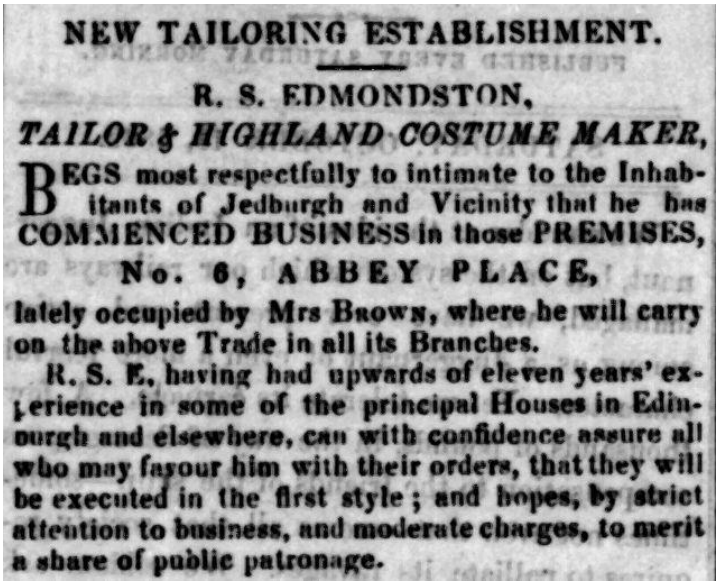
Piper Robert Stuart Edmondston



Robert was named after his grandfather, Robert Stuart Edmondston, who was born around 1834 in Edinburgh to John Edmondston and his wife Marion (née Scott).[i] Marion was the daughter of Peter Scott, a tailor, and his wife Caroline, who lived in the High Street, Tranent, East Lothian. The 1851 census recorded John, aged seventeen, as the apprentice to Peter Scott.

His grandfather, married Isabella Minto in Edinburgh four years later, on the 22nd June 1855. Their first child, George Minto was born on 3rd April 1858 in Jedburgh, but by the time his brother, John, was born on 10th 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.[ii]



NEW TAILORING ESTABLISHMENT.

R. S. EDMONDSTON,

TAILOR & HIGHLAND COSTUME MAKER,

BEGS most respectfully to intimate to the Inhabitants of Jedburgh and Vicinity that he has COMMENCED BUSINESS in those PREMISES,

No. 6, ABBEY PLACE,

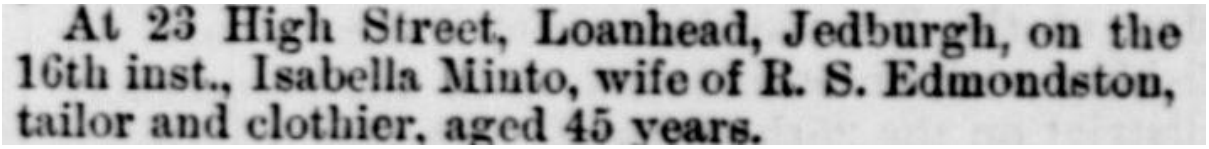
lately occupied by Mrs Brown, where he will carry on the above Trade in all its Branches.

R. S. E. having had upwards of eleven years' experience in some of the principal Houses in Edinburgh and elsewhere, can with confidence assure all who may favour him with their orders, that they will be executed in the first style; and hopes, by strict attention to business, and moderate charges, to merit a share of public patronage.

In 1862, the advertisement (see left) appeared in the *Jedburgh Advertiser* on 24th May. It publicises that R.S. Edmondston had opened a new tailoring establishment at 6, Abbey Place, Jedburgh. In 1871, the business moved to 8 Exchange Street and by 1874, to 14 Market Place.[iii]

Robert opens his own shop in Jedburgh

In August 1877, Robert's wife Isabella died, at 23 High Street, Loanhead, Jedburgh. He remarried the following year. His second wife was Agnes Young.[iv]



At 23 High Street, Loanhead, Jedburgh, on the 16th inst., Isabella Minto, wife of R. S. Edmondston, tailor and clothier, aged 45 years.

Robert and Isabella's eldest son, George Minto Edmondston, served an apprenticeship as a tailor with his father in Jedburgh. Around 1877, George married Wilhelmina Scott, known as Minnie, a school mistress from Dundee.[v] Soon after his father's remarriage, George relocated with Minnie to Edinburgh where he was employed by various firms before moving to Glasgow where he worked for Forsyth and Sons for a time.

George and Minnie's eldest son, Robert Stuart Edmondston, was born in Edinburgh on 26th July 1878, followed by William George on 25th March 1881 at 54 Roper Street, Whitehaven.[vi]

Robert and William attended school in Whitehaven, Cumberland, where the family briefly lived before moving to Hawick, Scotland, where their education continued.[vii]

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 1897/8, 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, James, Ronald and Minnie.



Figure 1: Advertisement for Curtis and Curtis, Exchange Buildings, New Street, Birmingham



Figure 2
The Edmondston family. Minnie is holding her youngest daughter Minnie and her husband, George, their youngest son Ronald. The other children from left to right are George, James, William, Robert and Mary

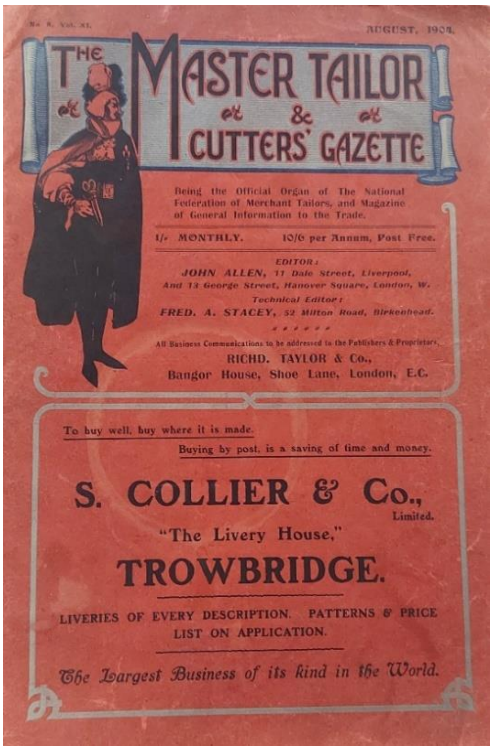




Figure 3: (Right) Brothers William, left, and Robert, right, 'tailoring pipers', appeared in the August 1904 edition of the *Master Tailor & Cutters Gazette shown on the left*

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

George and Minnie's eldest son, Robert, became a master tailor like his father. On 30th March 1900, he married Annetta Hay, daughter of George Ogilvie, a monumental mason, at Leith, near Edinburgh. Annetta worked for her father as a warehouse manager.[viii] The 1901 census recorded the couple living at 22 Dean Park Street, Edinburgh.

Robert and Annetta had three children by 1905: George Minto born 14th March 1902; Elizabeth Lilian, known as Lily, born 26th December 1903 and Minnie, known as Queenie, born 14th June 1905 at Leith.

By 1909, Robert had relocated to Birmingham and was living with Annetta and their children at, 289 Camden Street in the city centre, but by 1911 the family had moved to another house, No. 400 in the same street.[ix] Robert was running his tailor's outfitters from 38 John Bright Street.[x] A fourth child, Robert Stuart, was born on 19th October 1913. By 1917, the family had moved to 135, Prescott Street, near their previous house in Camden Street.



Figure 4: Robert with his wife Annetta

Robert enlisted in the 1st Battalion (75th of Foot) Gordon Highlanders in October 1915 and given the Service Number S13585. He served with the British Expeditionary Force in France and Belgium from May 1917.[xi]

The 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders were part of the 3rd Division, 76th Infantry Brigade. From 10th May 1917, the 1st Gordon Highlanders moved into the front lines participating in the Arras Offensive specifically around the area of Monchy-le-Preux, where they relieved the 12th Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment during the Third Battle of the Scarpe.





On August 26th 1917, Robert wrote the postcard (shown above) to his wife saying:

Letter and photo to hand today. Sorry I've had no time to write before. I am quite well but busy. It's about time you were sending something. It's two months since you sent the first and last. Will write soon Bob

In the top left-hand corner, there is an additional message:

Sorry to hear that Jim has been wounded. Hope he is getting over it alright.

The message relates to his brother, Lieutenant James Scott Edmondston, a Machine Gunner in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was posted as injured on 18th June. During the course of the war, he was injured three times since he arrived in France on 31st March 1917.

In December 1917, the Gordon Highlanders were stationed near Bullecourt, in the Pas-de-Calais, France. 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, [xii]

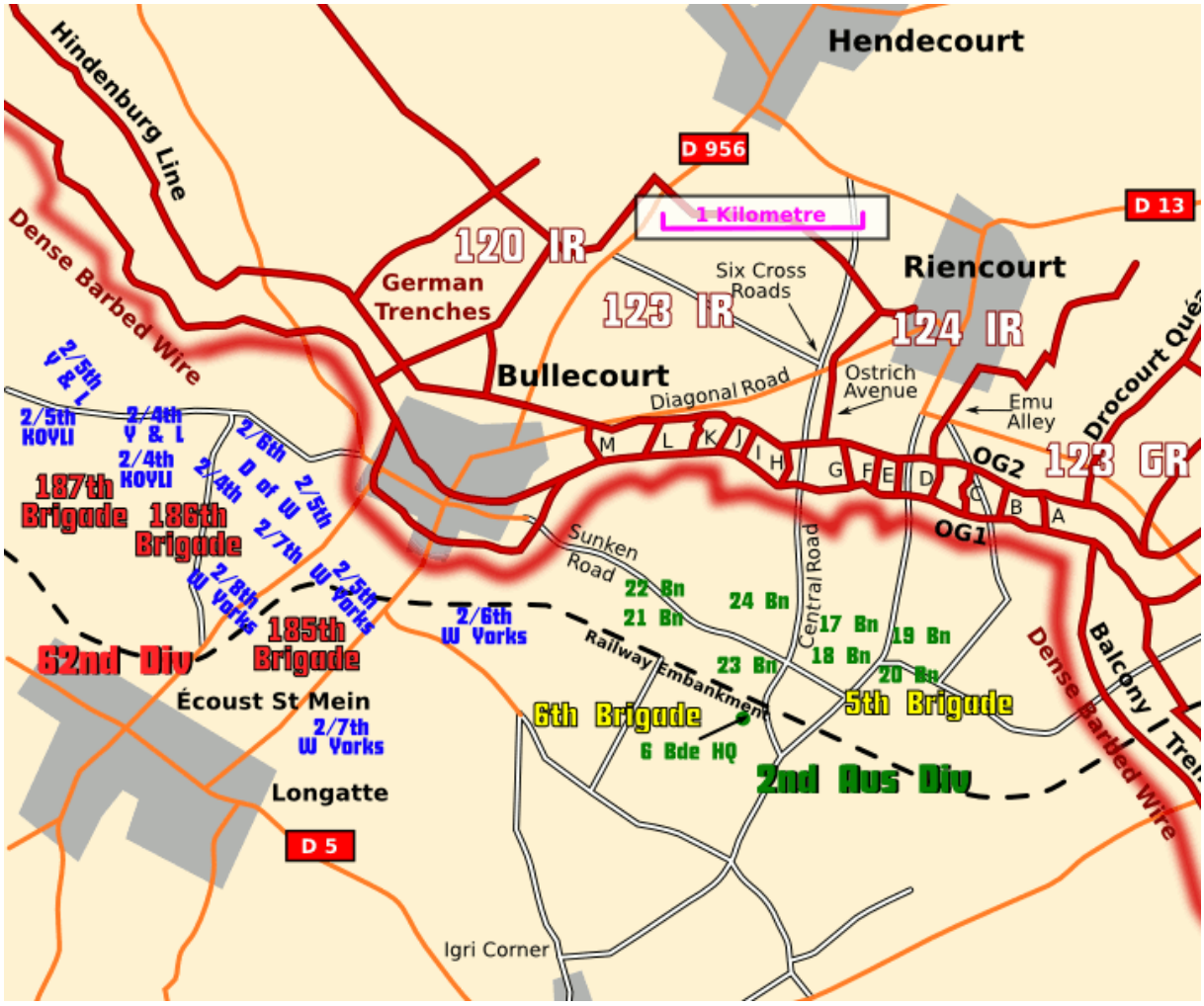


Figure 5: Map of Bullecourt showing the position of Écoust St Mein and the railway

In his last letter home on 12th December, two days before he was killed, Robert wrote to his son, George:

Just a line to let you know I am quite well although quite busy. I wrote you last week but I had the opportunity of marshalling here a great Xmas party which our own division are furnishing this year. I want to send it in time, probably if I waited until your answer reaches here a card would be too late. I had a letter from your mother today, they all seem quite well at home. I hope you will be starting work soon at your trade and hope that you do well. You must try to do so. Wishing you and your, grandma, grandad, George, Lizzie and her husband etc a merry Xmas and a happy New Year.

I am your affectionate Dad

The War diary for the 14th December 1917 records that Piper Sergeant Henderson and another man had been killed.[xiii] The other man was Robert.

Robert's officer wrote to Annetta on 14th December to say:

Dear Mrs Edmondston

It is with the deepest regret that I write to tell you such painful news. Your husband was standing at the top of a wall along with some other men when a shell burst in the middle of them and your husband was killed instantaneously. HQ details that your husband was acting as a tailor. I had just passed your husband a few seconds earlier on my way down the vault where we were living and on hearing the shell burst, ran upstairs and found your husband killed, one other killed (the Pipe Major) and three others wounded.

The previous night I spoke to him and he seemed a splendid fellow so cheery and regardless of danger. It is this type of soldier who has made a name for Britain which she shall always keep.

The company with me are extending to you and your children heartfelt sympathy.

Yours very sincerely F C P Campbell, Lieut

The Chaplain also wrote to Robert's wife on 17th December 1917:

Dear Mrs Edmondston

It is with my deepest regret that I write to inform you that your husband Pte Edmondston, was killed last Friday, 14th December. Our battalion was in reserve at the time so no special danger was anticipated at the moment, Unfortunately, some shells were sent across by the Germans and one of these killed you husband and our Pipe major. I buried your husband on Saturday in the little military cemetery at Favreuil and a cross will be erected at his grave. Your husband's belongings will reach you later on though the Effects Department. At the base he is much regretted by all ranks and I write to express our deep sympathy with you in your sorrow. I trust you will be abundantly comforted upheld.

Yours very sincerely

Alex M MacIvor

A third letter dated 20th December 1917, was written by Sergeant R. Patterson to the family after Robert's death states (sic):

Dear Friend

I thought it was my duty although the officer was writing also But I found these photos and he told me before that it was you, so I have enclosed two. He never mentioned to me who the child was. There was one good thing, he never suffered from shap. It was inst death. He was on sentry at the time. The Pipe Major got killed with the same shell and I'm very lucky to be here for I was not a few seconds away when it happened. He was a good soldier and I

join with you in your sad bereavement I am master tailor so he was one of my men. I have lost a brother also, it really an awful time, so I will close

PS I am home on leave so if you write for information, I will only be glad to do so.

Sgt R Patterson,

123 High St, New Pitsligo, Aberdeenshire

After the war the officer for whom Robert had been working visited Annetta. She was told that her husband had been working at night inside an attic of a farmhouse making new riding jodhpurs for him when he was shot by a sniper.[xiv] Annetta passed the jodhpurs down to her daughter Minnie.

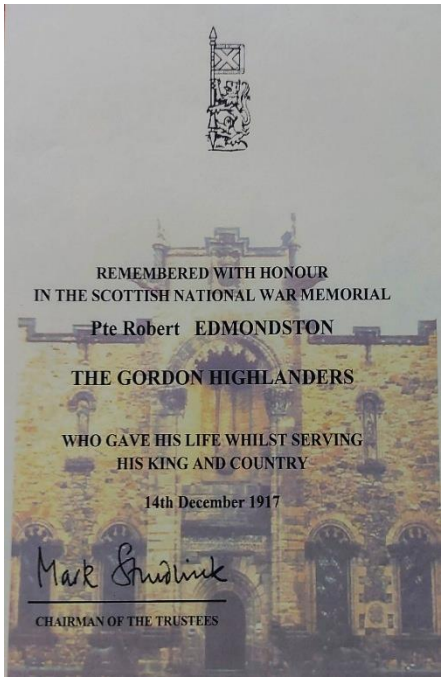
Robert was thirty-nine years old when he died. He was buried at Favreuil British Cemetery, about 5 miles SW of Bullecourt. He is also commemorated at St Mary's Church, Moseley, the Roll of Honour at Birmingham Hall of Memory and the Scottish National War Memorial.





(Top left) Robert's gravestone at Favreuil British Cemetery

(Top right) St Mary's Church, Moseley WW1 memorial



EDMONSTON.—A tribute to the memory of my dear brothers, Sergt. W. G. Edmondston (Serbian Gold Medal), Machine-gun Section of the Warwickshire Yeomanry, killed in action, November 12, 1917. Also Piper R. S. Edmondston, Gordon Highlanders, killed in action, December 13, 1917. God rest their dear souls.—QUEENIE SCOTT (Mrs. W. Scott-Gordon.



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 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 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 Edmonston 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 bandsmen 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.

(Top left) Certification of Robert's name on the Scottish War Memorial

(Top right) Obituary posted by Robert and William's sister, Mrs W Scott-Gordon (Queenie), *Birmingham Mail* 27th December 1917

(Right) Robert's father's obituary in 1932, *Jedburgh Gazette*, 9.12.1932

(Above) Robert's wife Annetta, later in life from the family of K M Birks, Ancestry, posted 22.7.2018



In 1932, Robert 's father died. His obituary is shown on the previous page.

Robert's wife, Annetta, was given an annuity of £8 10s on 15th November 1919, around £396 in today's money. [xv] Annetta moved to 16, North Junction St., Leith after Robert died. She passed away in 1952, aged 73.

On Wednesday, 14th October this year, 2026, Robert's great grandson, Allan Edmondston, together with his wife Yvonne, visited St Mary's Church, Moseley to see the WW1 memorial of Robert and his brother William (see left). To make the occasion special, three verses were read aloud from the poem *For the Fallen* by the English poet, Laurence Binyon, followed by the last post and a traditional piper's tune, *The Flowers of the Forest,* a mournful Scottish lament played at military funerals.

Robert's great grandson, Allan Edmondston, holding a picture of Robert Stuart Edmondston by St Mary's church WW1 memorial

With thanks to Laura, Allan's daughter for getting in touch with the Moseley Society History Group and also to Allan who provided photographs, letters and other items from the family archive that have been included in this updated article

Written and researched by Edwina Rees, Moseley Society History Group

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Endnotes

i Johnston family tree, Ancestry

ii Select Births 1564-1950

iii *Jedburgh Gazette*, 29.4.1871 Jedburgh Gazette, 7.11.1874

iv *Southern Reporter*, 28.8.1877
England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915, Berwick, Northumberland, Vol 4b, page 464

v 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

vi De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour
Lives of the First World War
https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org/lifestory/5312209
Jedburgh Gazette, 1.10.1878

vii De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour

viii See vi

ix Birmingham Electoral Register for 1909/10
1911 Census

x Kelly's Directory 1911

xi See vi

xii National Archives, War diary for the 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders
Ref WO 95/1435, pp 212-3

xiii See vi

xiv Source- William Gordon, husband of Queenie, Ancestry

xv Army Register of Soldiers Effects, 1901-1929, Ancestry

Illuustrations

Figure 1 *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 9.8.1906

Figure 2 From the family tree of A C S Taylor, posted on Ancestry, 25.11.2014

Figure 3 From the family archive of Alan Edmondston, photograph taken 14.10.2026

Figure 4 From the family tree of K M Birks, posted 22.7.2018, Ancestry

Figure 5 Webmatters, Carte de Route, Bellacourt May 1917