

HARRY WILLIAM ROBINSON



HARRY ROBINSON was born in Oxford in 1886. He was the eldest in Mr and Mrs T W Robinson's family of five children. Mr Robinson was a schoolteacher and from 1895 was Principal of Bedford House School at 122 Walton Street, living with his family next door to the school at number 123 (now the Co-op). Harry had been educated at his father's school and became a clerk in Gillett's Bank (subsequently absorbed by Barclays), probably at the main Cornmarket branch, and was living at the family home in Walton Street in early 1914. He was a keen oarsman and was a member of the Neptune Rowing Club in 1906, representing the club in the city bumping races from 1906 to 1914. He also played for the United Oxford Banks Football Club

Harry was married to Marjorie Gertrude Louise Bridgewater in SS Mary & St John, Cowley on 19 December 1914. On the marriage certificate he is described as a "bank clerk", although he must have been on the point of enlisting, if not actually already enrolled in the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry - he had been a sergeant in the Territorials before the War. After training he was sent to France in March 1915 with the 1st/4th Battalion and was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant in April.

He was wounded near Ypres in November 1915 but was back in the front line by March 1916. He was again badly wounded, having his right arm shattered, at Delville Wood on 25 August 1916. The Battle of Delville Wood was one of the bloodiest confrontations on the Somme with heavy casualties on both sides. The *Oxford Times* of 30 Sept. 1916 reported his return to Somerville Hospital in Oxford, where he recovered sufficiently to remain in the army but not on the front line. He was stationed at Cowley Barracks, attached to the Labour Corps, and was gazetted Captain and then Major while serving

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in Oxford. He died at Somerville Hospital on 9 November, two days before the Armistice, from influenza followed by pneumonia. He was 32. *The Oxford Times* and *Oxford Journal Illustrated* both reported on his full military funeral, at which there was an impressive procession from the hospital to the burial in the War Cemetery in Botley, with many family and military mourners. The *Parish Magazine* of December 1918 carried a sad obituary note.

Administration of Harry's will was given to his widow, then living at 4 Holyoak Terrace, London Road in Headington, on 23 January 1919. The couple had no children and Marjorie remarried in 1921.

The *Parish Magazine* note refers not only to Harry's death but also to the deaths of other members of the congregation, including two wives of men serving at the front, in the 1918-19 influenza epidemic. The world-wide pandemic, the so-called "Spanish Flu", began during the last months of the war in 1918 and continued until 1919/20, killing more than 30 million people round the world – more than all the casualties of the Great War itself.