

John Joseph Darwin

Warrant Officer Class II / C-20896

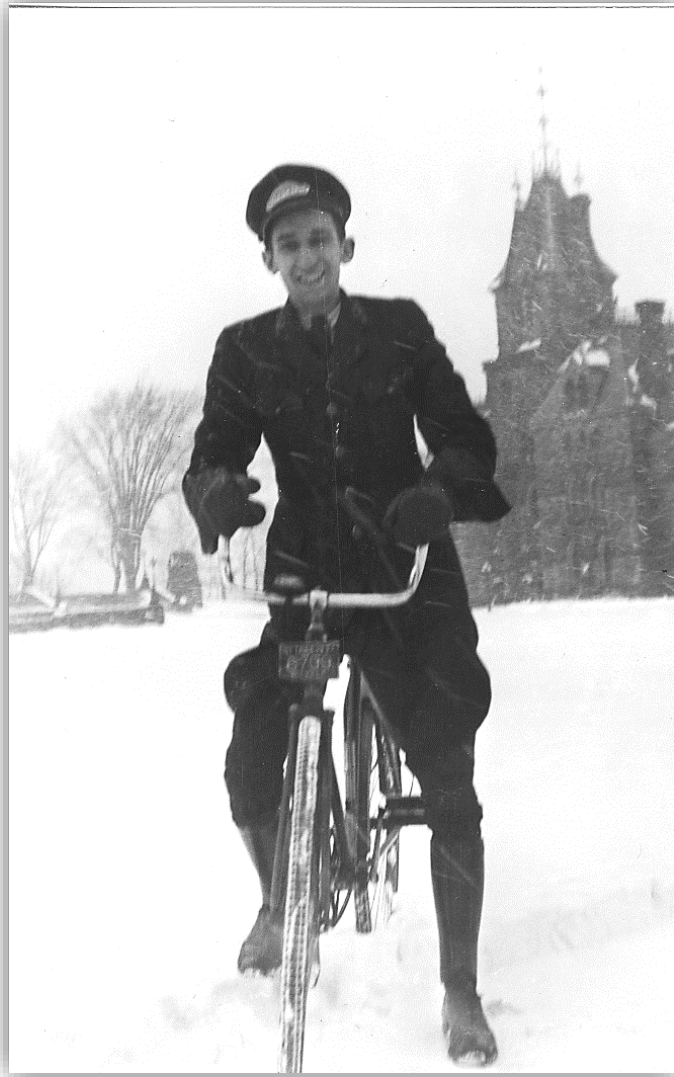
**Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa
Royal Canadian Infantry Corps**



John Joseph was born on September 27, 1919 at 291 Nicholas Street in Ottawa. He was the son of Thomas Vincent Darwin and Marie Albertine Darwin, born 2nd in the family with five children: one daughter and four sons. In his family John Joseph was nicknamed 'Jack' just like many North Americans named 'John' who were nicknamed at the time. Jack attended St. Joseph's Boys School for his primary grades and then St. Patrick's High School. Both schools are in Ottawa. During his youth Jack was an avid sportsman, being involved in many sports such as hockey, rugby, baseball. His records also indicated that he enjoyed skating, swimming and boating. John attended school until the age of 15, leaving High School in grade 10.

Football team of St. Patrick's High School in Ottawa - Jack is in the back row, last player on the right.





Immediately after leaving school Jack got a job as a rivet catcher for the Dominion Bridge Company in Ottawa, where he made \$12 dollars a week.

In 1935 John left this job and became a messenger for the Canadian Pacific Telegraph and Cable where he earned \$18 a week with delivering telegrams in his bicycle.

The younger siblings all revered their older brother Jack.

Jack delivering telegrams on Parliament Hill, Ottawa

Sadly, on July 10, 1937 Jack's mother Marie Albertine Darwin died when Jack was just 18 years old and his youngest brother Rupert was just three.

Marie Albertine Darwin



After his wife passed away it was father Darwin who had to take care of his family.

1943: on the top-left father Vince Darwin, top-right brother Percy, front-left brother Howard and youngest brother Rupert.



When Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, Jack volunteered immediately and commenced his basic Army training with the First Battalion of the Cameron Highlanders at the Beaver Barracks in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada on September 11, 1939. Winter training was in Borden, Ontario, Canada and the First Battalion of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa shipped out to Iceland in July of 1940.

By May 1943 he had gained the rank of Company Quartermaster Sergeant; and, finally in November 1943 he was confirmed as Company Sergeant Major, and this time he was also awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp.



Two friends from Ottawa, Jack and Desmond Davies while on leave in London.

Desmond was wounded just after D-Day, and survived to return to Ottawa by September 1944.

Jack Darwin landed with the The Camerons on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. His unit spent much of the next year spread out at company and platoon level providing machine gun and mortar support for the nine infantry battalions of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division. The Camerons fought their way through France to Belgium, The Scheldt, to Holland, Breskens and to the Rhineland offensive in Germany.



Jack 3rd from left and his comrades somewhere in Holland.

On 25 November 1944 Jack wrote a letter to his brother Howard and asked him a favour:

How would you and Pup. like to
call around and see my girl friend.
and if possible take her to the show
for me and I'll pay you back
some day. Her name is Eileen Oughlan
and she lives at 577 Somerset St. W.
Don't forget now eh!

Two months later on January 25, 1945 a telegraph was sent to Thomas Darwin, Jack's father, officially reporting that his son had been killed in action.

In a cruel twist of fate, Howard, a 14 year old 'newsboy' in Ottawa and Jack's devoted younger brother in 1945, signed for the (previously sent) telegram notifying the family of Jack's death in Holland.

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CANADIAN NATIONAL

W M ARMSTRONG, GENERAL MANAGER
TORONTO

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TELEGRAPHS

GJB 57 2 EX NL GB=OTTAWA ONT JAN 23

MR THOMAS DARWIN REPORT DELIVERY=

1210 291 NICHOLAS STREET OTTAWA ONTARIO=

31467 REGRET DEEPLY C20896 COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR JOHN JOSEPH
DARWIN HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION SIXTEENTH
JANUARY 1945 STOP YOU SHOULD RECEIVE FURTHER DETAILS BY MAIL
DIRECT FROM THE UNIT IN THE THEATRE OF WAR STOP TO PREVENT
POSSIBLE AID TO OUR ENEMIES DO NOT DIVULGE DATE OF CASUALTY
OR NAME OF UNIT=

FORM 6172 DIRECTOR OF RECORDS.

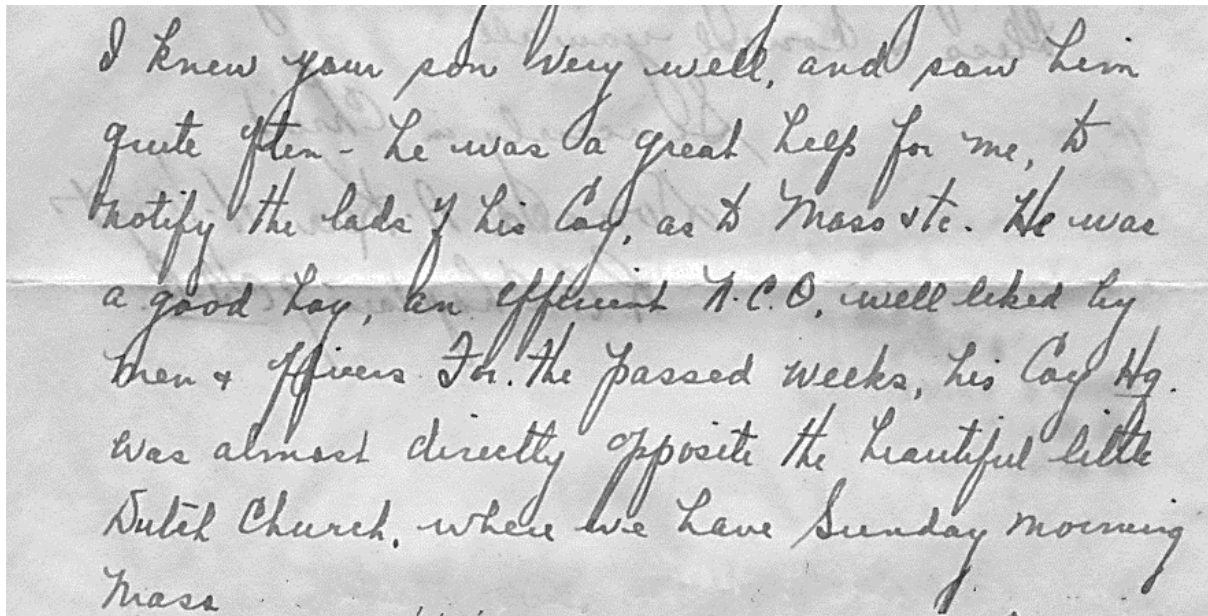
*Please return to
Mr Darwin. ca/sk*

Company Sergeant-Major John Joseph Darwin was 25 years old when he was killed in action there. And he left behind a 27 year old sister Josephine, a twenty year old brother named Percy, a fourteen year old brother named Howard and an eleven year old little brother named Rupert. The whole family was born and raised in Ottawa.

Jack was not married however he left behind his girlfriend, Eileen Coghlan.

The relatives later understood that he slipped in the snow and mud while climbing a hill and ran into a booby trap that exploded and killed him on January 16, 1945.

Jack's father received a letter from Capt. Donald A. Kerr chaplain in which he tells:



I knew your son very well, and saw him quite often - He was a great help for me, to notify the lads of his Coy, as to Mass etc. He was a good lay, an efficient N.C.O., well liked by men & officers. For the passed weeks, his Coy Hq. was almost directly opposite the beautiful little Dutch Church, where we have Sunday morning Mass.

CMS. John J. Darwin Killed in Action

Word has been received that C.M.S., John J. Darwin, 25, son of Thomas V. Darwin, 291 Nicholas street, was killed in action on the Western Front on January 23. His father is on the staff of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Born in Ottawa, he was educated at St. Brigid's school and University of Ottawa. Prior to enlistment he was employed by the Canadian Pacific Telegraph and Cable office. He enlisted in the Canadian Army at the outbreak of war and went to Iceland in July, 1940, being stationed there nine months, before going to England. Shortly after D-Day he went into service in France, Belgium and Holland.

He is survived by his father; three brothers, Percy of the Pensions and Health department, and formerly with the R.C.N.V.R.; Howard and Rupert at home, and one sister, Josephine, on the staff of the Bank of Nova Scotia, Bank and Gloucester streets.

Announcement in the newspaper.

Jack Darwin was a very early volunteer, signing up for the army only nine days after war was declared. He offered his services to the army for the majority of his adult life, serving for 6 years in the army. He was in combat for around seven months, and as 25 year old that would be very difficult mentally and physically. I can imagine some of the harsh challenges he faced during his time in combat.

From his files it appears that John had special belongings with him while he was at war overseas. After his death, John's father made a specific request writing the following note on the declaration form: "If possible I would like to recover a signet ring with a chip diamond, his watch, also a pen and pencil set which I gave him."

There are no further reports to say if Mr. Darwin ever received these possessions, but I really hope that John's father was able to recover them to keep as memories of his eldest son.



August 6 1945 he was reburied to the
GROESBEEK CANADIAN WAR CEMETERY, Grave
Reference: **I. D. 9.**



Life story: Alice van Bekkum, Research Team Faces To Graves.

Information+photos: Jeff Darwin, son of Howard Darwin, Jack's younger brother.

Service files: Library and Archives Canada.

Cemetery find information: unknown author.

