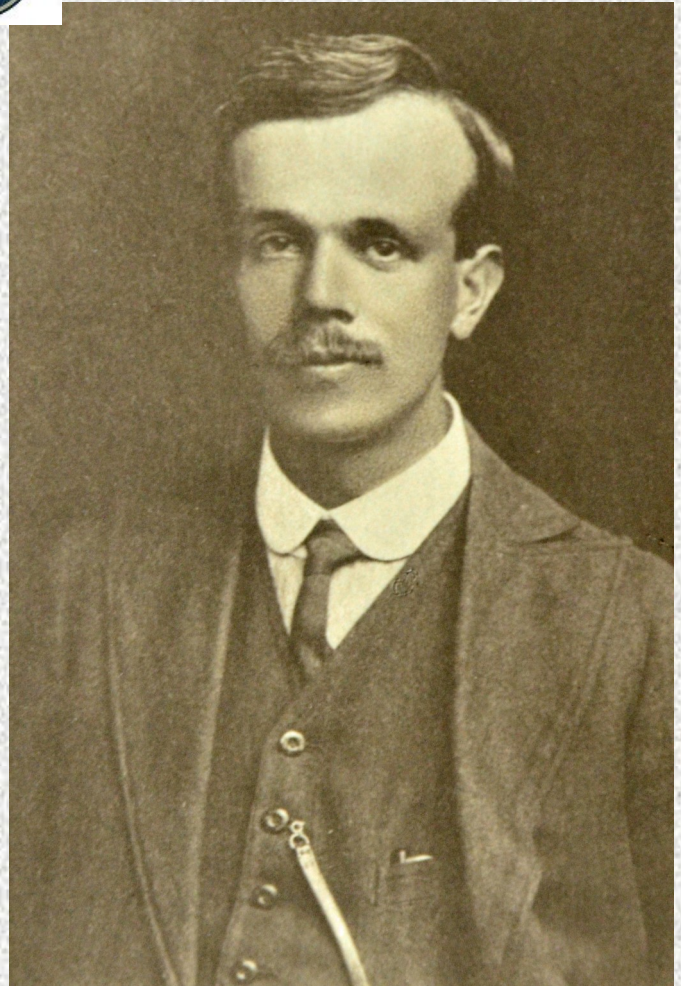


WALTER ROBERTSHAW



12th October 1918

1887-1918 Aged 32



Private 301877, 11th (Service) Battalion Worcestershire Regiment.

Walter was the second son of Catherine Elizabeth King and Hillas Robertshaw. Both were from Bradford. They married in 1883 and lived in Manningham. After an apprenticeship as a letterpress printer, Hillas worked as a compositor (typesetter) until his death in 1917. When Catherine died in 1894 Hillas did not re-marry but brought up their three boys himself, with the help of a house-keeper. Walter was born in summer 1886. All three boys would attend the Bradford Grammar School, Walter for two years from 1899 to 1901 between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. In each year he came first in both Art and Physics—indeed all three were good at physics. After a couple of years of study elsewhere, perhaps the City of Bradford School of Art, which led to the award of the A.C.T.C. he joined the Grammar School's Art Department as a Student-Assistant. In 1903 he came third in a competition to design a certificate for Bradford Baths Committee, winning a prize of £2 10s. Then in 1906 in the evening class exams he gained a First Class pass in Geometrical Drawing and a Second Class in Painting from Still Life. This was the springboard for further study. In 1908 he was awarded a Bradford Local Art Exhibition and around 1909 he was admitted to the Royal School of Art (now the Royal College) in London. At first he lived at Mill Hill in north London with his recently-married elder brother Joseph, a civil servant, and later in digs in Fulham. No detail survives of what he studied, and he apparently left in 1913 without gaining his A.R.C.A. Diploma. He was unemployed for a while, but he then secured an appointment as Art Master at the now defunct Kidderminster School of Art.

Walter did not join up until after conscription was introduced early in 1916. From the War Gratuity of £10 10s. paid to his brother it can be calculated that he was called up in June of that year. He served with the local Worcestershire Regiment, and he was sent overseas in November to join the 11th Battalion which was already serving at Salonica (Thessaloniki) in Greece as part of 26th Division. The allied garrison there was nick-named the 'Gardeners of

Salonica' on account of the relative quietness of the front against Bulgaria. It was an unhealthy location which to the Germans was in effect an internment camp. The allied troops there were prey to extreme variations in weather and to disease which accounted for more than twenty times as many casualties as enemy action, the great majority malaria cases. The stalemate was finally broken on 18 September 1918 after the allies attacked in the Battle of Doiran. While the French and Serbs enjoyed success, British forces were thrown in futile attacks against strongly defended ridges and suffered heavy losses. The Bulgarians withdrew to avoid being outflanked and an armistice came into effect on 30th September.

Walter probably avoided direct involvement in the attack because he was attached to battalion H.Q. where he was able to employ his artistic skills on mapping and similar duties. If this sounds like something from the T.V. comedy 'Blackadder Goes Forth' it is because that is founded in truth. Soldiers with artistic skills were indeed employed in sketching and mapping enemy positions. In early October he was admitted to No.42 General Hospital. He died at 6 a.m. on 12th October of 'Broncho-pneumonia and Dysentery Shiga.' The former was perhaps the result of the influenza epidemic which filled two-thirds of the graves in Kirechkoï-Hortakoi Military Cemetery near Thessaloniki where he was buried.

Old Bradfordians—'We will remember them'

'The lads that will never be old'

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Acknowledgements:

Walter Robertshaw's photo is from the OBA Memorial Book, courtesy of BGS and the OBA. Thanks to David Thompson and Val Aldridge for interrupting their holiday to photograph Robertshaw's grave, and to Keith Roberts for placing the cross and biography there. Neil Parkinson, Archives & Collections Manager at the Royal College of Art, kindly responded to my request for information. I have benefitted further from an exchange with Lucy Neville. For the R.C.A. biography for Walter see <http://remembrance.rca.ac.uk/?page_id=983>. Ancestry.co.uk was used to access census and military records relating to Robertshaw; *The Bradfordian* contains references to his place in the Art Department 1905-8, his exhibition (1908), at the RCA and his death (1918). Information about Walter is in *Bradford Daily Telegraph* 22.9.1903 and 12.7.1906, and the *Bradford Weekly Telegraph* 25.10.1918. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission record contains this information: "Son of Hillas and Catherine Elizabeth Robertshaw (formerly King). Art Master at Kidderminster School of Art. Native of Bradford."

<<http://www.worcestershireregiment.com/index.php>> aims to provide a detailed history of the 11th battalion but it was not complete at the time this profile was compiled and revised (22 March 2015, 13-6-2018). <<http://www.1914-1918.net/salonika.htm>> contains graphic descriptions of the disastrous attacks on Bulgarian positions in September 1918. Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, (2003), pp.313-15, is useful for the Macedonian Front. For the cemetery history, <<https://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/34900/kirechkoi-hortakoi-military-cemetery/>> accessed 13-6-2018.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper in 2015, expanded June and October 2018.



Cemetery photo © Val Aldridge 2014. Grave photo © Keith Roberts 2015.