

Private Robert William Shakespeare
Regimental number: 6141
8th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment)

born: 2 Aug 1897 – died: 13 July 1916

Private Robert William Shakespeare was born on 2 August 1897 in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, the only son of Robert and Hannah Shakespeare.¹ He was baptized at St Mary's Church in Walton-on-Thames on 10 October 1897. His father, also Robert William, was born in about 1866 in Stratford-upon-Avon and his mother, the former Hannah Eliza Tanner (later known as both Hannah and Eliza), was born in about 1876 in Chessington, Surrey.² They married on 28 May 1892 at St Mary's, in Stoke d'Abernon, Surrey,³ and had four children: Winnie Elizabeth (born in about 1893),⁴ Hannah May (born in about 1895),⁵ Robert William and Hilda Violet (born in about 1901).⁶

In 1901, the family was living at 3 Cottimore Terrace in Walton-on-Thames, where Robert Senior was a groom and Robert's mother a charwoman.⁷ Ten years later, the family had moved to Beaufort Mews in Twickenham, now a suburb of London, where Robert Senior was now a horse keeper and Robert Junior was a butcher.⁸

Robert Junior enlisted as a private in The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) in Richmond, Surrey,⁹ and joined the Front in France on 31 August 1915.¹⁰ In the first half of July 1916, the 8th Battalion was probably in the trenches in Belgium, conducting repairs and mounting working parties. There were a few casualties almost every day. On 13 July, working parties were carried out as usual and one Other Rank (non-officer) was wounded. This may have been Robert, since he died of wounds at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 13 July.¹¹ In July 1916, No. 1 CCCS received 2,810 admissions, of whom 70 died.¹²

Robert was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Grave Reference: Plot II, Row E, Grave 41). Bailleul is in France, but near the Belgian border, about 15 kilometres southwest of Ypres.¹³ It had become an important hospital centre for not just No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station but also No. 1 Australian and five British Army casualty clearing stations. The cemetery contains 4,403 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, 17 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War and 154 German burials from both wars.

The monies owing to Robert from the army upon his death were sent to his mother, who was living at 13 Devoncroft Road in Twickenham.

Robert was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914–15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).¹⁴ He is remembered on a war memorial plaque in St Mary the Virgin Church on Church Street in Twickenham.¹⁵

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¹ "Surrey, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2017), entry for Robert William Shakespeare, Reference Number: 7346/1/1

² "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2017), entry for Robert Shakespeare, Registration district: Chertsey, Sub-registration district: Walton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 03, Piece: 587, Folio: 58, Page: 17, Household schedule number: 100

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- ³ "Surrey, England, Church of England Marriages, 1754–1937," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2017), entry for Hannah Eliza Tanner, Reference Number: 8909/1/3
- ⁴ "Surrey, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2017), entry for Winnie Elizabeth Shakespeare, Reference Number: COB/3/3
- ⁵ "Surrey, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2017), entry for Hannah May Shakespeare, Reference Number: 8909/1/1
- ⁶ "Surrey, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2017), entry for Hilda Violet Shakespeare, Reference Number: 7346/1/1
- ⁷ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2017), entry for Robert Shakespeare
- ⁸ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2017), entry for Robert Shakespeare, Registration district: Brentford, Registration district number: 128, Sub-registration district: Twickenham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 9, Household schedule number: 334, Piece: 6842
- ⁹ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2017), entry for Robert Shakespeare
- ¹⁰ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2017), entry for Robert Shakespeare
- ¹¹ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 5 July 2017), entry for Shakespeare, R
- ¹² "War Diaries – 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *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 23 August 2016)
- ¹³ "Bailleul Community Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 January 2017)
- ¹⁴ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2017), entry for Robert Shakespeare
- ¹⁵ "Middlesex War Memorials," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2017), entry for R W Shakespeare