



In Memory of
Trooper
GORDON HOLMES ROBERTSON
378, 2nd Australian Light Horse
who died age 29
on 13th May 1915

Son of James Holmes Robertson and Annie Campbell Robertson,
Toowoomba, Queensland.

Remembered with honour
LONE PINE MEMORIAL, GALLIPOLI, TURKEY



TROOPER
GORDON HOLMES ROBERTSON
2ND AUSTRALIAN LIGHT HORSE
SERVICE NO: 378



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P01452.001

Gordon Holmes Robertson was a member of a family that made an extraordinary commitment to the national cause in the Great War. His older brother was James Campbell Robertson who commanded the 9th Battalion at Gallipoli and in 1918 became Brigadier-General commanding 6th Brigade. His older sister was Mrs Isabella Wonderley whose husband died in early 1914 and whose son Charles Wonderley was killed in France in 1918 (see Wonderley C.R.). She became one of the central figures in the committee of women in the campaign to build the Mothers' Memorial.

Gordon gave his address as c/- Isabella Wonderley, of Taylor Street, Toowoomba. He was almost 5'7" tall and weighed 147 pounds; he had a dark complexion, brown eyes and dark hair, and was a Presbyterian. He was educated at Toowoomba Grammar School and was among the first enlistments in Toowoomba, the city of his birth, on 19 August 1914. He enlisted just two weeks after the declaration of war, stating that he was single and a grazier, aged 29. He arrived at Enoggera as the 2nd Light Horse was being mustered, the first light horse unit to be raised in Queensland. As an "original" he sailed with the unit after just five weeks preparation, leaving Brisbane aboard *A15 Star of England* on 24 September.

After disembarkation in Egypt the 2nd LHR was in solid training from Christmas 1914 until May 1915. With the infantry pinned down in costly trench warfare at Gallipoli the decision was made to deploy the light horse to the Peninsula as infantry reinforcements. The men of the 2nd LHR landed, without horses, on 12 May. They moved up to the front-line within hours. One of the first casualties was Gordon Robertson. He suffered a "GSW, abdomen" perhaps less than an hour after reaching the front. The regiment's diary records the stark fact "one man wounded" for that first day. Gordon was taken down to the beach and evacuated to the hospital ship *Gascon*, where he died, officially at 7.30pm on 13 May. He was buried at sea, about "3 miles off Gaba Tepe (Anzac Cove)" after a short service read by the chaplain of *HMS London*. He was almost certainly the first combat casualty of the 2nd LHR. The regiment would suffer 203 men killed in the war.

In Toowoomba, Gordon's sister Isa Wonderley handled his affairs after his death on behalf of the family. In an extraordinary bungle the army prepared several death certificates for Gordon with three different dates of his demise. The problem took months to unravel. With a son and brother still at war, however, Isa remained active in her supportive role for the whole community of families caught up in the war. She wrote to the Red Cross in London seeking as much information of her loved ones as she could glean. She also elicited information from men returning from the theatres of war. She informed the army that her husband and parents were all deceased and that she had two sisters, one of whom was single and lived at her home in Taylor Street. She also expressed immense pride in the promotion of her surviving brother to higher command in the AIF.

Gordon Robertson's name is recorded on the Lone Pine Memorial which displays the names of 4933 Australian ANZAC soldiers who died at Gallipoli and have no known grave. Gordon Robertson's nephew Charles was killed at Dernancourt in 1918 and is also on the Mothers' Memorial. His brother Brigadier-General James Robertson died in 1951 and is buried at Drayton-Toowoomba Cemetery (grave CE 1-6-002-0027).

Toowoomba Grammar School Archive Records state that he started at the school on 1st February 1899 and left on 20th December 1900. The School Magazine dated November 1915 states, '*Gordon Robertson, brother of Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell Robertson, died of wounds received in battle. He entered the School in 1899, and*

was 28 years of age. After leaving school he was engaged in pastoral pursuits, and his fine manly bearing gained him general respect and many friends.'

External Links:

[CWGC](#)

[National Archives of Australia Military Records](#)

[National War Memorial Honour Roll](#)

[AWM4 AIF unit war diaries 10/2/4 2ND ALH May 1915](#)

[AWM Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing](#)