

I would be delighted for HistoryLinks to use and quote my material. Please let me know if you require original references and citations.

The officer pictured on the left is my 1st cousin (3 x removed), Lieutenant (later Major) Ernest William James Hobkirk (1890–1969) of the 1st Battalion, The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles).

Born on Broadhaugh Farm at Teviothead, near Hawick in Roxburghshire, Scotland; educated at the Edinburgh Academy (1905 – 08) and the Royal Military College, Sandhurst (1908 – 09), Ernest was commissioned into the Cameronians in 1910. He served with the 1st Battalion in Bloemfontein, South Africa (1910 – 12) before returning with his regiment to Maryhill Barracks in Glasgow in 1912.

Ernest, together with the 1st Battalion, left Glasgow and deployed to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force at the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914. Ernest and the battalion were quick to see action. They took part in the first action of the war: fighting at the Battle of Mons on 23 August in an attempt to hold the Mons–Condé Canal against the advancing German First Army. Although the British fought well, they were overrun by the sheer number of German forces and were forced to commence a fighting withdrawal to Paris. During the great retreat, the battalion was present at the Battle of Le Cateau on 26 August and at the artillery fight at Néry on 1 September. The battalion took up positions in the trenches at Houplines during the great winter freeze of 1914 – 15 before advancing into Flanders during the Spring of 1915.

Ernest was promoted to Captain in 1915 and in September, 'The Times' reported him as being wounded and missing in action in Turkey (could he then have been serving with the 7th or 8th Battalion in Gallipoli?). Ernest was subsequently found and returned to health since he was seconded to the Army Signals Service in October 1917.

Ernest's WW1 Medal Rolls Card shows that he served in Salonika (now Thessalonika) on the Macedonian Front from 1917 – 18 (perhaps with the 11th Battalion?). He returned to England at the end of the war and was based at Crowborough Camp in Sussex before marrying Doris Eva Redhouse (1897–1976) in Kensington, London in 1919.

Ernest transferred to the Royal Signals in 1920, was promoted to Major in 1925 and completed a tour of duty in India from 1926 – 28. He, together with his wife, Dora and infant daughter Mary, returned to England in 1928. For his final posting, Ernest was based at Bulford on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, from 1929 – 32.

Ernest retired on half-pay in 1932 and on retired pay in 1937. He lived the remainder of his life in the Salisbury area until his death in 1969, leaving his wife, Doris and two daughters, Mary Elizabeth and Vivienne Ann.

Jeremy Stone