

**Ridley, John Maxwell, Sergeant (A-86770)**



- John Maxwell Ridley was born on 18 July 1913 in St. Thomas, Ontario. He was 31 years old when he died of wounds on 16 October 1944 in the Netherlands.
- On 22 June 1942, he enlisted in the 30<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reconnaissance Battalion (The Essex Regiment, later The Windsor Regiment) at the recruiting depot in Windsor, Ontario. After attending basic training, he was sent to the Canadian Armoured Corps reconnaissance training centre in Dundurn, Saskatchewan, where he qualified as a driver and mechanic for wheeled and tracked vehicles. He was promoted to the rank of acting Corporal on 1 March 1943 and acting Sergeant on 1 April 1943. He was sent to England arriving on 29 July 1943, where he alternated between the 30<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment and the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit. He was transferred to France as a reinforcement on the 18 August 1944 and posted to the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment on 23 August 1944. He was wounded on 15 October and died of wounds on the 16 October 1944.
- John had no military experience prior to enlisting.
- He attended school up to grade 8.
- Prior to enlisting, he was employed as a factory policeman at Chrysler Corporation in Windsor, Ontario. He had also worked as a baker, possibly with his father.
- According to his medical examination, he was 5 foot 11.5 inches tall and weighed 206 pounds. He had blue eyes and dark brown hair.
- At the time of his enlistment, he lived at his home with his parents. His parents, John Thomas and Myrtle Ridley, who lived at 321 Lauzon Road, Riverside, Ontario, were married in Ingersol, Ontario on 30 October 1901. They had two other children, Donald Frederick (23), and Stella Symons(37). John Thomas, who was employed as a Baker, died in 1942.
- On 25 January 1943, before leaving Canada, he was granted retroactive permission to marry Helen Edith McPharlin of 957 Church Street, Windsor, Ontario. The marriage occurred on 18 Dec 1942. The couple had a son Jon Michael Ridley on 27 May 1943.
- The sole beneficiary of John's will was his wife.
- Ridley received a bullet wound at upper arm and shoulder on October 15, 1944. He was evacuated to Gent but died of respiratory failure during treatment the next day at 9am.
- He earned the Belgium Croix de Guerre.
- His body is buried in the Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Maldegem, Oost-Vlaanderen, Belgium. (Ref: XI. C. 3.)(plot, row, grave).

### Context

- On 03 October 1944, when the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment arrived in the Scheldt area from Calais, France, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division had just been tasked with clearing the low-lying lands south of the Scheldt Estuary of enemy forces so that the Allied Forces could start to use the recently captured deep-water port of Antwerp. However, the enemy was determined to hold these lands and deprive the Allied Forces of access to the port. An initial attempt was made by the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, with "A" Squadron of the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment in support, to cross the Leopold Canal and advance north. This initiative bogged down very quickly in the face of fierce resistance. A second more-successful attempt by the 9<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade was made by performing a right-flanking operation from Terneuzen across Braakman inlet. Then to augment the 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade, the members of 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment were deployed as infantry soldiers into the landing area at Paulina Beach. The 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade was able to push as far south as Biervliet, with the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment forming a line between Biervliet and the Braakman Inlet. Then, on 13 October, the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment was then reassigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade. The North Shore Regiment of the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade, pushed south to the headwaters of the Braakman inlet, while "B" Squadron moved in parallel along the Braakman Inlet. At the end of the day on 13 October, the Squadron received orders to turn towards the west and stay abreast of the North Shore Regiment, generally moving towards Watervliet in Belgium, north of the Leopold Canal. It would appear that Sergeant Ridley received a bullet wound at upper arm and shoulder during this operation. He was evacuated to Gent and died the next day at 9am. After his death, and in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Liberation of Belgium in the Second World War, the Belgian Government conferred to him the Croix de Guerre 1940 avec Palme.