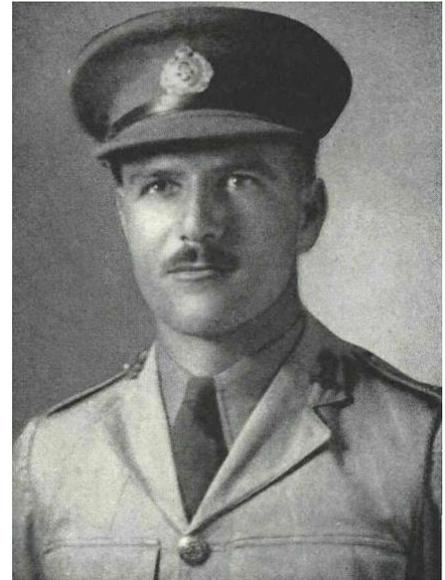


**Kindersley, Robert Erskine Gordon**

**Captain**

**Royal Canadian Engineers**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, RCE**



Robert Erskine Gordon Kindersley was born on 2 November 1906 on the outskirts of Exeter, Devonshire, England. He was the youngest of six children to Colonel Charles Porcher Kindersley and his Canadian-born wife Jean Ramsay Brown. He was affectionately called Robin, a common English nickname for Robert.

Robin grew up on the family estate in Dorset learning to ride and shoot on the extensive country grounds. Following secondary school at Oundle School, Robin attended Magdalene College, Cambridge University. In 1927 Robin left England for South America working first in the oil fields of Columbia followed by five exciting years at Talara, Peru with Imperial Oil.

In 1934 Robin transferred to Imperial Oil's plant in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada - a move that coincided with his marriage to Ruth Lawson of London, Ontario. He later transferred to IO's headquarters in Toronto and it was there that he enlisted in the Canadian Army at the outbreak of WWII. With his Officer Candidate Course training at school and valuable engineering experience, Robin was offered a commission with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Pioneer Battalion of the Royal Canadian Engineers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. Following training at Camp Borden, Robin was appointed Lieutenant in June 1940 under the command of Lt-Col Sutherland and, in August of that same year, together with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, he shipped

out from Halifax on the HMS Georgic. A week later the unit disembarked in Helensborough on the River Clyde in Scotland and trained down to Aldershot while witnessing the Battle of Britain raging in the skies overhead.

In December 1942 Robin was promoted to Captain. The following years included various training courses in Heavy Bridging and Bomb Disposal amongst others. In addition, various works projects were undertaken including the construction of Dunsford Aerodrome in Surrey and the expansion of St Eval Aerodrome in Cornwall.

Finally, on 26 July 1944, Robin's unit embarked for France where they undertook clearing, repair, and reconstruction of roads and bridges around Normandy. The Battalion then joined forces with Monty's Anglo-Canadian 21<sup>st</sup> Army through northern France, liberating Belgium and on into Holland. Millions of Dutch citizens had suffered terribly through the "Hunger Winter" of 1944-45 and the RCE facilitated the arrival of food, medicine, and other vital supplies to a population in the midst of starvation.

In May 1945 the Germans finally surrendered but the critical work of repairing infrastructure remained. Robin's unit was based in Zutphen northeast of Nijmegen and was building a bridge over the river Ijssel.

Because of his long service, Robin was due to be one of the first to be demobilised.



On the morning of 31 May - his last day of service - he set out to de-fuse some threatening grenades, one of which was booby-trapped, killing him instantly. It was a tragic end to five years of selfless devotion and courageous duty to his King and country.

Robin would leave behind a widow who never remarried, and two young daughters, Barbara and Anne who, after his long absence, only remembered their father through the few photos and letters he had written.

Robin was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal (CVSM) with clasp, 1939-45 Star, France-Germany Star, Defence Medal and War Medal.

Captain Robert Erskine Gordon Kindersley is buried in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery Groesbeek, Grave Number **I. A. 11**.



*Submitted to Faces to Graves by the Family of the Late Capt Kindersley.*

References:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- War Service Record. Library and Archives Canada
- "The Story of 2 Battalion, RCE 1940-1945," Murray/1947, AMICUS 2282040