

Private William Mitchell Milne[©]
Regimental number: S/12137
1st Battalion, Gordon Highlanders

born: about 1896 - died: 24 May 1918

Private William Mitchell Milne was born at 7:30 a.m. on 25 March 1896 at 70B Marischal Street, Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, the son of William and Elizabeth Milne.¹ Both his parents were born in Aberdeenshire—William in Rathen in about 1872 and Elizabeth, less than 15 miles away, in Peterhead in about 1868.² William, a farm servant, had married Elizabeth Philips on 16 December 1891 in Peterhead³ and the couple had at least four children—all sons: George Philip (born in about 1888), James (born in about 1894), William and Richard (born in about 1899).⁴

In 1901, the family was living at Brawbymuir Cottar House, Benholm, in Kincardineshire, where William senior was a ploughman, working on a farm.⁵

It is not known where William and/or his family were living in 1911. But, in 1915, William enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force in Aberdeen.⁶ He enlisted in the Gordon Highlanders, probably in May 1915⁷ and went to France on 24 November of the same year.⁸ He survived two and a half years on the Front.

At the beginning of May 1918, William's battalion was stationed near Chocques, just west of Bethune, in northern France. On 19 May, two working parties from the battalion were engaged in burying cables in Hinges Chateau. During the night of 19/20 May, one party lost a lieutenant and sustained seven casualties. The other came under heavy gas bombardment; seven men were wounded and 12 gassed. By the evening of 20 May, there were 120 cases of gas poisoning, including several officers. That day the battalion relieved the 2nd Royal Scots Regiment, which had suffered greater casualties than the Gordons. On 24 May 1918, the battalion relieved 2nd Suffolk Regiment, with apparently no casualties.⁹ However, William was injured at some point and admitted on 24 May to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station. He died the same day of shrapnel wounds and a fractured skull and was buried in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row C, Grave 11) on 24 May, with the Canadian chaplain R. K. Lambert presiding.¹⁰ He was just 22 years old.

This military cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.¹¹ William was one of 200 injured admitted to No 1. CCCS on 24 May 1918. In total, nearly 4,000 soldiers were admitted to this CCCS in the month of May and 115 died.¹²

William's next of kin was identified as Mrs. J. Milne, who was living at 181 Grate Northern Road, Woodside, in Aberdeen, but it is not certain who this was. Perhaps it was the wife of his eldest brother James or perhaps it was a mistake and should have been Mrs. E. Milne, his mother. Whoever it was, she was sent a letter informing the family of William's death.¹³ The monies owing to William from the army upon his death were sent to his father and a Mary A. Rioch.¹⁴ It is also not known who this was or her relationship to William.

William was awarded posthumously 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).¹⁵

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- ¹ “Statutory Registers–Births,” *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>: accessed 19 May 2018) entry for Milne, William Mitchell, Reference: 231/1 122, Registration district: Peterhead
- ² “1901 Scotland Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 March 2018), entry for William Mitchell Milne, Enumeration district: 2, Household schedule number: 38, Line: 5, Roll: CSSCT1901_81
- ³ “Statutory Registers–Births,” *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>: accessed 19 May 2018) entry for Milne, William Mitchell
- ⁴ “1901 Scotland Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 March 2018), entry for William Mitchell Milne
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ “UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for William Milne
- ⁷ Based on “War Gratuity Calculator” (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for William Milne
- ⁸ “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for W. Milne
- ⁹ “UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), Regiment or Unit: Gordon Highlanders, Sub-unit: 1st Battalion, Division: 3rd Division, Diary dates: 1915 Nov 1–1916 Dec 31, Piece description: Piece 1435/1-3: 76 Infantry Brigade: 1 Battalion Gordon Highlanders (1915 Nov–1919 Apr), Piece number: 1435
- ¹⁰ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 11 April 2018), entry for Milne, W.
- ¹¹ “Pernes British Military Cemetery,” *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 13 January 2015)
- ¹² “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 15 December 2014)
- ¹³ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 11 April 2018), entry for Milne, W.
- ¹⁴ “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for William Milne
- ¹⁵ “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for W. Milne