

WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION, LANCASHIRE NORTH BRANCH

DESPATCH: November 2016 - Supplementary Information

MILITARY CROSS CASE STUDIES: Bill Myers

Winning a gallantry medal was no guarantee of surviving the First World War.

Case Study 1

A Barrow-in-Furness second lieutenant called **Edward Meale Hannah** was just 19 when he was killed on 16th August 1917. Just over a year earlier the soldier with the King's Shropshire Light Infantry had won the Military Cross. His brother Robert, 22, of the Royal Irish Rifles, died on the same day and both are named on the Tyne Cot memorial.

Edward's Military Cross was awarded in May 1916 when he took command during an assault after all the other officers had become casualties. He consolidated a captured trench and established posts to protect his flank.

The young officer had started his military life with the Honourable Artillery Company before gaining a commission as a junior officer. He was posted to the 1st Battalion of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry but was attached to the 6th (Service) Battalion.

The Barrow News for May 27 in 1916 gave details of the gallantry medal. It noted: "Another Barrow lad has distinguished himself in the field of battle and brought honour to himself and the town." He was the son of Robert and Jessie of 115 Abbey Road, Barrow. His father was a poultry and fish dealer in Duke Street. It noted: "It was in an action on Good Friday that he came into the limelight because of his heroic deeds and he had the joy and satisfaction of being personally congratulated by Douglas Haig."

He was a former pupil at Barrow Municipal Secondary School and at Windermere Grammar School.

Before the war he had been an apprentice engineer.



Case Study 2



A Barrow-in-Furness Military Cross winner who survived the conflict was 2/Lt **William Eric Robertson**.

The 29th January 1916 edition of the Barrow News noted that he was with the 3rd Scottish Rifles but was attached to the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Scots. His gallant act was at Hooge on September 29 in 1915. He had been part of a bomb throwing group for 28 hours.

It noted: "His party appears to have been in a tight corner but the Honourable Artillery Company came up and relieved them." The paper said: "In the engagement where he won his Military Cross he was wounded and has since been on light duty, his nerves having suffered from shock."

His parents lived at 12 Cavendish Park, Barrow. It noted: "Mr C. G. Robertson is a well-known official at Messrs Vickers and has three sons in his Majesty's forces." One of them, 2/Lt Charlie Drinnan Robertson died, aged 23, on the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1st July 1916 with the Lancashire Fusiliers.