

Sergeant Robert Harper[©]

Regimental number: 43249

17th (3rd Glasgow) Battalion, Highland Light Infantry

born: about 1894 – died: 4 September 1917

Sergeant Robert Harper was born in about 1894,¹ the son of John and Euphemia Harper of Cowdenbeath, Fifeshire, Scotland.² His father John was born in about 1844 in Quarter, Lanarkshire, and his mother, the former Euphemia McBeath, was born in about 1852 in Carnock, Fifeshire.³ They married in Hamilton, Lanarkshire on 29 December 1871⁴ and had at least eight children: Thomas (born in about 1873),⁵ Charles (born in about 1874),⁶ John (born in about 1880),⁷ Margaret (born in about 1880),⁸ Archie (born in about 1883),⁹ Lily (born in about 1886),¹⁰ Jessie (born in about 1891)¹¹ and Robert.

In 1881, the family was living in Dalsersf, Lanarkshire, where Robert's father John was a coal miner.¹² Twenty years later, they were at 8 Park Avenue, Springhill, Fifeshire.¹³ Robert was a scholar and his father was still mining.

Robert enlisted in the Highland Cyclist Battalion (Regimental number: 1424) in Kirkcaldy, Fifeshire. Later he transferred to the Highland Light Infantry, where he was a sergeant.

In early September 1917, the 17th Battalion was on the front line near Nieuwport, Belgium.¹⁴ The battalion had been subject to continuous enemy shelling. Parties carried out daring sorties through swampy ground to collect information. On 3 September, the battalion was replaced by the 11th Border Regiment and went to billets at Queensland Camp in Oost Dunkerke. The next morning was uneventful and the soldiers were engaged mainly in training; however, at 2 p.m. the enemy shelled the camp and a hut occupied by B Company was hit. Two sergeants who were inside were killed and one sergeant and three soldiers from the non-officer ranks were wounded. It is likely that Robert was the sergeant wounded in the attack. He was admitted on 4 September to No 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with wounds to his abdomen and face.¹⁵ He died the same day and was buried the following day in Adinkerke Military Cemetery (Grave Reference: E. 1).¹⁶

Adinkerke Military Cemetery is 20 kilometres east of Dunkirk, in the community of De Panne, just across the border into Belgium. There are 168 Commonwealth soldiers from the Great War buried in the cemetery.¹⁷

Robert's sister, Mrs D. Nisbit of Effreville, Calderhead, Shotts in Lanarkshire, was his next of kind and was notified of his death.¹⁸ However, the monies owing to him from the army upon his death were sent to Robert's father.

Robert was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).¹⁹

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¹ "1901 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2016), entry for Robert Harper, Enumeration district: 1, Household schedule number: 35, Line: 20, Roll: CSSCT1901_133

² *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 3 December 2016), entry for Harper, R., Service No 43249

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- ³ "1901 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2016), entry for Robert Harper
- ⁴ "Scotland, Select Marriages, 1561–1910," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 March 2016), entry for John Harper, FHL film number: 6035516
- ⁵ "1881 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 July 2016), entry for John Harper, Enumeration District: 3, Household schedule number: 181, LINE: 15, Roll: cssct1881_211
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ "1901 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2016), entry for Robert Harper
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² "1881 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 July 2016), entry for John Harper
- ¹³ "1901 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2016), entry for Robert Harper
- ¹⁴ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 July 2016), Regiment or Unit: Highland Light Infantry, Sub-unit: 17th (Service) Battalion (3rd Glasgow), Division: 32nd Division, Diary entry start date: 1915, Diary Dates: 1915 Nov - 1918 Jan
Piece Description: Piece 2403/3: 17 Battalion Highland Light Infantry (1915 Nov - 1918 Jan), Piece number: 2403
- ¹⁵ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 23 July 2016), entry for Harper, A.
- ¹⁶ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 3 December 2016), entry for Harper, R.
- ¹⁷ "Adinkerke Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 30 April 2016)
- ¹⁸ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 23 July 2016), entry for Harper, A
- ¹⁹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2016), entry for Robert Harper