

## Private Jerry Umpherville

Blair Neatby

L106905 Private Jerry Umpherville of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) was killed in action on 17 September 1944 and is buried at the Coriano Ridge War Cemetery, Italy. Jerry was born on 21 September 1923 in Glen Mary, Saskatchewan. Of Métis heritage, he was raised on the family farm on the Métis settlement at Glen Mary. He attended a rural school for six years, leaving at the age of thirteen. Jerry Umpherville worked on his father's farm and was also a general labourer removing railway ties for Oscar Thorstenson, a local contractor. He also worked in the bush with his dad during the winter months. He joined the Canadian Army in Regina, Saskatchewan on 8 September 1943 and due to his limited education was taken on strength to No.22 Canadian Army Education and Basic Training Centre in North Bay, Ontario. Here he not only completed basic training but also received classes in reading, writing and mathematics.

While at the training centre, the army examiner wrote:

*Umpherville is a youthful soldier of normal physical development and condition. Originally dispatched to this Centre because of the limited nature of his formal education, his effective literacy, at the time, was rated at Grade 3.9. This soldier's Educational Training Records shows that Umpherville has now reached the Grade 6.3 level. The man's educational officer reports that the soldier has been interested in educational instruction from the beginning and could doubtless go much further if granted the time and opportunity. He also reports the soldier as being attentive, steady and industrious. From a purely military viewpoint, Umpherville displays a better than average grasp of training taken to date and was able to answer with relative accuracy a number of questions from the C.R.U. questionnaire. This soldier's adjustment to the Army has been smooth and uneventful. Umpherville expresses himself as eager to get overseas as he now has 2 brothers serving o/s with the Canadian Army. An excellent rifle shot, the soldier firing with Small Arms scored 59/60 and 60/100 using ball ammunition. His score with the Bren L.M.G. was 20/40. In view of the fact that this soldier is reliable, curious and anxious to learn, it would appear that he should have no difficulty in satisfactorily completing Infantry Corps training.*

With that recommendation, he proceeded to Shilo, Manitoba on 26 February 1944 for his infantry course held at A15 Canadian Infantry Training Centre. In April, he graduated as an infantryman and sailed for England on 18 June 1944. On 24 June 1944, he arrived in England and was posted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit. The following month he deployed to Italy arriving in theatre on 29 July 1944 as a PPCLI reinforcement. Pte Umpherville joined the Patricias in the field on 1 September 1944 during the assault on the Gothic Line. He fought with the regiment during the advance to San Fortunato. The Patricias crossed the Marano River on the night of 13/14 September 1944 and started to close up to the hill features. The regiment was tasked with the first objective of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade and attack the enemy on the southwestern part of San Fortunato Ridge. The plan did not go well for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, so the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade was called forward to help take the position at San Martino. The PPCLI was tasked with isolating the western flank of

the position. On the night of 15 September, the regiment closed up to their attack position on the Marano River and here they came under heavy artillery fire. On 16 September, Charlie Company moved forward to the Royal 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment positions at the extreme southern edge of the San Martino feature. Delta Company as they moved forward also came under heavy artillery fire. After relieving the "Van Doos," Charlie Company on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September sent out patrols to establish their next objective and came up against a strong enemy force. Delta Company during this day established its position to be ready to provide support to the assaulting company. As they established this position, they came under fire during the night suffering fourteen casualties. Pte Umpherville was killed in action during this operation. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star, Italy Star, War Medal and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp. Pte Umpherville was the son of Zaccheus and Bella Umpherville of Glen Mary, Saskatchewan. He was the brother of Roderick Umpherville who was serving in the Lorne Scots overseas, Walter Umpherville who was serving in the army overseas, Stewart Umpherville, Brian Umpherville, Margreth Umpherville and Gladys Umpherville of Glen Mary, Saskatchewan.

**Umpherville Lake, Saskatchewan** (map sheet 74H/16) 57° 33' 00"N 104° 19' 02"W, located southwest of Wollaston Lake was named in his honour on 27 February 1964.