on January 30, 1945. These were currently located in the Nijmegen area. They had previously relieved the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. On the Tuesday he arrived there it was snowing and it was cold. The North Nova Scotia Highlanders took up new positions on February 1 and moved slightly towards Nijmegen. The area where they occupied their positions was very quiet and they patrolled with the Stormont Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders.

The only hostile activity they heard was the coming over of V1 missiles. On February 2, it was reported that the roads were very bad due to rising temperatures and rain.

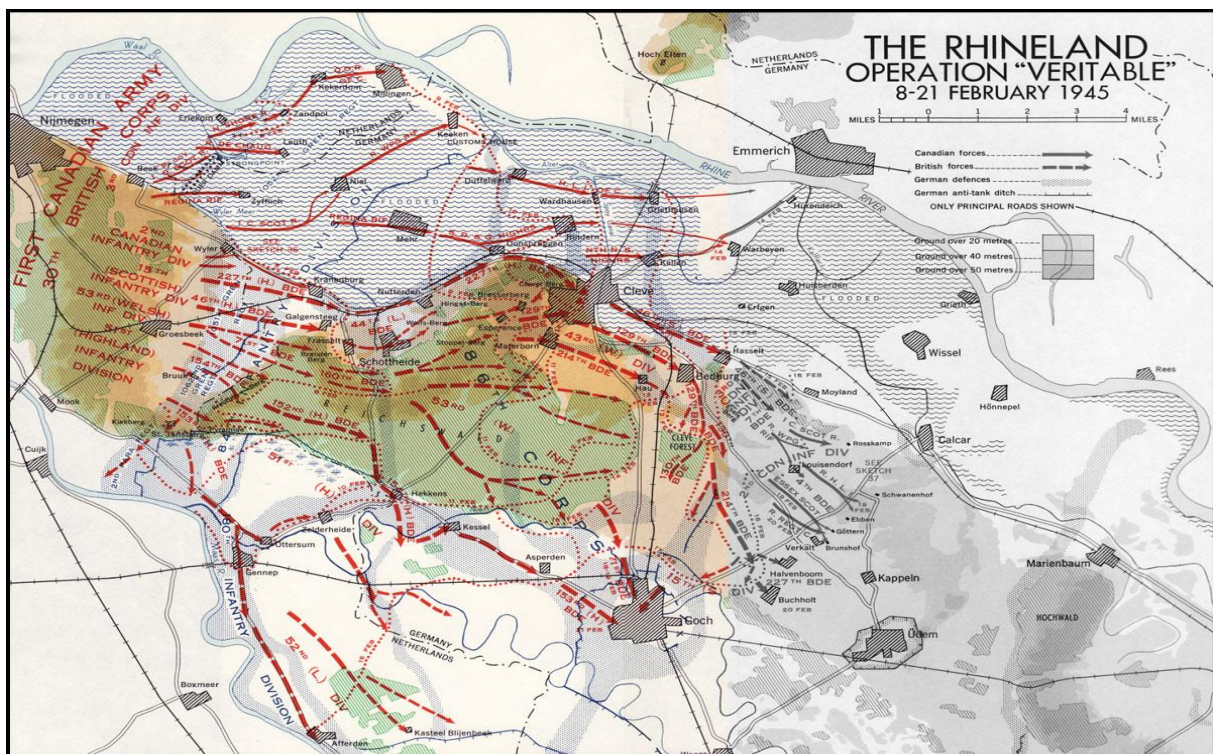
Preparations for Operation Veritable were in full swing.

Many soldiers and artillery were brought together around Nijmegen and the surrounding area. The regiment's commander was often at headquarters for consultations.

The Royal Air Force bombed the Reichswald Forest, Kleve, Emmerich and Gogh on February 7, which was supposed to have an effect on the morale of the enemy. On February 8 Operation Veritable was launched to liberate the area between the rivers Roer and Rhine. The morning silence was interrupted by artillery fire which started at 6 am.

The North Nova Scotia Highlanders came into action on February 11. The commander left at 10:30 am to report to the Tactical Brigade. The A and B Companies were ready to head towards Mehr at 3:30 pm. Due to the lack of transport by Buffaloes, this was not going according to plan. At Rindern the HQ took up position with the Stormont Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders.

The A Company had to follow the road to Donsbrüggen, but accidentally entered the water at Mehr, and while the command post and the B Battalion arrived in Donsbrüggen at 11:45 pm they missed the A Company. Guides were sent back to guide the A Company into the right direction. The next day they were found and immediately had to head to the east of Kellen with their Buffaloes. They encountered little opposition, took their positions and were prepared for anything. The North Nova Scotia Highlanders were the closest unit east of the River Rhine. On February 13, there was a rest and the men could recover from walking and from the transport by Buffalo.



On February 14, the North Nova Scotia Highlanders Regiment received a battalion order at 7:30 am. They had to cross the river with their Buffaloes and at 5 pm they finally succeeded. Three soldiers were killed and eight wounded. The next day it was relatively quiet except that in the area of the B Company some mortar shells landed, causing one casualty. The enemy position was shelled by artillery and was silenced. The regiment took up positions in buildings at Emmerich.

On February 16 and 17, the water rose so fast that it was impossible to continue. The next day they received orders to take over the positions of the English 5th Battalion, Dorset Regiment, 130 Infantry Brigade. But because of mechanical problems of the Buffaloes, the takeover was not completed that day. The A and B Companies succeeded, but the C and D Companies did not succeed in taking over the positions until the following morning, on February 19.



Augustine John Burke's Awards:

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

Photo: Peter van Dijke,
<http://lestweforget1945.org/>

When his mother has to fill out forms for Defense after his death, she adds 10 Canadian Dollars for the funeral by Reverend P. Raboutaille.

4.
DECLARATION

*Insert degree of relationship (for example, "Mother", "Father", "Brother", etc.)

I hereby declare that all the particulars shown on this form are correct, and a true and complete statement of all the relatives that the deceased ever had in the degrees specified; and that I am the Mother of the deceased.

N.B.—To be signed in full in the presence of a Clerk in Civil, Local Registrar, Commissioner or Notary Public or Commissioned Officer of any of His Majesty's Forces.

Alice Burke Signature of Informant
James W. S. Address

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief, that Mrs. Alice Burke above described, The above Declaration was made by the Informant and signed in my presence.

Dated at River-Bourgeois this 4th day of April 1945

Signature of Clergyman, Priest, Minister, Commissioner or Notary Public or Commissioned Officer of any of His Majesty's Forces.

Rev. Pierre Raboutaille Qualification Parish Priest
 Address River-Bourgeois, Q.S.

NOTE.—Before granting the above Certificate, care should be taken to see that the informant gives particulars concerning the death of any Relative stated by him or her to have died, and that the full name and address and age of such surviving Relative specified is stated in the proper place in the Statement opposite.

(If the deceased has no living relatives of the degrees shown on page 2, the names and addresses and relationship of other relatives should be set out below.)

USE SPACE BELOW FOR ANY ADDITIONAL REMARKS YOU MAY WISH TO MAKE

Receipt attached inside is for payment in connection with funeral service conducted by Rev. P. Raboutaille whose signature appears thereon. Funeral Service being for the deceased in question, John Augustine Burke

March 5th 1945

Received from Mrs. Alice Burke

Ten $\times \frac{1}{100}$ Dollars

For a requiem high mass

\$10.00 P. Raboutaille P.P.



Life story: Gijs Krist, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources:

- Commonwealth War Grave
- Library and Archives Canada
- Canadiansoldiers.com
- Don Pottie photos and information
- June Bourque

Aloysius Burke, Augustine John's older brother, also served in the Canadian Army and survived a torpedo attack on the SS Caribou. This passenger boat, built in the Netherlands in 1925, participated in convoys between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. A German submarine attacked the convoy on October 14, 1942 and the Caribou was sunk. On that Wednesday morning 136 people did not survive this attack in the icy water.



Aloysius



SS Caribou

Photo's : Don Pottie