

## **Major John Robert Cosgrove (1885-1976), D.S.O, M.C., M.E.I.C.,**



He was a soldier, engineer, lumber industry engineer and representative in Canada, and a timber utilization specialist in Britain.

He was born to John and Emma Cosgrove, in Armagh County, Ireland, and educated at the Belfast Royal Academy and the Glasgow and West of Scotland Technical College. In 1896, he joined the First Droghen Company, Boys' Brigade, and later spent three years with the Fifth Volunteer Battalion Highland Light Infantry.

His first job was with the company of Messrs. Sir Robert McAlpine and Sons, Railway Dock and Public Works Contractors, where he first worked as a timekeeper, measurer, and cost clerk. He continued his work with McAlpine and Sons from 1903 to 1908 in order to complete his civil engineer apprenticeship. He was eventually placed in charge of the construction of the Waterford and Rosslare Railway and the Rosslare Harbour Reclamation Wall, and later served as a manager with the company. From 1908 to 1909, Cosgrove was at the Royal Technical College in Glasgow, where he worked as an evening class Assistant Instructor in Surveying.

In 1909, Cosgrove moved to Canada. Later that year, he worked as a Lands Surveys and Resident Engineer at Essondale, B.C., and also completed surveying work in New Westminster. By 1910, he was the Resident Engineer for A.J. Hull at a B.C. provincial farm at Mount Coquitlam and later that year became the Engineer for North Vancouver, where he was involved in local surveys, highway location, timber cruising, land-clearing, bridge building, road building, wharf construction, water works installations, and other activities. He directed the location of Marine Drive, Indian River Drive, and Keith Road deviation, as well as laying out the District's natural parks.

Soon after he moved to North Vancouver, Cosgrove was followed to Canada by his brother William and his mother Emma. John also built a house for his mother around 1913 on 540 East Kings Road in North Vancouver. It was there he first met his future wife Sarah Radcliff.

In 1912, he joined North Vancouver's Sixth Field Company of Canadian Engineers. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Cosgrove was sent with the first draft of the Sixth Field Company to Valcartier Quebec. There he joined 1 Field Company of the First Canadian Division (C.E.F.). The Company then sailed to England, arriving in October of 1914; he was posted to Flanders in 1915. After the second battle of Ypres, Cosgrove was awarded the Military Cross. By 1917, he was a Captain and had been transferred to the Canadian Railway Troops. With them he took part in the Battle of Messines Ridge, the third battle of Ypres, and the battle of Passchendaele. By the end of the war, he was promoted to the rank of Major, and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

During the war, Cosgrove married Sarah Frances Radcliff at St. Andrew's Church in Plymouth, England, on May 15, 1915. Their son, John Travers Cosgrove, was born in North Vancouver in 1920. John would later serve with the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers in WWII.

Upon returning from the War, Cosgrove he first resumed his position as Engineer of North Vancouver. In 1920, he became the Logging Engineer and Assistant Forest Superintendent of the Capilano Timber Company, where he was involved in surveys, locating and constructing logging railways, and other logging activities. He was also involved in foreign trade studies and was a Licensed Inspector for the Pacific Lumber Inspection Bureau for British Columbia. After the birth of his son in 1920, members of Sarah's family moved to North Vancouver, including her mother Emma Radcliff, and her sisters Gertrude, (an artist and wood carver), Florence (who ran Vanity Fair Drygoods on 2527 Lonsdale Ave.), and Kathleen (later Kathleen Thompson).

In 1923, Cosgrove became the City Engineer and Manager in Trail, B.C. In this year he also received his full membership into the Engineering Institute of Canada. From 1923 to 1925, he worked as the B.C. Lumber Trade Commissioner in Toronto, Ontario, where he was in charge of trade extension work in Eastern Canada on behalf of the B.C. government and timber industry.

In 1925 he moved back to the UK and from then until 1935 e was the Officer in Charge for the Section of Timber Utilization of the Forest Products Research Laboratory in Princes Risborough, England, where he was involved in research and instruction in various areas of logging. At this time, his wife and son moved from North Vancouver via Poughkeepsie and New York to England.

In 1935, Cosgrove was made the Joint Director and Market Development Officer of the Colonial Forest Resources and Development Department of the Colonial Office. In this position, he organized work regarding the development of markets for timber from Commonwealth countries.

From 1946 to 1954, he worked with the War Graves Commission as Clerk of Works. He retired in 1954, dying in February of 1976.