

---

# JAMES HENRY BLUNDELL

---

## Constable, 1931-1946

*Written & researched by John Burchill  
August 4, 2022. Winnipeg Police Museum*



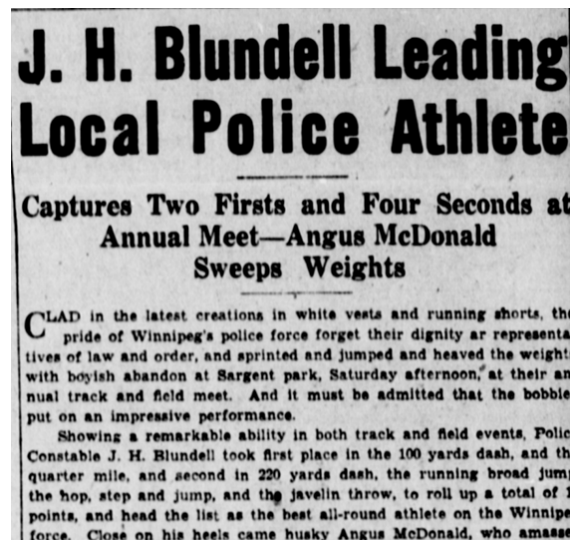
James Blundell was born in Winnipeg on December 12, 1909. On December 20, 1926, shortly after turning 17, James joined the Winnipeg Electric Company as a motorman. James remained with the Winnipeg Electric Company until February 12, 1931, when he was laid off.<sup>1</sup>

James was also a member of the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, working directly under Major General Huntley Ketchen. The latter, as the commanding officer of Military District 10, provided a reference for James.<sup>2</sup>

At 6'1¾" and 175 pounds, and with a solid work and military background, James was a perfect fit for the Winnipeg Police Force. He was hired as a probationary officer on April 18, 1931.

Besides a solid work reputation, James was also a solid athlete and stood out almost immediately in the various athletic events hosted by the Winnipeg Police during their annual track and field days. In fact, during his first track and field meet in 1932, he won the Board of Police Commissioners Cup for best overall athlete, placing first in the 100-yard dash and the quarter mile run; and second in the long jump, triple jump and javelin. He would go on to win the cup two more times.

J.H. Blundell captures 2 First & 4 Seconds  
August 29, 1932, Winnipeg Tribune



---

<sup>1</sup> A motorman is a person who operates streetcar. They are in charge of the motor (of the electric car) in the same sense as a railroad engineer is in charge of the engine. The Winnipeg Electric Company (formerly the Winnipeg Electric Railway Company) was the transit provider to the city of Winnipeg from April 5, 1924 until May 29, 1953 when it became Greater Winnipeg Transit Commission.

<sup>2</sup> Ketchen was in charge of the military during the Winnipeg General Strike. After he retired from the military in 1929, he was elected as a Conservative candidate for Winnipeg in the 1932 provincial general election. He was re-elected in 1936 and 1941.



Board of Police Commissioners Cup  
Presented to J.H. Blundell in 1932, 33, 34

As I previously wrote about in the article on Angus McDonald, the Winnipeg Police annual track and field day was not only for police officers. It also attracted some of the premier athletes in the province. According to a January 9, 1932, article in the Winnipeg Free Press, “many athletes that are internationally known gained their first experience in events staged by the WPAA, [including] Cyril Coaffee, Laurie Armstrong, and Brant Little, Olympic runners”.<sup>3</sup>

James would continue to compete in the Winnipeg Police track and field days until the late 1930s, continuing to place first in the javelin and long jump events. In fact, James would set a Winnipeg Police games record for the javelin in 1937.

However, younger and faster runners like former Canadian record holder in the 100 and 200-yard dash, Alister Swanston, would join the Winnipeg Police in 1937.

On February 6, 1940, James entered service with the Royal Canadian Air Force at Winnipeg, reaching the rank of Warrant Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class.

On June 2, 1943, James was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE), on the advice of Canadian Ministers, Military Division. He also received the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal (1939-1947), British War Medal (1939-1945), and Canadian Forces Decoration (CD).

On April 11, 1946, after the War, James decided to remain with the RCAF and resigned from the Winnipeg Police.

Blundell sets javelin record.  
August 23, 1937, Winnipeg Tribune



<sup>3</sup> At the 1924 Olympic trials Cyril Coaffee tied the Olympic record with a 10.8 second time in the 100 yard dash and went to the Paris Games as Canada's team captain; Laurie Armstrong also competed in the 1924 Olympics in the 100 and 200 yard dashes and the 4x100 relay; and Brant Little competed in the men's 800 metres at the 1928 Summer Olympics.

James was killed by an impaired driver just outside of Edmonton on November 16, 1956. Also killed in the crash were his wife and his mother-in-law. At the time of his death, James was still serving in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

James was buried with military honours at Beechmount Cemetery, Edmonton.



On the advice of Canadian Ministers, Military Division, James was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) on June 2, 1943. Winnipeg Police Chief George Smith was also awarded the MBE at the same time.

\*\*\*\*

**NOTE:** Anyone wishing to recognize a police member they feel made sustained and substantial contributions to policing in Winnipeg and its surrounding municipalities during the past 150 years is asked to send me their name and (if known) a brief description of their accomplishments.