

Vernham, Philip Fredrick, Trooper (A-86728)



- Philip Fredrick Vernham was born on 1 January 1915 in Verdun, Quebec. He was 29 years old when he was killed in action on 13 October 1944 in the Netherlands.
- On 15 June 1942, he enlisted with the 30th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment of Windsor. After enlisting, 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 sent overseas in July 1943 with the 30th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment (The Essex Regiment, later The Windsor Regiment) and was hospitalized in November 1943. Upon his release from hospital, he was posted to a reinforcement unit, until August 1944, when he was transferred to the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment.
- He had no military experience prior to enlisting.
- He attended two years of secondary education at the High School of Montreal.
- Prior to enlisting, he was employed for 10 months by the Ford Motor Company, most likely in Windsor, Ontario as a stock clerk. Prior to that he was employed for five years as a stock clerk and truck driver at Lanspeary's Drug Stores Ltd, and three years as a grocery clerk for Dominion stores.
- According to his medical examination, he was 5 foot 4.5 inches tall and weighed 130 pounds. He had brown hair and brown eyes. He was found fit for category A-1.
- His parents were divorced when he was seven years old, and his only brother died two years before he enlisted. His father, Reginald Vernham, lived at 559 Elliott Street East, Windsor, Ontario and worked as a painter. His father later moved to British Columbia. His mother, Florence Sewell, an arthritic invalid, lived at 956 Howard Avenue, Windsor, Ontario.
- When he was killed, Philip was a bachelor and had no children.
- The sole beneficiary of Philip's will was his father.
- His body is buried in the Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Maldegem, Oost-Vlaanderen, Belgium. (Ref I. E. 9.) (plot, row, grave).

Context

- On 03 October 1944, when the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment arrived in the Scheldt area from Calais, France, the 3rd 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 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade, with "A" Squadron of the 7th 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 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade was made by performing a right-flanking operation from Terneuzen across Braakman inlet. Then to augment the 9th Brigade, on 11 October, the members of 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment were deployed into the landing area as infantry soldiers. The 9th Brigade was able to push south, and the Highland Light Infantry captured Biervliet. On 12 October, the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment used its antitank guns, flamethrowers and mortars to push south to form a front line between Biervliet and the Braakman Inlet. During this advance, it captured 170 enemy soldiers.



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- Then, on 13 October, the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment was then reassigned to the 8th Brigade. The North Shore Regiment of the 8th Brigade, which was to push south to the head waters of the Braakman inlet, moved through the front lines, thus freeing up "A" and "C" Squadrons for other tasks. "C" Squadron was switched over to the north-western sector of the front to fill in the gap between the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders and the North Nova Scotia Highlanders. At 1500 hours, under heavy mortar fire, they moved into their new positions just north of 'Driewegen', about 3 to 5 kilometres north-west of Biervliet. According to the Regiment's war diary, they suffered three casualties, one fatal. "A" Squadron moved into reserve while "B" Squadron continued the advance south and then west alongside the North Shore Regiment.
- Trooper Vernham, possibly a member of "A" Squadron, was driving a Flame Trower Carrier that hit a landmine on 13 October 1944 in the vicinity of 500 metres south of Hoofdplaat. The complete front portion of the carrier was blown off and torn to pieces.