

VALE BOB GIBBS B.E.M.

17/10/1916 - 27/2/2006

It is with much sadness that I have to record the death of Robert(Bob) Gibbs. Bob was an energetic and enthusiastic genealogical researcher and through him I was introduced to a whole new branch of the "Northern Clan" of the Desmier family. I have below reproduced his obituary that was published in the Knaresborough press. The author was Alan Hemsworth.

A courageous and spirited man who truly saw the world

The world will be a sadder and a less interesting place for the passing of Bob Gibbs at the age of 89. Bob was a genuine character to match Blind Jack or any other of Knaresborough's many characters.

Bob was born in Hong Kong in 1916. He grew up in India in the days of the British Raj. He came to England with his younger brother in 1926 (his mother and sister followed a year or two later) to attend an English boarding school and he eventually arrived in Knaresborough via Surrey, Bradford and Normanston, a Japanese prisoner of war camp and Korea.

Although he worked on the railway before the war and could have sat out the Second World War in a reserve occupation he volunteered for the forces as soon as war was declared.

He was eventually posted to Hong Kong where he was captured by the Japanese in December 1941. He was transported to the Japanese mainland to various prison camps and at one stage had to work as a stevedore in docks unloading rice, coal and metals.

Throughout the four years of hardship in captivity he still had an eye for beauty. During his time as a prisoner of war he first saw and grew to love Mount Fuji and cherry blossom. Having spent four years in captivity, Bob then served in the Korean War. Never one to miss an opportunity he even managed a trip to Mount Fuji before returning to England.

After leaving the forces, he trained as a games, geography and later a maths teacher. He taught at Christchurch in Harrogate, Boroughbridge Secondary Modern School and from 1971 until his retirement in 1978 at King James's School, Knaresborough.

He had a genuine interest in pupils in his charge. Even years after having a particular class he would

enquire after a pupil. 'Is he/she doing ok?'

Bob was a keen sportsman with an enduring love of walking (both fell walking and competitive road walking for which he won several medals), cricket (despite



coming to Yorkshire via Surrey he was a passionate supporter of Yorkshire County Cricket Club) and golf. He was for many years a leading figure in local schools athletics.

On retirement, Bob travelled to every continent. His daughter Margaret remembers one occasion when Bob (aged about 80) was told off by his Aunt (aged 98) for sleeping rough in Africa!

He crossed the Nullarbor Plain in Australia by bus (a journey of three or four days), he travelled from Calgary to California by Greyhound coach, he travelled the length of South America, running into Shining Path guerrillas on the way. He visited Russia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, the Galapagos Islands, Kenya, the Kalahari Desert, Borneo, China, India and Pakistan.

A few years ago he even returned to Japan for a ride on the bullet train and to see his beloved Mount Fuji again.

Take a tip from Bob and visit Chile or failing that the English Lake District.

How typical of Bob to die not in a nursing home unable to look after himself but on February 27 on a holiday in Tenerife (three and a half weeks into a four week winter break in the sunshine). He got value for money even on this last holiday!

A courageous and spirited man who kept going to the end, Bob leaves a daughter (Margaret) and son-in-law (Richard) and many friends and acquaintances in Knaresborough and all over the world.