

Private Alexander Turnbull©
Regimental number: 8/10998
1st Battalion, Gordon Highlanders

born: 16 September 1897 - died: 21 May 1918

Private Alexander Turnbull was born at 7:15 a.m. on 16 September 1897 at 1 Cornelius Close in Jedburgh, Roxburgh, Scotland.¹ His father, Richard Turnbull, and his mother, the former Isabella Mackenzie Graham, had married on 25 October 1878 in Yetholm, Roxburgh. Both his parents were from Jedburgh—Richard was born there in about 1854 and Isabella in about 1859²—and they had at least 11 children—five sons and six daughters—all born in Roxburgh. Alexander may have been their youngest son. He had four older brothers:

- Thomas (born in about 1883);
- Richard (born in about 1884);
- John (born in about 1886) and
- David G (born in about 1888).³

His six sisters were:

- Isabella M. (born in about 1880);
- Jessie R. (born in about 1890);
- Mary (born in about 1892);
- Christina (born in about 1894);
- Maggie (born in about 1896) and
- Sarah (born in about 1900).⁴

In 1891, the family was living at 7 Old Bridge End in Jedburgh, where Alexander's father was a mason.⁵ Ten years later, the family had moved to 7 Cornelius Close.⁶

Alexander served with the 1st Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders and had enlisted in Galashiels,⁷ in about May 1915.⁸ He went to France on 25 October 1915.⁹ Nearly three years later, his battalion was stationed in Chocques, just west of Bethune, in northern France.¹⁰ On the night of 19/20 May 1918,

[t]wo working parties [of the battalion] of 250 each worked on cable burying in HINGES château grounds. One party lost [a lieutenant] killed and 7 other casualties. The others came in for a gas bombardment of HINGES including the château and grounds. They had about 7 men wounded and [an officer] and 11 others gassed before getting back to billet. The effects of the gas made themselves felt about 8 am and by nightfall about 120 cases have been reported...¹¹

Alexander may have been with the first working party, because he was injured with shrapnel wounds to the head but not apparently gassed. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 20 May 1918 and died the following day. He was buried Pernes British Military Cemetery, France (Plot 1, Row F, Grave 39) on 22 May. Alexander was a Presbyterian and the Canadian chaplain R. K. Lambert presided over his burial.

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.¹² Alexander was one of 370 admissions to No. 1 CCCS on 20 May but, in the whole month of May, a total of nearly 4,000 soldiers were admitted to this station and 115 died.¹³

The chaplain sent a letter to Alexander's mother, who was his next of kin and living then at 3 Castlegate in Jedburgh, and she had the following inscription placed on his gravestone:

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
OUR BELOVED SON ALEX.
GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN¹⁴

Alexander 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 28 April 2018) entry for Turnbull, Alexander, Reference: 792/ 88, Registration district: Jedburgh

² "1901 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 April 2018), entry for Alexander Turnbull, Enumeration district: 5, Household schedule number: 14, Line: 16, Roll: CSSCT1901_424

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "1891 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 April 2018), entry for Richard Turnbull, Enumeration district: 1, Household schedule number: 84, Line: 5, Roll: CSSCT1891_385

⁶ "1901 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 April 2018), entry for Alexander Turnbull

⁷ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 April 2018), entry for Alexander Turnbull

⁸ 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 12 April 2018), entry for Alexander Turnbull

⁹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 April 2018), entry for Alexander Turnbull

¹⁰ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 April 2018), Regiment or unit: Gordon Highlanders, Sub-unit: 1st Battalion, Division: 3rd Division, Diary dates: 1915 Nov 11–1916 Dec 31, Piece description: Piece 1435/1-3: 76 Infantry Brigade: 1 Battalion Gordon Highlanders (1915 Nov–1919 Apr), Piece number: 1435

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Pernes British Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 13 January 2015)

¹³ "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>)

http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 15 December 2014)

¹⁴ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 26 April 2018), entry for Turnbull, A. Service No: S/10998

¹⁵ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 April 2018), entry for Alexander Turnbull