

## Piper Robert Stuart Edmondston

Robert's grandfather, Robert Stuart, was born around 1834 in Edinburgh to John Edmondston and his wife Marion (nee Scott).<sup>i</sup> At the age of seventeen, Robert was recorded in the 1851 census as a 'tailor's apprentice' and lodged with Peter Scott, a tailor and his wife Caroline, his maternal grandparents in the High Street, Tranent, East Lothian.

Four years later, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1855, Robert married Isabella Minto in Edinburgh. Their first child, George Minto was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1858 in Jedburgh, but by the time his brother, John, was born on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1860, Robert and Isabella had moved to Prestonpans, a fishing village, less than two miles away from Isabella's parents in Tranent. In the 1861 census Robert was described as a 'tailor journeyman'. The couple went on to have four more children: Robert Stuart; Agnes Elizabeth; Margaret and Marion Isabella.<sup>ii</sup>

Robert and Isabella's eldest son, George Minto Edmondston, served an apprenticeship as a tailor with his father in Castlegate in Jedburgh. On completion of his training George moved to Edinburgh where he was employed by various firms before moving to Glasgow where he worked for Forsyth and Sons for a time. Around 1877, George married Wihelmina Scott, known as Minnie, a school mistress from Dundee.<sup>iii</sup>

**MR GEORGE EDMONDSTON.**  
We regret to learn of the death of Mr George Minto Edmondston which occurred suddenly at his place of residence at 12 King Edward Road, Moseley, Birmingham, on November 24th. He had been in good health for a man of his years and his death, due to heart failure, came as a sudden shock.  
Mr Edmondston was a native of Jedburgh, being a son of the late Mr R. S. Edmondston who used to be in business as a tailor in Castlegate. He served his apprenticeship with his father, but left the town when quite a young man. He went to Edinburgh where he learned the cutting and afterwards was employed with various firms in the city. Subsequently, he followed his trade for a time in far-north Lerwick, but later returned to Edinburgh. The West claimed him next and he saw service with Forsyth and Sons in Glasgow. Then over the Border and away down to Birmingham where he entered the service of Curtis and Curtis. When he forsook the last-mentioned firm he set up in business for himself and, up till lately, carried on in a successful way.  
It may be recalled that Mr Edmondston was one of the early members of Jed-Forest Instrumental Band. In 1870, at the age of 12 years, he was playing the cymbals, and three years later was a cornet player. Mr T. Armstrong was the leader then. Mr Edmondston never forgot his early connections with the Band, and it is only a matter of three weeks since the *Gazette* received a note from him recalling his associations with the Band and band-men in the seventies.  
Mr Edmondston was in his 74th year and is survived by three sons and two daughters. There were two further sons in the family—the two eldest—both of whom were killed in the war.

Figure 1: Obituary notice of William's father, George Minto Edmondston

George and Minnie's eldest sons Robert Stuart and William George were born in Maxwelton, Dumfries on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1878 and 25<sup>th</sup> March 1881 respectively.<sup>iv</sup>

Robert and William attended school in Whitehaven, Cumberland, where the family briefly lived before they moved to Hawick, Scotland, where their education continued.<sup>v</sup>

In the 1891 census, the family lived at 4 East Street, Hawick, Scotland. George was away from home leaving Minnie to look after their five children, Robert and William, together with three further children, Mary, George Minto and James born around 1885, 1888 and 1889 respectively.

After the birth of two further children, Ronald and Minnie, around 1897 and 1898 in Scotland, George and Minnie relocated to Birmingham where George found employment as a tailor's cutter with the firm Curtis and Curtis. The 1901 census recorded the family living at 60, Mary Street, Balsall Heath with their four youngest children, George and James, Ronald and Minnie.

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**Manufacturer's Stock of First Quality  
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Write or call for patterns at once.  
*If you cannot call our simple self-measurement form will secure a PERFECT FIT.*  
Our 70 years' reputation is your guarantee

**OTHER SALE SPECIALITIES:**  
All Subject to 10 per cent. Special Discount during August.

Our all wool Rain Coat, ready for wear or to measure—an invaluable holiday companion ... .. 25/-  
Golfing, Touring or Cycling Suits from 42/-  
Ladies' Rain Coats in fancy tweeds, covert coatings, etc., from ... .. 25/-  
Ladies' Costumes to measure from ... 63/-  
Fancy Waistcoats, varied stock, from 4/6  
Frock Suits from... .. 63/-  
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THIS 2½ GUINEA SUIT for 42/-  
less a further Special Discount of 10 % making Nett Cash price **38/-**

In men and sea proof Royal Navy Serges, Tweeds, Flannels, etc., etc.

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**10% "SPECIAL" 10% Discount Coupon**

AVAILABLE UNTIL AUGUST 31st.

This Coupon entitles the holder to a special cash discount of 10 per cent. on all tailoring purchases during August.

Signed CURTIS & CURTIS, Speciality Tailors.

Send or bring with you when ordering.

**GET OUT THIS OUT.**

**CURTIS & CURTIS,**  
*Speciality Tailors—Established 70 years,*  
**EXCHANGE BUILDINGS, NEW STREET,  
BIRMINGHAM.**

Figure 2: Advertisement for Curtis and Curtis, Exchange Buildings, New Street, Birmingham



**Figure 3**

**The Edmondston family. Minnie is holding her youngest daughter Minnie and George their youngest son Ronald. The other children from left to right are George, James, William, Robert and Mary**

The 1911 census recorded George and Minnie living at 89 Eastwood Road, Balsall Heath with their three youngest children, George, Ronald and Minnie Scott (known as Queenie). George was a 'master ladies and gentleman's tailor'.

George and Minnie's eldest son, Robert, became a master tailor like his father. On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1900, he married Anetta Hay, daughter of George Ogilvie at Leith, near Edinburgh.<sup>vi</sup> The 1901 census recorded the couple living at 22 Dean Park Street, Edinburgh.

By 1905 Robert and Anetta had three children: George Minto born 14<sup>th</sup> March 1902; Lily, born 26<sup>th</sup> December 1903 and Minnie, born 14<sup>th</sup> June 1905 at Leith.

By 1911, Robert relocated to Birmingham and was living with Anetta and their children at 400 Camden Street in the city centre. Robert was running his tailors outfitters from 38 John Bright Street.<sup>vii</sup> A fourth child, Robert Stuart, was born on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1913.

Robert enlisted in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (75<sup>th</sup> of Foot) Gordon Highlanders in October 1915 and given the Service Number S13585. He was recorded as a 'Piper' in the Roll of Honour at Birmingham's Hall of Memory and in an obituary

by his sister 'Queenie'.<sup>viii</sup> In May 1917 he was called up and served with the Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders.<sup>ix</sup>

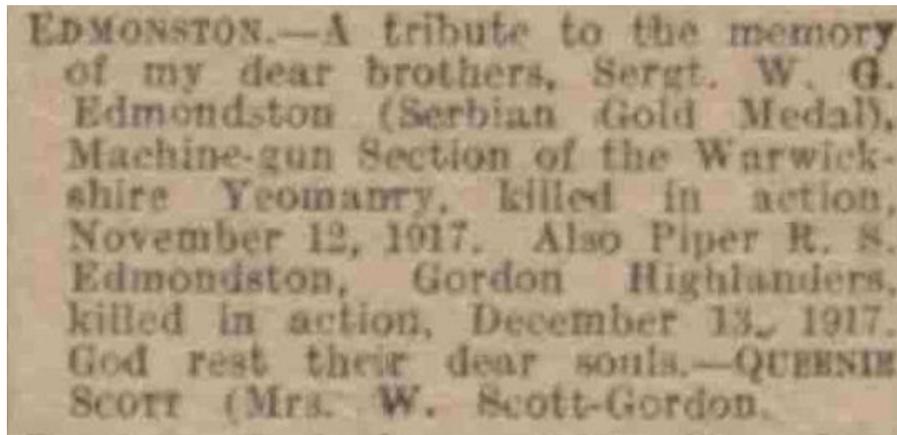


Figure 4: Obituary for William and Robert by their sister Minnie (Queenie)

The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Gordon Highlanders were part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, 76<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade stationed at Bullecourt, France in December 1917. On the day that Robert was killed, the Battalion were defending their position on the railway embankment at Écoust-St-Mein. The day was spent improving their position on the embankment and also the Écoust to Moreuil road, following a heavy enemy bombardment two days previously which had wounded nine men,<sup>x</sup>

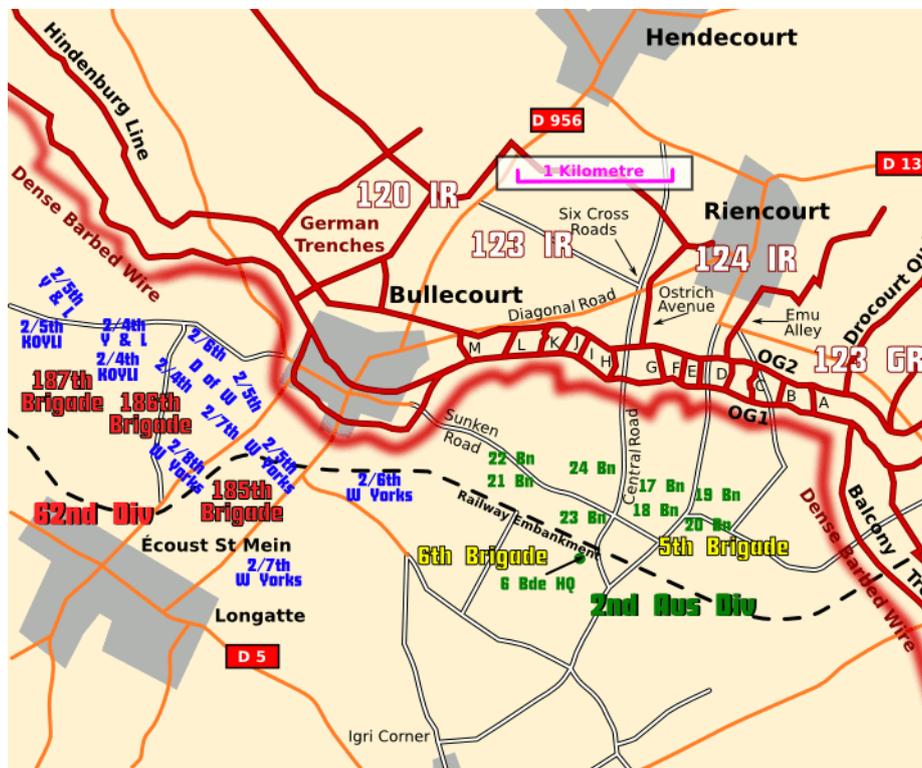


Figure 5: Map of Bullecourt showing the position of Écoust and the railway embankment

The war diary for the 14<sup>th</sup> December 1917 records that Piper Sergeant Henderson and another man had been killed.<sup>xi</sup> The other man was Robert. He had been working at night inside an attic of a farmhouse making new riding jodhpurs for his officer when he was shot by a sniper.<sup>xii</sup>

An officer wrote of him, *'He was a splendid fellow, so cheery and regardless of danger and it is this type of soldier who has made a name for Britain which she shall always keep.'*<sup>xiii</sup>

Robert was thirty-nine years old when he died. He was buried at Favreuil British Cemetery, about 5 miles SW of Bullecourt. He is also commemorated at St Mary's Church, Moseley and on the Roll of Honour at Birmingham Hall of Memory.

**Figure 6:**  
**(Near right) Robert's gravestone at Favreuil British Cemetery**  
**(Far Right) St Mary's Church, Moseley WW1 memorial**



After the war the officer for whom Robert was working visited Anetta and gave her the jodhpurs, Robert was making when he was shot. She passed these down to her daughter Minnie (Queenie).

**Written and researched by Edwina Rees, Moseley Society History Group**

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## Endnotes

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- i Johnston family tree, Ancestry
- ii Select Births 1564-1950
- iii In the 1881 census for Altringham, Cheshire , Wilhelmina was lodging with James and Martha White of the Fulshaw Wilmslow Evangelist Congregational Church  
The 1911 census records the couple had been married for 33 years
- iv De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour  
Lives of the First World War  
<https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org/lifestory/5312209>
- v De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour
- vi See v
- vii Kelly's Directory 1911
- viii *The Stage*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1919
- ix See v
- x National Archives, War diary for the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Gordon Highlanders  
Ref WO 95/1435, pp 212-3
- xi See v
- xii Source- William Gray, husband of Minnie, Ancestry
- xiii See v

## Illustrations

- Figure 1 *Jedburgh Gazette*, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1932
- Figure 2 Birmingham Daily Gazette, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1906
- Figure 3 Shortt-Smith family tree, Ancestry
- Figure 4 *The Stage*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1919
- Figure 5 Bullecourt  
<https://anzac22ndbattalion.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/bullecourt-may-1083.gif>
- Figure 6 The gravestone photograph was taken by Andrew Bruce, Robert's great grandson