



Thompson, Arthur Percival

Arthur was born on July 2, 1918, in Sauris, Manitoba. His parents were Arthur Wellsby (d. July 20, 1943) and Ethel Iva (d. December 27, 1906), their father.

On December 2, 1944, he had a sister, Edith May (age 37), and Dorothy Ethel (d. 1931), who died.

Arthur left school at the age of 18, completing grade 12 and part 13. From 1924 to 1929, he attended the Public School in Sauris. From 1930 to 1935, he attended Sauris Collegiate, completing grade 12 and part 13 in senior mathematics.

From 1938 to 1939, he attended the Angus School of Commerce, where he studied shorthand, commercial science, and practical bookkeeping. He gave up baseball, ice hockey, golf, and woodworking as hobbies.

After primary school, he held various jobs:

1935-1936: Mechanic at Mitchell's Service Station, where he gained experience with all kinds of engines. Due to a lack of work, he quit.

1937-1938: B. Williams' furniture store, clerk-salesman. He quit to return to school.

1939-1941: McKay Bros Grain Co, Winnipeg: working on a grain elevator, machine instructor, assistant grain buyer.

On October 9, 1940, he enlisted in the Non-Permanent Active Militia of Canada – Winnipeg Rifles.

Arthur is 1.75m tall and weighs 66 kg. He has blue eyes and light brown hair.

On October 1, 1940, he enlisted for active duty in the Canadian Army, with a preference for the air force. He served in the Royal Canadian Air Force (registration number: R124110) from August 28, 1941, to November 2, 1942. He passed his ground examinations, but his instrument flying was below average. His assessors deemed him unsuitable as an operational pilot.

Arthur left the air force and then preferred to join a tank regiment to fight overseas. His assessment: a calm, serious person with sound leadership ideas and good intelligence. After five weeks, it was also noted: development questionable, but with proper training, a good group leader.

Artur arrived there on November 9, 1942, for a 10-day stay at the District Depot in Toronto. From there, he went to a training center at Camp Borden as Trooper B135437.

On January 22, 1943, he was promoted to Cadet, and on April 22, 1943, Arthur became a Second Lieutenant. By then, he was also a Class III driver-wheeler. He was then transferred to another training camp on May 21, 1943. He became a Transport Special Reserve on July 10, 1943, and was promoted to Lieutenant (M445261) on July 15, 1943. Arthur arrived in England on August 28, 1943. On September 2, 1943, he was transferred to the 2nd CACRU, a reserve unit. His new posting was the 10th Armoured Regiment, The Fort Garry Horse, on March 1, 1944, a unit he also briefly served with in 1943.

On June 22, 1944, Arthur departed for France.

In late September and the first days of October, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division was preparing for Operation Vitality. Montgomery, commander of the 21st Army Group, issues instructions: M 527: Secure the use of Antwerp.

- The 1st Canadian Army must advance north along the Tilburg-Den Bosch axis.

- The 2nd Canadian Army opens the front in western Brabant.

Simonds, commander of the 1st Canadian Army, directly subordinate to Montgomery, translates this as:

The 2nd Canadian Infantry Division will capture northern Antwerp and close off the eastern side of South Beveland.

Foulkes, commander of the 2nd Canadian Army Corps, directly subordinate to Simonds, orders a bridgehead to be established over the Albert Canal and the Antwerp-Turnhout Canal, trapping the Germans north of Antwerp.

The 5th and 6th Canadian Infantry Brigades are on the front line between Antwerp and Brecht. On the east side, they are supported by the 49th (West) Riding Division of the British Army, the Polar Bears.

An attempt by the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade to establish a bridgehead at Lochtenberg fails. The 49th (West) Riding Division of the British Army, the Polar Bears, succeeds at Rijkevorsel.

Keebler, commander of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, orders the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade to cross at Rijkevorsel and then advance westward. This succeeds.

After fierce fighting, the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade reaches Lochtenberg and makes contact with the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade. Contact is then made with the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade, which then breaks through from Antwerp towards Korteven.

Fort Garry Horse supports the advance of the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade with its tanks. Much to their dismay, and contrary to the prevailing regulations, they do not receive their orders from the divisional level. Complaints are raised about the cooperation with infantry, which isn't trained to advance with tanks, resulting in inadequate cover for the

tanks. They too often feel like targets; the Germans "show all their eggs in the window." Fort Garry Horse suffered many losses during this period.

September 28, 1944: At 6:30 a.m., Le Regiment de Maisonneuve marched toward the 49th Division bridgehead and, north of the canal, prepared for the attack. The Fusiliers de Mont-Royal had previously been pushed back by the Germans, who had light tanks and half-tracks equipped with machine guns.

The Maisonneuves were supported by a troop of the 14th Canadian Hussars (8th Reconnaissance Regiment) and A Squadron from Fort Gary Horse.

The Hussars would lead, followed by the four tanks of Thompson's troop and two infantry companies behind them, then Maisonneuves' battalion headquarters with the rest of the infantry and A Squadron. Artillery support was provided.

The Canadians advanced at 12:30 p.m. The weather was sunny, a rarity. There was little German resistance, and the tanks easily broke it.

But when the column was about half a kilometer from Oostbrecht, it was fired upon by an 88mm gun positioned on a corner near the cemetery. Thomson's tank was hit and caught fire. Arthur Thompson and Robert Blake were killed. Arthur was then 26 years old.

Arthur was temporarily buried in the cemetery in Rijkevorsel.

A reburial took place in Bergen op Zoom on September 3, 1945. He was buried in Plot 11, row C, grave 11.

Arthur was awarded the 1939-1945 Star, the French-German Star, the Defence Medal, the War Medal, and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp.

Sources:

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2642367/thompson,-arthur-percival/>

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12724931/arthur-percival-thompson/photo>

https://www.ancestry.ca/interactive/9145/44486_83024005550_0703-00229?pid=111734&treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=QNt27&phstart=successSource#?imageId=44486_83024005550_0703-00254

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