

Cst. Cobble W.J.



COBBLE, WILFRED J. - CST. Regimental No. 12983
December 4, 1946 - Vegreville, Alberta Age 39

Cst. Cobble was a Mountie who enjoyed diverse experiences with the Force. In the course of his career, he served in eight different detachments in five provinces, British Columbia to Ontario. One of his great thrills was being assigned to the Musical Ride. He stayed with it until he was thrown from a horse in July 1939, and struck by the animal's forefoot, suffered a depressed fracture of the skull. He underwent surgery for this injury and was off duty for two months.

Not long after recovering from this accident, he turned his interest to becoming a dog master. Upon completion of this training, he was given his first dog, "Peter Pan of Northmere," and worked successfully with him until he was replaced with a second dog named "Lad". In 1945, Cst. Cobble was returned to regular duty and assigned to the detachment at Vegreville, Alberta.

At 7:00 pm on the night of Tuesday, December 3, 1946, he and Sgt. A.A. Cantrill were returning from Innisfree to Vegreville by car. They had spent most of the day serving summonses.

As they drove along east of Lavoy on Highway #16, they came upon a truck parked on the side of the road. It was loaded with coal and very poorly illuminated. Only its parking lights were on and, at the rear, there was one red tail light.

A little bit of investigation located the driver of the truck at a nearby farmhouse. They insisted he get back to his vehicle with a lantern until it could either be made operational or be towed away. The driver complied and the two police officers drove back to the site of the disabled truck.

The truck was facing east on the roadway and Cst. Cobble parked the police cruiser 35 yards behind it, facing west. He left the cruiser's motor running and its headlights on while he went back to the truck to check its licence plate. As the officer was standing in front of the truck, he put his foot up on the bumper in order to make notes on the writing pad on his knee.

Back in the cruiser, Sgt. Cantrill saw headlights approaching at speed from the west. He slipped over behind the steering wheel of the cruiser and flicked the lights from dim to bright several times. This didn't seem to have any effect on the on-coming truck. Sgt. Cantrill watched with concern as the huge vehicle rumbled past his position without braking. At the last moment, he saw the truck swerve to its left in an attempt to avoid the parked coal truck. This caused the right rear of the moving truck to hit the coal truck in the left rear end. The impact of the collision made the parked truck lurch ahead and sent huge lumps of coal spraying through the air.

Sgt. Cantrill ran back to check on Cst. Cobble and found him lying on the shoulder of the road in front of the truck. His knees were drawn up and he was groaning. His fur cap was off and lay a few feet from him. Cst. Cobble was unconscious and had blood on the right side of his head. Sgt. Cantrill and a civilian who stopped to help, Victor Storozhenko, loaded him into the back seat of the cruiser and headed for the hospital in Vegreville. About halfway there, Cobble sat up with the assistance of Storozhenko, took a handkerchief from his pocket and blew his nose. Cantrill stopped the car and spoke to him but Cobble didn't answer. He lay back down and groaned.

The cruiser arrived at the hospital at 8:00 pm. While the doctors worked on the injured policeman, Sgt. Cantrill went to the phone and called Cst. Cobble's wife, Kathleen. She arrived at the hospital within minutes and stayed with him until he died from trauma of a fracture skull at four the next morning.

Cst. Cobble was buried at Riverside Cemetery in Vegreville, survived by his young widow and their infant son.