

## **Private Andrew Black Forsyth<sup>©</sup>**

**Regimental number: 32874**

**"C" Company, 6th Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment**

**born: 1889–died: 3 October 1918**

Private Andrew Black Forsyth was born in 1889<sup>1</sup> and baptized on 11 September 1889 in Deptford, Durham, the son of David and Margaret Forsyth.<sup>2</sup> Both Andrew's parents were born in Sunderland—David Forsyth in 1866 and Margaret Black in about 1863.<sup>3</sup> They married in Sunderland at the beginning of 1889.<sup>4</sup> Andrew would be their only child.

Andrew's father was a police constable. Just after Andrew was born, the young family was living at 39 Trimdon Street West in Sunderland with two other families—Margaret's parents, Andrew and Mary Ann Black, and Joseph and Lucy Reay and their daughter.<sup>5</sup>

In 1901, the family was still at 39 Trimdon Street West. Andrew's grandfather had died but his grandmother Mary Ann was still living with them. The Reay family was still there and another family, Patrick and Hannah Feeney and their daughters, had moved in.<sup>6</sup> By 1911, the Forsyth family had moved to a three-room house at 48 Robinson Terrace. Andrew was a general labourer in a shipyard and his father was a police constable with the Sunderland Borough. Margaret Logan, a widowed aunt,<sup>7</sup> was living with them.<sup>8</sup>

By the time Andrew enlisted in the army in 1915, the family was living at 2 Canon Cockin Street in Hendon, Sunderland, and Andrew was working as a labourer for the Northeastern Marine Engineering Company in Sunderland. About the time he was working there, the company specialized in marine engines and boilers and employed 3,000 to 4,000 people.<sup>9</sup>

The 6th Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment (known as the Yorks & Lancs) was formed at Pontefract, Yorkshire, in August 1914. A year later, the battalion went to Gallipoli and then moved to Egypt. In July 1916, the battalion went to France.<sup>10</sup> It was there that Andrew joined them.

Andrew enlisted on 4 December 1915 in Sunderland, but initially went into the Army Reserve.<sup>11</sup> He was eventually mobilized on 19 January 1917 and left Folkestone on 13 May heading for Boulogne, France. In November of that year, he was admitted to No. 8 General Hospital in Rouen with a fever. His illness was not identified in his service file, but he was eventually repatriated to England, where he remained until March 1918. He had only been back in France for just over six months when he was fatally wounded.

At the beginning of October 1918, the 6th Battalion was stationed near Épinoy, about 10 kilometres northwest of Cambrai.<sup>12</sup> An attack was launched on 1 October with the Canadian Corps leading in the morning and the British 11th Division, including Andrew's battalion, following. The 6th Battalion was to secure the left flank down to the Douai–Cambrai Road. Andrew was in the "C" Company, which was to keep in touch with the leading companies and assist where necessary. The whole battalion was subjected to heavy shell and machine gun fire, causing many casualties. It appears that only one company reached its objective, but the others were able to hold their positions until relieved in the evening. It is not known how Andrew was wounded, but he may well have been one of the casualties of this attack.

Andrew was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 2 October 1918 with gunshots to his abdomen. He died the following day.<sup>13</sup> A casualty clearing station (CCS) was a military medical unit behind the front lines, usually located near transportation. Casualties who did not die or could not be adequately treated in the CCS were stabilized before being transported to a field or military hospital.<sup>14</sup>

He was buried on 3 October in Duisans British Military Cemetery (Plot 8, Row A, Grave 59) with the Canadian chaplain W. Fisher presiding. This cemetery is located in Étrun, near Arras, France. The first burials in the cemetery took place in March 1917.<sup>15</sup> No. 1 CCCS arrived at the beginning of September 1918 and was stationed near Duisans for two months in the autumn of 1918. As a result of the serious and urgent nature of the cases admitted to No. 1 CCCS, the death rate was considered to be high in October—a total of 83 deaths occurred during the month.<sup>16</sup>

A letter was sent to Andrew's father David, who was still living on Canon Cockin Street, to notify the family of Andrew's death.<sup>17</sup> His father also received the monies owing to Andrew from the army upon his death<sup>18</sup> and the possessions Andrew had with him when he died—a disk and strap, photos, paper, a wallet, a religious book, cards, a watch and chain, a metal ring, a cigarette maker, a cigarette base and a fountain pen.<sup>19</sup>

Andrew was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>20</sup> His father David arranged to have the following inscription included on his son's gravestone:

TILL THE DAY BREAKS  
AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY<sup>21</sup>

It must have been a difficult time for Andrew's father—first is only son's death in 1918 and then the death of his wife Margaret in 1920, at the age of 57.<sup>22</sup> David himself probably died in 1938.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 4 May 2020), entry for Forsyth, Andrew Black, Registration district: Sunderland, Volume 10A, Page 509

<sup>2</sup> "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538–1975," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 March 2020), entry for Andrew Black Forsyth, FHL film number: 1894621, Reference ID: item 5 p 151

<sup>3</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 27 January 2020), entry for Andrew B. Forsyth, Registration district: Sunderland, Sub-registration district: North Bishop Wearmouth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 15b, Piece: 4130, Folio: 102

<sup>4</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 4 May 2020), entry for David Rice Forsyth, Registration district: Sunderland, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 762

<sup>5</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry*, entry for Andrew B. Forsyth

<sup>6</sup> "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 11 January 2020), entry for Andrew B. Forsyth, Registration district: Sunderland, Sub-registration district: North Bishopwearmouth [*sic*], Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 4706, Folio: 149, Page: 10, Household schedule number: 52

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Logan was probably the sister of Andrew's grandfather, William. ("1851 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 6 May 2020), entry for William Forsythe [*sic*], Registration district: Glendale,

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Sub-registration district: Ford, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 17a, Household schedule number: 27, Piece: 2422, Folio: 228, Page: 7)

<sup>8</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 5 January 2020), entry for Bruno Whittle, Registration district: Sunderland, Registration district number: 555, Sub-registration district: Sunderland East, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 04, Piece: 30185

<sup>9</sup> "North Eastern Marine Engineering Co," *Grace's Guide to British Industrial History* ([https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/North\\_Eastern\\_Marine\\_Engineering\\_Co](https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/North_Eastern_Marine_Engineering_Co) accessed 4 May 2020)

<sup>10</sup> "York & Lancaster Regiment," *The Long, Long Trail* (<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/>: accessed 4 May)

<sup>11</sup> "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 3 May 2020), entry for Andrew Black Forsyth. Unless otherwise specified, all information about Andrew's military service comes from this source.

<sup>12</sup> *The National Archives* (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>: accessed 4 May 2020), entry for 6th Battalion, York and Lancs, Reference: WO-95-1809-5\_001.jpg

<sup>13</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 24 February 2020), entry for Forsyth, A. B.

<sup>14</sup> "Casualty Clearing Station," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty\\_Clearing\\_Station](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty_Clearing_Station): accessed 2 May 2020)

<sup>15</sup> "Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org); accessed 7 October 2015)

<sup>16</sup> "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13–1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca>: accessed 26 March 2018)

<sup>17</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa*, entry for Forsyth, A. B.

<sup>18</sup> "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 3 May 2020), entry for Andrew Black Forsyth

<sup>19</sup> "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 3 May 2020), entry for Andrew Black Forsyth

<sup>20</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 26 November 2020), entry for Andrew B. Forsyth

<sup>21</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 24 February 2020), entry for Forsyth, Andrew Black

<sup>22</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 4 May 2020), entry for Margaret Forsyth, Registration district: Sunderland, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 780

<sup>23</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 4 May 2020), entry for David R. Forsyth, Registration district: Sunderland, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 704