

# Lance-Corporal William Drummond

William was born on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1893<sup>i</sup> to David Kininment Drummond, a commercial traveller, and Henrietta Mabel (née Porter). David and Henrietta had married in the winter of 1890 and had boarded in Wheeleys Road Edgbaston<sup>ii</sup>. The arrival of their first child, Agnes, in 1892 had necessitated a move to a home of their own, Lynton Villa in Shirley Road, Acocks Green Yardley, then in Worcestershire. The family grew rapidly and by 1911, William had four sisters and two brothers<sup>iii</sup>.

William attended Wellesbourne House School in Acocks Green. It was a private day school for boys, founded in 1885 and catered for 200 pupils from the age of 8 years. The school curriculum put emphasis on developing a keen spirit of competition both in work and games.

Amateur dramatics also played a large part in the school's activities and productions of Shakespeare and Gilbert & Sullivan were regularly given. A high standard of discipline was maintained in and out of school time. The boys were taught to doff their caps and when travelling on a bus to go inside, not on top, and to give their seats up to ladies and girls.<sup>iv</sup> From here William graduated to King Edward VI Five Ways School, Birmingham.<sup>v</sup>

In 1910 Williams father died, aged 56 years,<sup>vi</sup> and the family, following their bereavement, moved to 12 Cambridge Road, Moseley.<sup>vii</sup> By 1911, William's mother had moved to Stockton-on-Teme, Worcestershire with her two youngest daughters, leaving William, now a draper's assistant, with his eldest sister Agnes, a student, and his younger brother, David, to live at 67 Blenheim Road, Moseley with a general domestic servant.<sup>viii</sup>



William Drummond



King Edward VI Five Ways School, Birmingham Ref xv



SS Winifredian. Ref ix

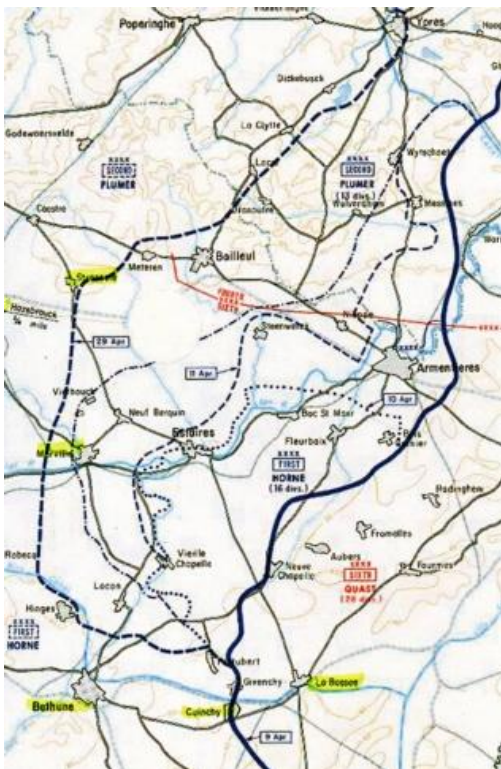
Two years later in June 1913, William joined the 'A' Company of 1/14<sup>th</sup> (London Scottish) London Regiment, a Territorial Force, becoming Private Drummond, No. 1889. At the outbreak of war, the whole battalion volunteered for overseas service. On the 14<sup>th</sup> September, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, London Regiment were mobilised, and from the London HQ, at 59 Buckingham Gate, were taken to the coast to board the *SS Winifredian*<sup>ix</sup>. They arrived at Le Havre the following day. For some weeks the

Battalion was scattered over the north of France on small detachment duties such as traffic control, ammunition loading, ambulance staff and general escorts<sup>x</sup>.

In the second week of October, the Germans captured Antwerp and the 'race for the sea' gathered speed. On the 20<sup>th</sup> the First Battle of Ypres commenced. Five days later the London Scottish received orders to concentrate at St Omer. The next day they were transported by double-decker London buses to Ypres and for the next thirty-six hours they were marched as a reserve unit to wherever a sector crisis had built up, to protect the overstretched defensive lines and to prevent the Germans breaking through to the Channel ports<sup>xi</sup>.

On the evening of the 31<sup>st</sup> October, the London Scottish Regiment was moved into the front line just north of Messines. New rifles had been issued on arrival in France but there had been no opportunity for them to be tested. They were now found to have faulty magazine springs so loading had to be done by hand after every shot. In spite of this, the first onslaught at 9 pm was beaten off. Soon after midnight the attack recommenced and the enemy advance came in dense waves, but the line still held. At 2pm they came again and the London Scottish Regiment was forced back by sheer weight of numbers. Their left flank was turned, threatening total destruction of the battalion. The Commanding Officer, Colonel Malcolm, led his remaining reserves in a successful bayonet charge, thus regaining contact with the unit on the left. The fighting became prolonged and confused, with heavy losses. Eventually, the Commanding Officer had no choice but to order withdrawal to avoid complete envelopment and annihilation. Detachments were skilfully brought out and the enemy had suffered so severely that they were not able to follow up their limited success. The survivors were marched back to Kemmel and from there to La Clytte. The killed and wounded amounted to 394 men.<sup>xii</sup>

Field Marshal French wrote, "I saw the battalion personally a few days later. How they suffered was too pathetically apparent.... the heavy losses amongst their friends and comrades bowed them down with grief; for they necessarily lacked as yet the professional training and stoicism of men whose real business is war."<sup>xiii</sup> William was one of the lucky survivors.



A map showing the relative locations of Strazelle, Melville, Bethune, Cuinchy and La Bassee Ref xviii

On 20<sup>th</sup> December at 5pm, the London Scottish Regiment left their base camp in Pradelles, three quarters of a mile west of Strazelle, to march to Béthune via Melville. They arrived at 1.30am and were billeted overnight in the local theatre. The next day at noon the Regiment continued on to Cuinchy their new base camp. While manning the trenches near the La Bassée canal, at this time, the regiment experienced sporadic rifle and gun fire from the enemy with the occasional shell from the German 'minenwerfers', but no casualties. On 22<sup>nd</sup> January "some shelling" was reported but, by the time the battalion was relieved at dusk the following day, "two men had been killed and three wounded, one of whom died of his wounds on the 27<sup>th</sup> January."<sup>xiv</sup> The injured soldier, who had been taken to the Base Hospital in Boulogne and had died five days later, was William.

A comrade wrote of William, "we were all very fond of him, he was a splendid fellow, very quiet and unostentatious and absolutely reliable; if he had a job to do, he always did it well. You have many unknown to you who share your sorrow."<sup>xv</sup>

William was buried in the Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. He was entitled to the 1914 Star, the British War medal and the Victory medal 1914. He was just 21 years old.<sup>xvi</sup>

Written by Edwina Rees, Moseley History Society.



## Footnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour
- <sup>ii</sup> Drummond Family Tree.  
[www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)
- <sup>iii</sup> Census returns for 1901 and 1911
- <sup>iv</sup> The Acocks Green History Society  
<http://aghs.jimdo.com/private-schools-in-acocks-green/>
- <sup>v</sup> De Ruvigny's Role of Honour
- <sup>vi</sup> Death Register in July, August and September 1910  
[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)
- <sup>vii</sup> See iii
- <sup>viii</sup> 1911 census
- <sup>ix</sup> SS Winifredian. From the memoirs of Francois-Xavier (Frank) Maheux, MM  
[http://21stbattalion.ca/tributemn/maheux\\_f.html](http://21stbattalion.ca/tributemn/maheux_f.html)
- <sup>x</sup> London Scottish London Gazette, Number 660, Volume CX, pp 122-3
- <sup>xi</sup> See x
- <sup>xii</sup> See x
- <sup>xiii</sup> See x
- <sup>xiv</sup> See x
- <sup>xv</sup> See v
- <sup>xvi</sup> Commonwealth War Graves Commission  
<http://www.everymanremembered.org/profiles/soldier/49589/>
- <sup>xvii</sup> The Free Grammar School in New Street. Photograph taken from 'Dent, Robert Kirkham. (1894). *The Making of Birmingham: Being a History of the Rise and Growth of the Midland Metropolis*, Published by J. L. Allday'  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King\\_Edward%27s\\_School,\\_Birmingham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Edward%27s_School,_Birmingham)
- <sup>xviii</sup> Map of the Lys Offensive 1918. Although this is a map of the region in 1918, the unbroken blue line shows roughly the position of the front line as it was in early 1915. This map was chosen to depict the places the Scottish Regiment passed through or were billeted at in January of 1915  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_the\\_Lys\\_\(1918\)#/media/File:Map\\_of\\_German\\_Lys\\_offensive\\_1918.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Lys_(1918)#/media/File:Map_of_German_Lys_offensive_1918.jpg)