

Bombardier Robert Robertson
Regimental number: 141314
81st Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery

born: about 1884 - died: 27 September 1918

Bombardier Robert Robertson was born in about 1884 in Preston, Lancashire, the eldest son of George William and Mary Jane Robertson.¹ His father, George, was born in about 1860 in Walton-le-Dale, Lancashire, and his mother, Mary Jane in about 1855 in Preston. George married Mary Jane (nee Rogers) in 1882 in Preston.² They probably had three children – Robert, William (born in about 1886) and George (born in about 1888) – before Mary Jane died in 1893.³

In 1895, Robert's father remarried. George married Sarah Alice Pomfret in Preston.⁴ They had two children:⁵ Thomas Pomfret (born in about 1896)⁶ and a second child who was born and died before 1911.

In 1891, George, Mary Jane and their children were living at 6 Bispham Street, Preston, where George was a tape sizers labourer.⁷ After the death of Mary Jane, George and Sarah Alice with three children, including Robert, were living at 5 Roman Road, Preston, and George was an oiler in a cotton mill.⁸ Robert, aged 17, was also working in a cotton mill, as a cotton weaver. In 1911, they are recorded as living at 35 Roman Road and Robert was still a cotton weaver. ⁹

Robert enlisted in the Royal Garrison Artillery in Preston, Lancashire on 6 December 1915.¹⁰ When he enlisted at the age of 32, he was an overlooker,¹¹ 5' 6" tall and a non-Conformist. He had previously served for three years with the 5th R.L.G.A.

After he enlisted, but before he went to the Front, Robert married Annie Kirkland.¹² They were married on 14 July 1917 at the Independent Chapel in Preston. He remained in England until 4 November 1917, when he went to France. On 5 November 1917, his promotion to Bombardier was confirmed.

He had a number of hospital stays between December 1917 and April 1918, but was discharged to a rest camp in April and rejoined his unit on 6 June. Then, on 10 July 1918, he was injured – he sustained a bruised foot in the performance of his duty, but he was not to blame. The statement given by Corporal D. J. Driscoll (Royal Garrison Artillery, Regimental number: 29700) noted:

In the field on 10th July 1918 about 9.45 p.m. I was taking a gun into position in the gun pit. On levering it down the ramp the trail slipped to a flank, owing to the greasy nature of the ground as it swung round it pinned Bomb^r Robertson's left foot against a pile of shells, injuring him. He was taken to a Field Ambulance.¹³

Robert and his wife, Annie, had a daughter, Janey, born on 18 May 1918.¹⁴ Sadly just months after the birth of his daughter, Robert was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.¹⁵ He was unconscious and had shrapnel wounds to his head when he was admitted on 26 September. He died the next day and was buried that day in Duisans British Military Cemetery (Grave 12, Plot 7, Row A) with the Canadian chaplain W. Fisher presiding.

Duisans British Military Cemetery is located in Etrun, near Arras, in France. The first burials took place in the cemetery in March 1917.¹⁶ The 1st CCCS arrived at the beginning of September and was stationed near Duisans for two months in the autumn of 1918.¹⁷ A total of 75 patients died at the 1st CCCS in September 1918.

Robert's wife was his next-of-kin and was notified of his death. At the time, she was living at 216 Manchester Road, Frenchwood in Preston. She received the monies owing to him from the army after his death.¹⁸ She also received his personal possessions, including two discs, letters, photos, a pipe, a metal match box, a wallet, a key, a cap badge, a safety razor (in case), a razor, a notebook, a gunnery certificate, a postcard and a tobacco pouch.¹⁹

Robert was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁰

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¹ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 February 2016), entry for Robert Robertson, Registration district: Preston, Sub registration district: St Peter, ED, institution, or vessel: 21, Piece: 3439, Folio: 28, Page Number: 30

² "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 January 2016), entry for George William Robertson, Registration district: Preston, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 1006

³ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 January 2016), entry for Mary Jane Robertson, Registration district: Preston, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 420

⁴ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 6 February 2016), entry for George William Robertson, District: Preston, County: Lancashire, Volume: 8E, Page: 1005

⁵ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 February 2016), entry for Robert Robertson, Registration district: Preston, Registration District Number: 476, Sub-registration district: East Preston, ED, institution, or vessel: 15, Piece: 25258

⁶ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 February 2016), entry for Thomas Pomfret Robertson, Registration district: Preston, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 590

⁷ "1891 England Census," entry for Robert Robertson, Registration

⁸ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 February 2016), entry for Robert Robertson, Registration district: Preston, Sub-registration district: Trinity, ED, institution, or vessel: 08, Piece: 3944, Folio: 9, Page Number: 9, Household schedule number: 56

⁹ "1911 England Census," entry for Robert Robertson

¹⁰ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 February 2016), entry for Robert Robertson. Unless otherwise sourced, all information about his military record comes from this source.

¹¹ An overlooker was an overseer or foreman of work in a textile mill. "Dictionary of Old Occupations," Family Researcher (<http://www.familyresearcher.co.uk/>; accessed 8 February 2016)

¹² "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 8 February 2016), entry for Robert Robertson, District: Preston, County: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 1037

¹³ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920," entry for Robert Robertson

¹⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 February 2016), entry for Thomas Pomfret Robertson, Registration district: Preston, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 610

¹⁵ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2016), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 678

¹⁶ "Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org; accessed 7 October 2015)

¹⁷ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 17 June 2015)

¹⁸ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 28 January 2016), entry for Robert Robertson

¹⁹ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920," entry for Robert Robertson

²⁰ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 28 January 2016), entry for Robert Robertson