

Sergeant Robert Robinson

Military Medal

Robert was born in Stamford, Lincolnshire, on 12th March 1883 and baptised there in the church of St Michael on 6th May. He was the eighth and youngest child of William and Mary Ann Robinson (née Everitt) who had married at Waltham on the Wolds, Leicestershire, in 1861. William had been working as a groom in 1881, but ten years later Mary Ann was a widow and had moved to Shaftesbury Avenue in the Belgrave area of Leicester where she worked as a glove stitcher. Four of her adult children were in employment and still living at home, whilst Robert and his older brother John were both at school.

By the turn of the new century the family had moved to Victoria Road North, also in Belgrave, and just three children were still at home. Robert, now 18, worked as a cotton dyer, his brother William was also a dyer of cloth and John was in the boot trade.

Early in 1907 Robert married Bertha Grant from Leicester. Her family lived in Denman Street and later in Dorset Street. This road ran parallel to Brandon Street where at number 148 she and Robert, from at least 1908, would spend their married life. They went on to have a family of eight children, seven of whom grew to adulthood. In 1911 Robert was a leather warehouseman and Bertha worked in the shoe trade.

Most of Robert's army papers have not survived, but his medal record tells us that Private Robinson, service number 11473, served in the 8th Battalion Leicestershire Regiment. This was one of the New Army battalions formed in September 1914 and it seems likely that he volunteered in the early stages of the war.¹ Robert arrived in France on 29th July 1915 and so at the war's end he was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, along with the Victory Medal and British War Medal.

Sometime before 20th October 1916 he was promoted to Acting Corporal, for on this date his award of the Military Medal was published in *The London Gazette*.² Although the precise details of the action for which the award was made are not known, it took place between 14th and 17th July when the Leicesters were engaged in fierce fighting around Bazentine-Le Petit wood and village during the Battle of the Somme. The 8th Battalion War Diary records that at the close of the action they had suffered a total of 432 casualties: 60 killed in action, 11 dead of wounds, 322 wounded and 39 missing, and that 13 officers, NCOs and men were "recommended for immediate awards for acts of gallantry during the operation", amongst them "11473 LCpl R. Robinson".³ Some information indicates that Robert was himself wounded and gassed, and that his medal was won for rescuing a wounded officer under fire.⁴

The *Leicester Daily Post* announced Robert's Military Medal on 23rd October and the following month the *Leicester Chronicle* also marked it by publishing his photograph.

He was discharged from the army on 15th February 1919 and granted a 12 month gratuity for damage to an ankle due to war service.

With over 300 Club members, including the other seven men who had won medals, Robert was present at the Belgrave Working Men's Club and Institute on the evening of Tuesday 11th November 1919 at a supper and entertainment to welcome back all those members who had

served in the war and to commemorate those who did not return. The Club's magnificent Roll of Honour was unveiled and each medal winner was presented with a framed photograph of the eight of them together.⁵

In 1921 Robert was working for Leicester Corporation as a Tramway Conductor and five of their still-young family were at home with him and his wife. He described his occupation in the same way in the 1939 Register.

He died in hospital on 6th April 1962 with his funeral taking place at Gilroes Crematorium four days later⁶ and Bertha died in 1970. They were survived by their seven adult children.

¹ The soldier with service number 11468 enlisted in Leicester on 9th August 1914 and soldier 11475 on 7th August. Robert with number 11473 was likely to be in an early cohort too.

² *London Gazette*, 20th October 1916, p10220.

³ The National Archives, WO 95/2165/1

⁴ <https://royalleicestershireregiment.org.uk/entity/117550-robinson-robert?q=>

⁵ See *Leicester Evening Mail*, 12 November 1919, p2, and *Leicester Daily Post*, Weds 12 November 1919, p2.

⁶ *Leicester Mercury*, 6th April 1962, p10.