

RONALD VICTOR RALLI ROBERTSON



9th April 1918

1888-1918 Aged 30

Private 508449 R.A.M.C., 2/1st (London) Field Ambulance.

Ronald Robertson was born in January 1888 in Kilburn, north-west London. His father John Robertson came from Weymouth in Dorset. A graduate of Queen's College Oxford, he took holy orders in the Church of England and after serving a number of parishes in London's expanding suburbs in 1896 he became Vicar of Bradford, a post he would occupy for ten years. His first wife was Mary (Maria), the daughter of a Greek merchant from Chios, Pantaleone Constantine Ralli. She bore five children, of whom Ronald was the youngest. After her death in 1898 John married Eleanor Armitage, his junior by nine years. She bore him two more children. In total the Reverend Robertson had four sons and three daughters. In 1906 he gave up Bradford for a country parish in Hampshire, probably for health reasons. His last years were blighted by chronic heart disease and in December 1913 he died in Italy where he had gone to convalesce.

Ronald attended the Bradford Grammar School for two years starting in 1897 when he was in his tenth year. He seems to have spent both years in Junior School Third Form. In 1899 he went to board at Winchester College, then in 1901 he moved to Haileybury where his elder brothers Eric and Wilfrid had been educated. Ronald was sixteen when he left in 1904. His elder sisters Alexandra and Ethel meanwhile boarded at Skipton Girls Grammar School. What Ronald did after leaving school is not known. While Eric settled in northern England and worked as a representative for Bradford Dyers Association, and Wilfrid went to the Far East as a trader, when Ronald joined the Army he was living in east London at Poplar. He enlisted in Chelsea in a Territorial Force reserve unit formed after the war began, the Second 1st London Field Ambulance. The men of the Royal Army Medical Corps did not carry weapons so it is possible that he desired to serve but did not wish to shed blood. In 1916 the Second 1st Field Ambulance became part of 56th London Division in France; Ronald did not go overseas until 1917 at the earliest.



In March 1918, 56th Division was stationed in the defences east of Arras while Second 1st Field Ambulance occupied positions in the city's north-western suburbs. The German Offensive on 21st March struck south of Arras and it was not until 28th March that a thrust was aimed at the defences around the city. This attack made little progress, but on that day Robertson's facility admitted 374 casualties, although it was equipped to treat only 150. Over the next days it moved to several different locations. On 9th April it was at Dainville where the main dressing station came under enemy shell-fire. Four R.A.M.C. privates were killed and thirteen other ranks were wounded and evacuated. Privates Dewey, Daly, Robertson and Weeks were buried side by side in the communal cemetery at Dainville where they still lie together.



Acknowledgements:

I have not been able to trace a photo of R.V.R. Robertson. The image of the R.A.M.C. badge was taken by the author. The family was researched using Ancestry.com. His B.G.S. record is in the 1898 and 1899 Annual Reports—I have assumed he is to be identified with 'R.W. Robertson' in the former (his only mention) and 'R.V. Robertson' in the latter. He is not on the Winchester College memorial site. For Haileybury College, see <http://www.hertsatwar.co.uk/fluidcms/files/files/Haileybury%20College%20R%20to%20Se/ROBERTSON%20Ronald%20Victor%20Ralli%20508449.pdf> accessed 15-3-2018. Ronald's Medal Index Card records that he had a pre-1917 number (635); *Soldiers Died in the Great War* gives Poplar as his residence and Chelsea as his place of enlistment. The 2/1 London Field Ambulance War Diary is available on Ancestry.com, Piece 2944. The *Bradford Weekly Telegraph* reported his death on 26-4-1918. He was buried in Dainville Communal Cemetery, Arras, Grave A.27.

John Robertson's career was taken from Alumni of Oxford University 1715-1886 and the Church of England Clergy List 1897 (both from Ancestry). The Yorkshire Evening Post 26th August 1906 records the appointment of his successor. There is a photo of Canon John Robertson with his sons Eric and Wilfrid taken in 1910 on the Herts at War site (above). The *Portsmouth Evening News* 26-12-1913 reported 'In 1896 he accepted the important Vicarage of Bradford, which he held for ten years, being appointed during his tenure as Hon. Canon of Ripon. In 1908 he removed to the country benefice of Monk Sherbourne, Basingstoke.' For the Ralli family, I consulted http://www.christopherlong.co.uk/gen/maximogen/fg03/fg03_393.html (accessed 15th March 2018).

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