

WILLIAM
LESLIE
MCLAREN
PIMLOTT



30th April 1918

1897-1918 Aged 20



Private 513725, 2/14th (TF) Battalion London Regiment (2nd London Scottish).

Leslie was the only child of Helen, nee McLaren, and William Bates Pimlott from Middleton, Lancashire. William began his teaching career working for his brother-in-law at a school in Eccles near Manchester. Through studying at evening classes at Owen's College he gained a London University B.A. and then M.A. He was second master at secondary schools in Surrey and Essex before he was appointed headmaster of the Salt Boys' High School in 1891, and subsequently of the Salt Grammar School. Helen was born in Glasgow, but moved to Rochdale probably after her father died. She lived with her brother-in-law who was an Inspector of Schools, and she attended a college in Manchester. They married in 1888. Leslie was born in Shipley, where they lived on Kirkgate, on 5th July 1897. After William Pimlott's early death, Helen took in lodgers. Leslie was educated first in Saltaire, then moved to the Bradford Grammar School in September 1909. For three years he was in the Classical forms. He shared his father's aptitude for French, and also did well at Latin and Greek. He left shortly after his fifteenth birthday.

When the war began Leslie was working as a clerk. Like so many young men of the time he was keen to play his part, but he was barely seventeen and had to bide his time. He joined the Volunteer Training Corps which had been established to take care of home defence when the Territorials were mobilized for service overseas. Then at the end of November 1915 he attested for service under the Derby Scheme, and he was mobilized at Halifax the following May, aged eighteen years and ten months. He was 5 feet 6 inches tall and he weighed just under 9 stones. His physical development was described as 'Good'. Leslie chose to serve in 14th Battalion London Regiment, the London Scottish, doubtless as a consequence of his mother's ancestry. Leslie received eighteen weeks basic training before he was transferred to France, then a further three

weeks before he joined the 2nd London Scottish as they emerged from a month holding trenches near Arras. Shortly after his arrival 60th (2/2nd London) Division was transferred to Salonika in Greece, where he would serve until June 1917.

Salonika was renowned by the Germans as an enormous internment camp for British, French and Serb troops. It was an unhealthy spot where British non-battle casualties exceeded battle casualties by twenty to one. Leslie went down with dysentery, and when he was fit to be discharged from hospital he was temporarily assigned to 9th Entrenching Battalion. This meant he was probably not involved in the Battle of Doiran in April-May 1917. In June, 60th Division was transferred to Egypt, and again Leslie had lengthy spells in hospital suffering from dysentery (July-August) and trench fever (December-February) before he rejoined his battalion on 3rd March. During the winter it had taken part in the capture and defence of Jerusalem. Now it was part of 'Chaytor's Column' which was ordered to strike from near Jericho across the River Jordan in the direction of Amman. On the first day of the drive, 30th April 1918, 2nd London Scottish attacked the Turks in a strongly entrenched position near Shunet Nimrin. They rushed the first position by moonlight but then ran into fire from concealed machine guns and were unable to proceed further. This is where Leslie was killed. His Service Record notes: 'Believed to be buried in Damascus District Syria. Grave unidentified.' His name is on the Jerusalem Memorial to the Missing.



Acknowledgements:

This photo in the School memorial book (courtesy of the O.B.A. and B.G.S) has no name attached to it, but there is strong reason to believe that it is Pimlott's portrait. Apart from the subject's youthful appearance, he is wearing the 'Foreign Service Helmet' made from cork, which fits Pimlott's service. The photo is fuzzy but when enlarged the cap badge does appear to have the St. Andrew's Cross on it (the London Scottish cap badge is easy to find online).

The family was researched using Ancestry.com. Helen Maclaren was difficult to identify, but in the 1881 census she was residing with her brother-in-law James Hamilton Wylie who was married to her sister Agnes. Helen left her estate to their daughter Agnes Mary. William Bates Pimlott's career was traced through articles in newspapers available in the British newspaper collection, located using findmypast.co.uk.

Leslie's years at B.G.S. are recorded in the 1910-1912 Annual Reports. Leslie's military career is taken from his Service Record, available on Ancestry.com, and the report of his death in the *Shipley Times and Express* 24th May 1918 under the title 'Young Grammarian Killed'. I have not been able to consult Bernard Blaser, *Kilts across the Jordan: Being Experiences and Impressions with the Second Battalion London Scottish in Palestine* (London: H. F. & G. Witherby, 1926) nor David R. Woodward, *Hell in the Holy Land: World War I in the Middle East*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006). For the 60th (2/2nd) London Division's role in the 1918 campaign in Palestine I have relied on the detailed account at < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Transjordan_attack_on_Shunet_Nimrin_and_Es_Salt> accessed 26th April 2018. 2/14th London Scottish were part of 179th Brigade. For Salonika I consulted H. Strachan, *The First World War*, (Simon & Schuster, London, 2003).

Helen lived the remainder of her life with a nephew at 'Barnejo', Thrybergh, near Rotherham. She died in January 1929.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper in April 2018. For further information, contact Nhooper1956@googlemail.com, or see <<http://www.bradfordgrammar.com/former-pupils/bradford-grammar-school-in-ww1/>>.