

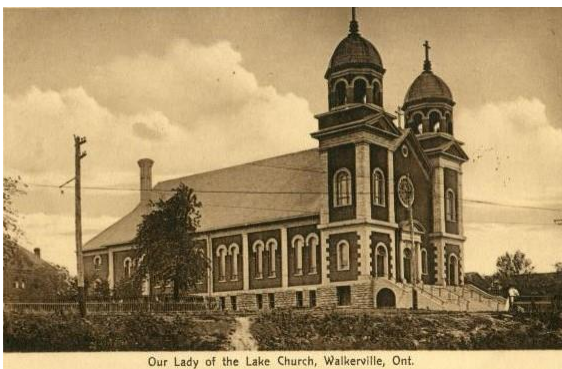
Gibbons, Harold Clayton

Sergeant

**1st Canadian Armoured Carrier
Regiment**

Royal Canadian Armoured Corps

A/86624



Our Lady of the Lake Church, Walkerville, Ont.

Windsor Star Feb 1929

Walkerville in 1911. Clayton was the third of their eventual 11 children, with three girls dying at young ages.

Orley worked as a truck driver and then became a moulder to support his family. Their children were raised under Lena's Roman Catholic religion and Clayton attended St. Angela School in Windsor. He left school age fourteen during grade 8 around the time that his older sister Olive sadly died.

Harold Clayton Gibbons, who went by his middle name, was born 25 August 1914 at Walkerville, Essex County, now part of Windsor, Ontario (ON). His father Orley Gibbons was from Ontario of English extraction and married Eleanor ("Lena") Marie Deneau, who was French, at

YOUNG GIRL TAKEN

**Olive Gibbons, 17, Dies
After Short Illness;
Funeral Friday**

Miss Olive Gibbons, 17 years old, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Orley Gibbons, 947 Hall avenue, died at Metropolitan General hospital yesterday afternoon following a short illness. Born in Sandwich East, Miss Gibbons was a life-long resident of that district.

Deceased is survived by her parents, five brothers, Albert, Clayton, Bernard, Orley Jr., and Everett; and three sisters, Edith, Thora and Alfreda.

Funeral services will be held Friday morning from the home of Mrs. Douglas Dougall, an aunt of the deceased, who lives at 848 Hall avenue. Services at the home at nine o'clock will be followed by a service in Sacred Heart church at 9:30. Interment will be made in St. Alphonsus cemetery.

Clayton eventually obtained work as a truck driver like his father and found himself in a position where he had to provide partial support to his mother and younger siblings after Orley (Senior) died in 1933.

Orley Gibbons
ORLEY GIBBONS, of 426 Goyeau street, died Sunday in Grace Hospital, following a lengthy illness. He was 44 years old.
Mr. Gibbons was born in Kingsville and had lived in Windsor for several years. He was a moulder by trade.
Surviving are his wife, Lena (nee Deneau); eight children, Albert, Clayton, Bernard, Orley, Everet, Estelle, Thora and Freda, at home; a brother, Harry Deneau, of Windsor, and two sisters, Mrs. Andrew LeClair and Mrs. Albert Pittman, of Windsor.
Funeral services will be held Tuesday afternoon at 2 o'clock in the Albemy J. Janisse chapel, 403 Sandwich street east. Interment will be in Greenhill Cemetery, Kingsville, Rev. Canon P. N. Harding will officiate.

Windsor Star Dec 1933

Clayton gained employment as a machine operator at a Ford Motor Company automotive plant in Windsor and worked there for 18 months until he decided to join the Army. He attested 1 June 1942 at Windsor age 27. Clayton was then 5'7" tall and 153 lbs. The Army Examiner remarked about Clayton: "Above average intelligence and good physique. A cautious man with no well-developed social interests. Rather lacking in self-confidence and feels he is not well-coordinated physically. A man with courage and too much modesty. Will be very useful man, with patience. Might become N.C.O. (Non Commissioned Officer) when fully trained".

Clayton enlisted directly with the 30th Recce (tank) Battalion (Essex Regiment) and was sent to the Canadian Armoured Corps Training Centre at Dundurn, Saskatchewan (SK). He qualified as a Driver Class III for Wheeled and Track by November 1942. Clayton was further qualified as a Driver Mechanic Group "C" 30 January 1943 and promoted to Lance Corporal 1 February 1943.

*Reconnaissance (Recce) training
Camp Dundurn, SK WW2*





Clayton reverted rank to Trooper at his own request 19 April 1943. His regiment was moved to Camp Borden, ON in June and he received special embarkation leave time that month to return home. Clayton disembarked in the UK with his regiment 29 July 1943. He was requalified as Driver Mechanic while there but his regiment did not see action. They were employed in assembly work for unassembled vehicles arriving from Canada and disbanded 31 March 1944.

Trooper Clayton Gibbons

Clayton reported to the Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit in the UK 20 April 1944 during the D-Day buildup. He landed in France 26 August 1944 and was taken on strength with 1st Canadian Armoured Personnel Squadron 2 September 1944.

1st Canadian Army had converted 72 Priest tanks to Infantry Carriers in August 1944, which became known as Kangaroos. They were effective in reducing infantry casualties during the Battle of Normandy and the squadron was formally attached to The Elgin Regiment (25th Canadian Armoured Delivery Regiment) in September 1944. They were involved in the capture of Le Havre that month and carried 9th Infantry Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division into battle. In late September/early October they saw action at Calais with 7th and 8th Canadian Infantry Brigades.

The well worn Priests were replaced by Canadian made Ram tanks in October 1944, with turrets removed and other modifications made allowing them to accommodate 10 infantrymen plus the crew as armoured personnel carriers. They were merged into the 1st Canadian Armoured Carrier Regiment (1CACR or "Kangaroos") 25 October 1944 at Tilburg, Netherlands and placed under the command of the British 79th Armoured Division.

Six "Kangaroos" Tilburg, Netherlands Oct 1944



Clayton was promoted to acting Corporal 1 November and promoted again to acting Sergeant 1 December 1944. He became Troop Sergeant for Number 1 Troop, "A" Squadron under the command of Lieutenants Black and Calder.

A Troop had three Sections with three tanks in each Section, so a troop of tanks could carry a platoon of infantry.



The Allied offensive Operation VERITABLE was launched 8 February 1945. Orders were received for "A" Squadron to go into action carrying Scottish soldiers and the convoy moved out at 21:45 hours that night. The Kangaroos suffered three fatal casualties on 9 February, mostly from enemy mortar attacks.

Scottish Div. on Kangaroos, Kranenburg, GER

Kangaroos "A" Squadron, Xanten, Germany- photos courtesy Bill Miller

The Kangaroos were kept busy during the latter phase of Operation BLOCKBUSTER as the Allies forced the Germans to retreat towards the Rhine River. Operation PLUNDER, the assault of the Rhine, was executed in late March with "B" Squadron crossing first on "London Bridge", a British Bailey Bridge. By April the Kangaroos were back in Holland.



Clayton's "A" Squadron, Number 1 Troop was carrying 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade's Royal Regiment of Canada (RRC) "A" Company in a night action 12 April 1945 from Emmen, Netherlands (NL). Their objective was to surround and cutoff the town of Assen, NL and involved the seizing of a bridge. The visibility was bad and the squadron had to cross very narrow bridges in the darkness. While the operation was successful, it resulted in the wounding of Captain Tom Calder by a sniper. Sergeant Clayton Gibbons' tank ran off a narrow bridge and overturned, killing him at age 30.

| WAR DIARY OR | | | | 3/19A MFM 11 46/P&S |
|---|----------|------|---|---|
| Instructions regarding preparation of Diaries (which will be kept from first of mobilization, creation or embodiment) are contained in FS Regs Vol 1. | | | | Original, duplicate and triplicate forwarded to OIC 2nd Echelon for d |
| Title pages will be prepared. | | | | (Erase heading not required) |
| Place | Apr Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information (Page 3) | Remarks, ref to Appendic initials |
| EMMEN NEDLAND (V440659) | 12 | | Contd - Unfortunately, however, the roads from here WEST to the 2 Div Centre Line are unexplored as yet and we have reports that they are full of pockets of the enemy left in this area. We ourselves are on the Polish Arm'd Div Centre Line and the Adjutant, Capt McLaughlin, made a recon today from EMMEN (V440659) EAST into GERMANY and discovered that the Poles are opening up a road from EMMEN across to the 4 Arm'd Div Centre Line just NORTH of MEPPEN in GERMANY. This route is expected to be opened within the next 24 hrs or as soon as several bridges which have been blown are repaired or rebuilt. This will put us within two hrs drive of either Sqn and will relieve our transport difficulties considerably. 'A' Sqn carrying the RR of C in a night action, the objective of which was to surround and cut off the town of ASSEN (V220899) and involved the seizing of a bridge at (V238914). It was a very sticky show with bad visibility owing to the extreme blackness of the night and to the fact that it was necessary for the Sqn to cross very narrow bridges. It was, however, completely successful owing to the fine work done by Lieut CL Black, who is being recommended for an MC. During the action Capt Tom Calder was wounded by a sniper and Sgt HC Gibbons was killed when his tank ran off a narrow bridge and turned turtle. 'B' Sqn supported by tks of 22 CAR and carrying the ASSEH of Oda attacked BOCKOLTE (V987748) and URKES (V025769). Part of the Sqn then moved on to NEURONBURG (V018866). | JHR |
| | 13 | | Weather :- Cloudy and Warm RHQ at EMMEN (V440659). The Adjutant again made a recon to the WEST today and discovered a route to 'A' Sqn which cut the travelling time down to 1 1/2 hrs. Tac HQ moved to NEURONBURG (V018866). 'A' Sqn carried RHQs to the outskirts of GRONINGEN (V2011) and harboured at (V209113). GRONINGEN is only 20 miles from the Dutch North Sea Coast and we understand that it is the last objective in the 2 Div plan. When it finishes 'A' Sqn may get a much needed rest or else will be moved to some other area. 'B' Sqn was not employed today and had a rest. They concentrated in the area of (V018866). | JHR |

1CACR War Diary courtesy Bill Miller - CanadianKangaroos.ca

From Blackburn's *The Guns of Victory*, Clayton's surviving crewmate



described what happened that night: "He (Clayton) was the driver of the last Kangaroo in the Troop, concentrating on the vague outline of the one ahead of him. He got too close to the edge of a culvert over a creek... his right track slipped over the edge and the thing toppled upside down in the water. His Sergeant (Clayton), standing upright and

peering ahead when the thing went over, was caught and pinned under the water by the rim of the open body of the Kangaroo". Clayton's crewmate tried to pull him out but it was impossible. He was able to exit the tank through the escape hatch in the floor to avoid the rising water and lived to tell the sad tale of Clayton's death.

Kangaroos "A" Squadron carrying Royal Hamilton Light Infantry towards Groningen 13 April 1945



SGT. H. C. GIBBONS
Killed

SGT. GIBBONS

Sgt. Gibbons was killed in action on April 12 while serving on the Western front with the Canadian Armored Corps. He enlisted in June, 1942, with the 30th Reconnaissance Regiment and went overseas in July, 1943.

He had lived in Windsor most of his life and attended St. Angela's School. He was employed with the Ford Motor Company of Canada, Limited, before his enlistment.

Surviving are his mother, Mrs. Lena Gibbons; four brothers, L-Bdr. Bernard Gibbons, stationed at Petawawa; Gnr. Everett, also stationed at Petawawa; Orley, who served for three years in the Canadian Army before being honorably discharged and Albert of Windsor. Also surviving are three sisters, Mrs. Louis Bezaire, LaSalle; Thora June and Frieda at home.

Windsor Star April 1945



Clayton Gibbons temporary gravemarker at Holten before permanent headstone placement

Sergeant H.C. Gibbons was temporarily buried at Loon (near Assen), Netherlands and later relocated to Holten Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands, grave reference **X. E. 5**.

Courtesy Canadian Virtual War Memorial

The inscription on his headstone: EVER REMEMBERED BY ALL WHO KNEW HIM, FOR TO KNOW HIM WAS TO LOVE HIM

Clayton Gibbons campaign medals:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France-Germany Star
- Defence Medal
- War Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.



Birk's box that held Clayton Gibbon's Memorial Cross given to his mother Lena



Biography by Jim Little, Research Team Faces to Graves.

Sources Consulted:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Veteran Affairs Canada – Canadian Virtual War Memorial

Ancestry public trees

Newspapers.com

Lady of the Lake Church, Walkerville, ON photo
<https://swoda.uwindsor.ca/node/2854>

30th Recce (tank) Battalion information
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windsor_Regiment

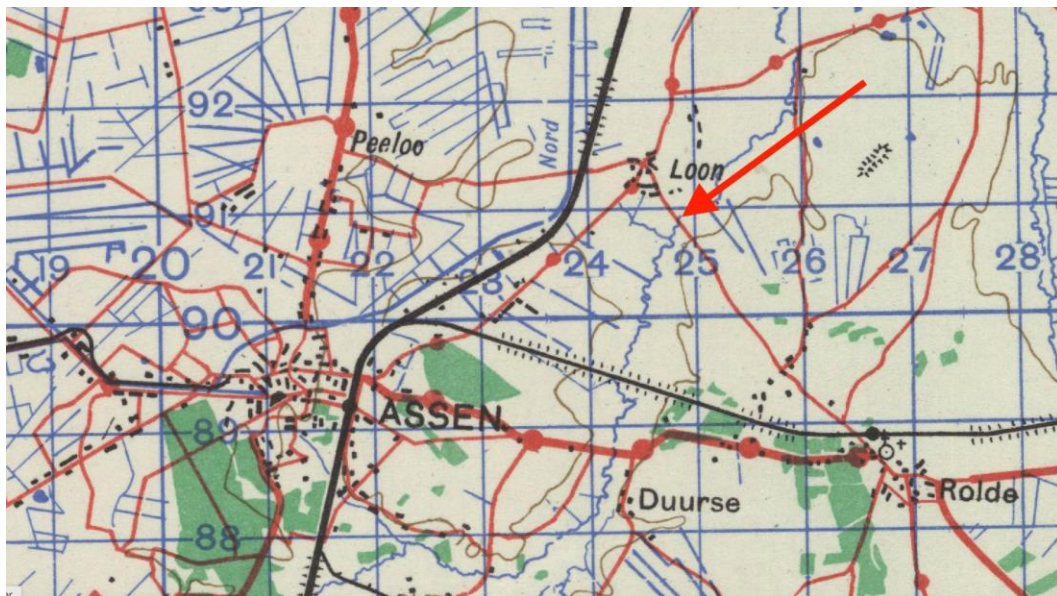
Kangaroo pictures <http://www.theelginmilitarymuseum.ca/the-kangaroos.html>

1st Canadian Armoured Carrier Regiment information - CanadianKangaroos.ca

Bill Miller – Canadian Kangaroos photos and information for Clayton Gibbons

Grodzinski, John R. (1995) Kangaroos at War – The History of the 1st Canadian Armoured Personnel Regiment

Blackburn, George C. (1996) The Guns of Victory, 1944-45



Arrow indicates where Clayton Gibbons' tank overturned – he was buried nearby

GIBBONS—Lena (Deneau), 63 years, October 5, 1958 of 1141 Moy Ave. Wife of the late Orley (died 1928). Dear mother of Mrs. Louis Bezaire (Edith), Mrs. William Skomash (Thora), Albert, Orley, Everette, Windsor; Bernard, Harrow; Mrs. Paul Courchesne (Freda), Sturgeon Falls. Dear sister of Mrs. Joseph Tatreau (Freda), Earl, Mark, Gordon Deneau, Windsor; 21 grandchildren; 1 great-grandchild. Funeral Wednesday, Oct. 8 at 9 a.m. from the Janisse Brothers' Funeral Home, 1139 Ouellette Ave to Sacred Heart Church at 9:30. Interment St. Alphonsus

Windsor Star Oct 1958

Clayton's brother Bernard named his first son after him.

GIBBONS—Bernard, age 54 years, October 20, 1971. Late of 316 Secord St., Harrow. Beloved husband of Mildred. Dear father of Clayton, Stewart, William, Frederick, of Harrow; John of Emeryville; (Jean) Mrs. Wilfred Joncas, Gloria, Mary, Sharon, Charlene, Jo Ann of Harrow; (Judy) Mrs. Art McMillan of Windsor. Dear brother of Everette of Harrow; (Edith) Mrs. Louis Bezaire; (Thora) Mrs. William Skomash of Windsor. Resting Gerald A. Smith Funeral Home, 197 King St. West, Harrow. Funeral Saturday 10:30 a.m. to St. Anthony's Church at 11 a.m. Rev. E. P. Gaffield officiating. Interment Colchester Memorial Cemetery. Prayers Friday 8 p.m. Legion service Friday 8:30 p.m.

Windsor Star Oct 1971