

George Alexander Robbie.

George Alexander Robbie, born 19 June 1875 in Canterbury¹ was the fifth son of James and Isabella Robbie, of Palmerston North.² The family were Presbyterian. George moved to the South Island and must have been in the Nelson area prior to 1894 as he included his membership of the Stoke Volunteer Rifles, Nelson Battalion in his testimony when he enrolled.³

George was a school teacher and was headmaster at Appleby School near Richmond from 1894 until 1906. George was a keen rugby player and was invited to join the Nelson Football Club's Senior Fifteen team and was instrumental in forming the Waimea Football Club in 1896.⁴

George married his wife Edith Emily Robbie, nee Johnson, daughter of S. B. Johnson, at Nelson on 3 August 1904 officiated by Rev. Kempthorne.⁵ The Johnson's were a Nelson family that lived in Collingwood Street.⁶ By 1906 George and Edith had moved to Patea where George had accepted a new teaching Position.⁷

Edith's addresses, as next of kin on his military record, included Collingwood Street, Nelson, Palmerston North, at the time of George's enlistment, and finally Manchester Street, in Christchurch when his estate was settled by the Public Trust.⁸

He enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force at Patea, with the Wellington 2nd Reinforcements to 2nd Battalion NZ Rifle Brigade F Company, army serial no. 24/1306. His military record enters his service in New Zealand as from 9 July 1915. He embarked 13 November 1915.⁹

He was given a commission at the rank of 2nd Lieutenant in 1917, after being a gas specialist lecturing NCO's at Sling camp¹⁰ at the rank of Quatermaster-Sergeant for the Rifle Brigade Training Battalion.¹¹ He was the first married teacher to be given a commission in the field.¹²

He saw action in Egypt 1915-1916, in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in 1916 and in Western Europe in 1916-1917. He died at Ypres 22 July 1917, killed in action.¹³

The Nelson Provincial Museum Collection holds the military orders he received from Captain Urquhart outlining his objective and a letter from Captain Urquhart to Cpl. Symonds dated 1 November 1917. An extract from that letter reads:

"He was killed on the 21st July while in charge of a fighting patrol, which attacked an enemy post in the hedgerows to the north of La Basse Ville. He was at the head of the patrol, and was shot by one of the enemy when close up to one of their wired hedges...The position ...was found to be very strongly wired, and proved to be held by a company."¹⁴

He was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, the British War medal and the Victory Medal which were given to his wife, Edith.¹⁵

He was related to Marjory Stewart, being her uncle by marriage and the Stewart papers are deposited with the Nelson Provincial Museum. The Stewart papers (Reference NPM997.112) include George Robbie's World War 1 papers.

Endnotes

1 Robbie, George Alexander. Military Personnel Record. History sheet.

- 2 Colonist, 15 August 1917, p.4
- 3 Robbie, George Alexander. Military Personnel Record. History sheet.
- 4 Pestell, p.25.
- 5 Nelson Evening Mail, 29.9.1904, p.2.
- 6 Colonist, 15 July 1915, p.4.
- 7 Pestell, p.25.
- 8 Robbie, George Alexander. Military Personnel Record. History sheet.
- 9 Robbie, George Alexander. Military Personnel Record. History sheet
- 10 Colonist, 9 September 1916 p.4.
- 11 Colonist, 20 April 1916 p.4.
- 12 Colonist, 18 April 1917 p4.
- 13 Robbie, George Alexander. Military Personnel Record. History sheet.
- 14 Stewart Papers, Letter re his death, NPM997.112.22.B
- 15 Robbie, George Alexander. Military Personnel Record. History sheet

Sources

Deaths. Colonist, 15 August 1917, p.4

Marriage, Nelson Evening Mail, 29.9.1904, p2.

Personal. Colonist, 20 April 1916 p.4.

Personal. Colonist, 15 July 1915, p.4.

Personal. Colonist, 9 September 1916 p.4.

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Pestell, Jacqui. 2009. Lessons from the past: Appleby School history 1859-2009. Richmond, Appleby School.

Robbie, George Alexander. Cenotaph Database record, Auckland War Memorial Museum, URL:
http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph/13116.detail?Ordinal=2&c_surname_search=robbie&c_firstname_ , accessed 13.5.2014.

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<http://www.archway.archives.govt.nz/ViewFullItem.do?code=20806384>,
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Stewart Papers, Nelson Provincial Museum Collection: NPM997.112.

This Biography was compiled by Anna Wilkinson in 2014.