

## **PROFILE – Part 1 - 12 Mar 2020 -**

### **Gunner John Gibson M.3633, 2<sup>nd</sup> Survey Regiment, Royal Cdn Artillery**

1. John Gibson, (aka “Johnnie” to his siblings) the youngest child in the family, born 3 Aug 1919 in North Crook, Durham, England. Emigrated at age seven from England to Canada with his parents and siblings in May 1927. Lived in Evarts, Alberta from 1927 to 1936, and thereafter in Calgary until he volunteered to serve in the military. He had just married Ruth Barrett, 1 Jan 1941.

John enlisted 5 Jan 1941 into the Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA), Calgary and proceeded to #11 RCA Training Center Woodstock, Ontario, 12 Jan 1941 for basic military and artillery training, qualified as a gunlayer (map coordinates / surveys of artillery site positions) and motor transport driver 1/C Class ‘A’, 17 Mar 1941.

He returned to Calgary for 10 days leave to visit his wife and family prior to embarking at Halifax, NS, Canada, 6 Apr 1941 for overseas duty in the UK.

2. John disembarked in Gourock, Scotland 19 Apr 1941, and was taken on strength (TOS) at 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Artillery Holding Unit (2CAHU) 20 Apr 1941, Bordon, England.

Briefly TOS by #15 Cdn General Hospital Bramshott, RCAMC for duty, rations & quarters and promoted to acting Lance Bombardier, 5 Jul 1941. He was SOS from the hospital unit shortly and proceeded to 1CAHU for additional Class ‘A’ motor transport training, qualified 26 Jul 1941 and returned to 2CAHU. He reverted to rank of Gunner, 8 Aug 1941.

He was TOS by #1 Medium Regiment RCA, from 9 Aug 1941 until 3 Oct 1943 (driving transport vehicles during artillery training exercises, etc., for two years or more, in the UK).

John received notice of divorce decree from Ruth Barrett effective 4 Oct 1943. He spent most of Oct 1943 in #4 General Hospital RCA Medical Corps. On being discharged, was briefly TOS by 2CAHU again. Then he was TOS by 2<sup>nd</sup> Survey Regiment, RCA, 26 Nov

1943, and remained with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Survey Regiment, attached to HQ 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Corps, for the duration of his service.

He completed a Unit Assistant Postal Orderly course, Series 2; 22 Jan 1944, and then attached to 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Corps HQ Signals, RCCS, 23 Jan 1944.

The following month, he attended a motorcyclist field skills course, qualifying 23 Mar 1944.

3. John embarked Dover, UK, 6 Jul 1944 & disembarked in Normandy 9 Jul 1944. Arrived with 2<sup>nd</sup> Survey Regiment RCA, and attached to HQ 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Corps Signals, in Amblie, France.

He served / survived HQ 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Corps movements, advancing through out NW Europe; France, Belgium, NE Holland (NL) and into NW Germany. Including Operation “Duck” across the Ems River; and the capture of Leer and Oldenburg (25 Apr to 4 May 1945).

As a despatch rider, he had witnessed and was a small part of twenty Operations and Battles by the end of hostilities 4 May 1945. On 5 May 1945 at Bad Zwischenahn, Germany, HQ 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Corp, Lt.- Gen. Guy G. Simonds, Commanding, accepted the unconditional surrender of the German forces facing 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Corps Troops.

4. Subsequently, Victory in Europe (VE) Day was declared by the Allies 8 May 1945. But for John and many other Canadian Troops, it was not over yet.

What ensued after VE Day, was “Operation Eclipse”, which mandated by the Allies, defined the joint occupation effort for administration and control of the chaotic collapse of the Third Reich.

### **5. ‘Canadian Army Occupation Forces and Operation Eclipse’**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army provided 25,000 Troops designated as the Canadian Army Occupation Forces (CAOF) for its part in support of the British occupation zone of NE Germany.

The Canadian Army’s area of responsibility in the occupation involved approximately NW Germany territory taken by Canadian

Troops. The task was spear headed initially, by the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army and in large part by 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Corps Troops on hand; with HQs at Bad Zwischenahn, Germany. This **initial** CAOF effort continued for approximately 50 days beyond the cessation of hostilities. Or until the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division / CAOF Command arrived to relieve 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Corps Troops.

6. It is not known if John, 'as suitable personnel' simply volunteered for CAOF duty, and waived his 4 year plus demobilization priority. Or with his acquired experience in the field, that he was 'detailed' necessary and also, did not have a lower demobilization priority. (Some Canadian Troops, **the survivors**, had as much as 6 years of demobilization priority.)

For either reason it is evident he was motivated by an incentive to become a part of the initial COAF response. He did receive 9 days of privileged leave (PL) with allowances plus travel time to the UK effective 24 Apr 1945, returning to duty 7 May 1945 with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Survey Regiment RCA, attached to HQ 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Corps and CAOF in Bad Zwischenahn, Germany.

7. On Saturday 26 May 1945 John collided with and was ran over by a British 15 Cwt vehicle, while on duty, despatch riding on his motorcycle near Bad Zwischenahn. He died as result of multiple injuries, in shock and never to regain consciousness. He was 25 years old.

John was SOS from his unit at death. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Survey Regiment disbanded 22 Jun 1945. Lieutenant General Guy G. Simonds' 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Corps was disbanded 25 Jun 1945.

His death occurred on strength of Canadian Forces HQ 405-G-21379, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Corps.

On 28 May 1945 his C.O., Lt-Col J. A. Hornibrook, Commanding 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Survey Regiment, RCA; ordered a court inquiry for the purpose of investigating and reporting on the circumstances and causing of his death.

The inquiry was conducted at Haren (Ems) Railway Station,

Germany on 7 Aug 1945.

The findings of the Court inquiry were that M.3633 Gunner Gibson was on military duty at the time of the accident, was wearing a crash helmet and was no way to blame for the accident. The court report 8 Aug 1945 noted the accident was due to an error of the 15 Cwt vehicle driver, who misjudged the condition of the road surface and lost control of the vehicle.

8. Gunner John Gibson M.3633 remains were buried temporarily near Bad Zwischenahn, Germany in an Elemensdorf Protestant military plot. His remains were transferred for reburial 11 Mar 1946 to the Holten Canadian Military Cemetery, Holten, Holland NL, and now lay in **Plot VIII, Row D, Grave 10**.

Here, his spirit is among friends. John and his comrades are memorialized annually on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May. Their service and sacrifice to expel the WW2 Nazi German forces from the eastern provinces of the Netherlands is greatly appreciated by the Dutch.

At his headstone; "Love's greatest gift, Remembrance. Sadly missed by brothers and sisters."

"Curiously his headstone is engraved with his name as 'J. Gibson'; not John Gibson. He had no other given name than John."

#### **9. Eligible and awarded five War Service Medals 1939 – 45**

1939 – 45 Star

France – Germany Star

Defence Medal

War Medal

Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp

Note: HA 165, no Despatch (Rider) Ribbon!

Technically not considered a member of RCCS Despatch Riders Section?

**10.** John Gibson emigrated with his parents and siblings from Durham, England; departing Liverpool, England, 13 May 1927 on the Canadian Pacific Line "S/S Montrose (2)" and landed in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. His parents were:

- Elizabeth (nee Nettleship) Gibson, born 16 Aug 1885 in Comondale, North Yorkshire, England. She married Thomas Frederick Gibson, 19 Aug 1905. Seven children, all born in Durham, England.) She died 20 Oct 1930 at age 45 in Evarts community (near Sylvan Lake), Alberta, Canada.

and :

- Thomas Frederick Gibson, born 21 Jan 1882 in South Church, County Durham, England, Coal miner. He served in WW1. (S/N 56198 Sgt, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, King's Liverpool Regiment, BEF). Settled and farmed (dairy) in Evarts, Alberta. Died 9 Nov 1939 age 57. See Siblings in Profile Part 3.

## 11. Abbreviations:

**C.O.** - Commanding Officer

**HQ** - Headquarters

**PL** - privileged leave

**SOS** - struck off strength

**TOS** - taken on strength (to a unit or regiment)

## 12. References:

- LAC, Library and Archives Canada, WW2 1939 – 1945; J. Gibson M.3633 Service Files.

- History of 2nd Canadian Survey Regiment, RCA : from 18 Oct 43 to 23 June 45. Held by Bibliothèque et Archives Canada / Library and Archives Canada

- Operations files; 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Survey Regiment, RCA, 6<sup>th</sup> Anti-Tank Regiment, RCA and II Canadian Corps, yet to be found and reviewed.

- Wikipedia II Canadian Corps,

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/II\\_Canadian\\_Corps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/II_Canadian_Corps) **HYPERLINK**

["https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/II\\_Canadian\\_Corps"](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/II_Canadian_Corps)ps

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<https://www.canadiansoldiers.com/organization/fieldforces/casf/2ndcanadiancorps.htm> Also, see NW Europe 1944 – 45.

- Cdn Army Occupational Forces (CAOF) [http](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/mdn-dnd/D63-) **HYPERLINK**

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- The Canadian Army 1939 – 1945, An Official Historical Summary by Colonel C. P. STACEY, O.B.E., A.M., PhD.

- Ancestry.ca and Ancestry.com

- Gibson Family Bible 1905 – 2020. Held by publisher.

**13. Pictures and captions: See Pictures and Captions, John Gibson - PROFILE - Part 2.a. & Part 2.b. - 17 Mar 2020**

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