

Robert Burnett

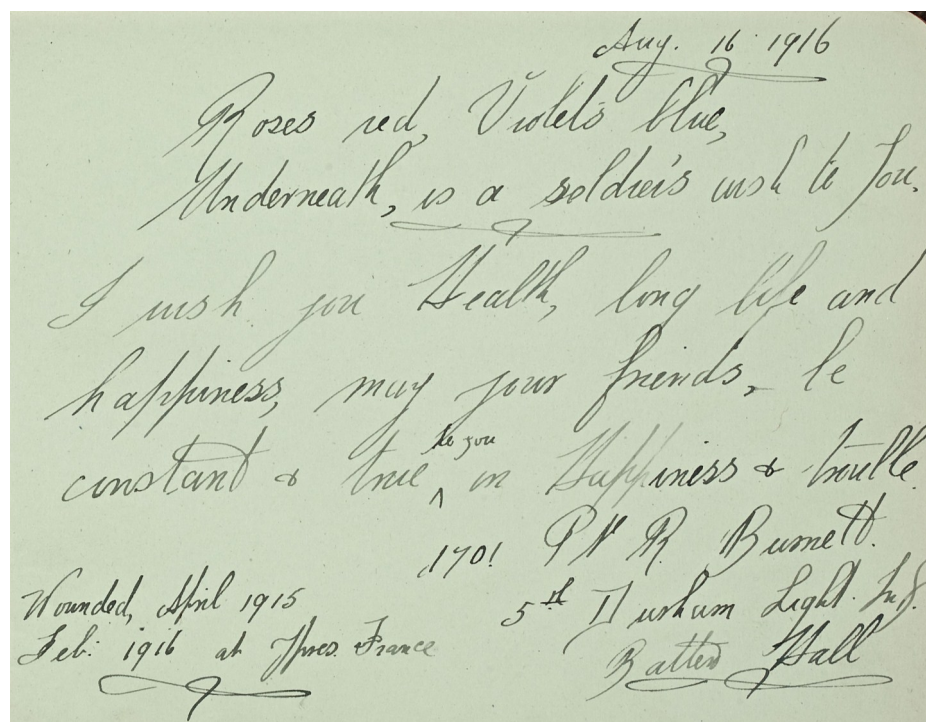
Robert Burnett was born on 15th January, 1896 in the St Lawrence district of York. His parents were Robert and Agnes Kate Burnett. The 1901 census shows the family living in a house in Wellington Street, York. Robert's father was working as a slotting machinist at the engineering works. By 1911 they were living at 71 Hercules St, Darlington, and the family remained at this address throughout the war. The family had suffered much loss - Robert lost six siblings before their 11th birthday.



Robert became an apprentice boilermaker and went on to work for Stephenson & Co. Locomotive Works, Darlington. On 15th October 1912 he joined the Territorial Army and enlisted into the Durham Light Infantry at Darlington. He was 17 years old and 5 foot 5 inches tall with fair vision and good general development. He was passed as medically fit and posted to 5th Battalion. On 5th August 1914, a few days after the outbreak of war, he was embodied for service, joining his regiment in preparation for war.

On 17th April 1915 he embarked at Folkestone to travel by ship to Boulogne, France. However, just seven days after arriving in France he was shot in the neck and transferred to Wimereux Hospital in France. From there he was transferred west along the French coast to Le Havre on the hospital ship Salter, before returning to England on 3rd May on the hospital ship Carisbrooke Castle. Robert was in France for a total of 16 days.

Having recovered from his gun shot wound Robert was once again sent to France, embarking at Southampton and arriving in Le Havre on 2nd September 1915. A few days later he rejoined his regiment and was transferred to 1/5th Battalion. After five months Robert suffered another wound; on 14th February 1916 in Ypres, Belgium, he received a gun shot wound to his chest which left shrapnel in his chest wall. After another trip to Wimereux Hospital he was transferred home to England on the hospital ship St Patrick, arriving on 4th March. He was sent to Battenhall Mount VAD Hospital to recover.



The autograph book from Battenhall Mount VAD Hospital in the collection of the George Marshall Medical Museum, with Robert's entry.

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By March 1917, over a year after his gun shot wound, Robert was posted to the Durham Light Infantry Reserve at Scotton Camp, Caterick, and in June it was decided that he would be of most use in civilian employment. He returned to work for Robert Stephenson & Co., but remained a reservist.

A medical report written in early September 1917 described Robert as 'a strong healthy man'. It noted that he had a 'small circular scar on the right side, 4 inches below the armpit', as well as a further scar 'oval in shape, ½ inch to the left of the spine' caused by the operation to remove the shrapnel from his chest. The report also records a slight irritative cough, and other documents mention that Robert developed a cold which turned into bronchitis after lying outside when wounded. His disability was estimated to last six months, with a 10% decrease in his capacity to work. Robert's war service finally came to an end on the 9th October 1917, on the grounds that he was no longer physically fit for service.

For his service during the First World War Robert was entitled to three medals: the 1914-15 Star, the British War medal and the Victory medal. He was also presented with a Silver War Badge in recognition of the wounds he sustained. In the spring of 1917 Robert married Elsie Jones, a native of Worcester, in Darlington. They had three daughters together and moved back to live in Worcester. Robert died in 1928, aged just 32.