Bishop's Fighting Men:
Bishop's Involvement in WW1 and the Field Ambulance Corps

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George Roe

George Roe was a student at Bishop's studying for a Bachelor of Arts. He was a member of the university hockey and tennis teams. He was also a member, and later Secretary-Treasurer, of the Guild of the Venerable Bede, and a member of the Theological Discussion Society, both of which involved him in missionary and outreach work.

Lennox A. "Doc" Robertson

October 5, 1896 – June 2, 1916

Robertson was born in Montreal E. A Robertson and Edna F. Robertson. He was studying for a Bachelor of Arts at Bishop's University and expected to graduate with the class of 1916. He was an active student: a member of the football, hockey, baseball, canoeing, cricket, basketball, and tennis teams, as well as making the Honour Roll for 1915.

1915

September - December 1915:
George Roe enlisted with the 2nd Field Ambulance Corps where he performed hospital and ambulance duties in France.

March 6, 1915:
L.A. Robertson enlisted with the 5th Battalion Canadian Mounted Rifles and went overseas with them later that year. The Battalion fought in France and Flanders.

Figure 1: Depicts the logo used to represent the Field Ambulance Corps. The Latin words translate to "Faithful in Adversity."

Summer 1915:
L.A. Robertson distinguished himself after he saved a soldier from drowning. This heroic incident occurred while his Battalion was training in Valcartier, Quebec.

1916

Lent 1916:
George Roe was drafted into the 9th Field Ambulance Corps and sent overseas, still at the rank of Private.

Easter 1916:
George Roe (alongside fellow Bishop's student Baker) was stationed in Bramshott, England. He was stationed at in a newly opened hospital to care for soldiers who were sick and wounded ("Bramshott" n.d.).

Convocation 1916:
George Roe, while stationed in Belgium, wrote a letter to the *Mitre*. In it he described the shelling he was currently experiencing: "The town we are in has been under shell fire, and it is still exposed to the same danger. It is surprising how little one realizes what danger is over here" (*Mitre,* Convocation 1916).

Early 1916:
L.A. Robertson once again distinguished himself during a stint in the trenches with his Battalion. During heavy bombardment from German shell-fire, their telephone line was cut by shrapnel. As Robertson was stationed as the signaller, he went out into the open to repair the line "carrying his phone out to a shell hole under heavy shell and rifle fire, and thus regained communication with the artillery in the rear" (*Mitre* 1916).

April – May 1916:
L.A. Robertson received 8 days of leave in London. During this time, he wrote a letter to Mr. Lett, back at Bishop's, in which he described his leave:

"I had a fine time in London and enjoyed every minute of it."

He then ominously notes that although all the Bishop's students in his Battalion are safe, they "are in a bad place" and "some will be getting hit soon" (*Mitre,* Trinity 1916).

Trinity 1916:
George Roe once again wrote to the *Mitre*'s Editor about his time in Belgium:
"The other night we were wakened by the terrific noise of bursting shells, which almost seemed to drop on our buildings and the ground near by. One cannot adequately describe the fearful explosions they make – one can fully understand why so many get "shell-shock" over here" (*Mitre*, Trinity 1916).

An excerpt from Wilfrid Wilson Gibson's poem "Breakfast" describes similar sentiments to those Roe and other soldiers felt about incessant shelling:
"We ate our breakfast lying on our backs
Because the shells were screeching overhead."

Summer 1917:
George Roe had a short leave of absence in Paris, although, he would have preferred to visit relatives in England.

Fall 1917:
George Roe, along with Bishop's student Baker, continues to perform his hospital and ambulance duties in France.

December 1917:
George Roe receives the unfortunate news of the passing of his sister . As a result of this, Roe obtains leave from duty to attend her funeral.
Upon his return, he is admitted to a base hospital near the French coast, on account of his poor health, which had affected him for a lengthy period of time.

1917

June 1916:
Corporal LA Robertson is killed in action in France. News reaches Bishop's University on June 8th when the *Mitre* laments how much he will be missed.
"Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes" (Owen 10-11)

June 21st, 1916:
Lennox A. Robertson receives the Distinguished Conduct Medal just weeks after his death. The medal was given to him on account of his heroic actions establishing communications using a shell hole– an act he performed earlier in the year.

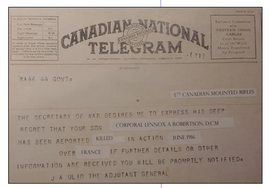

Figure 2: An example of a telegram parents would receive when their child died at war.

October 1917:
Robertson's funeral was held at Bishop's University. From the *Mitre*, a record of his service notes: "To bring about the noblest, highest, grandest of ends; one which, humanly speaking, could have been brought about by no other means than such as these, the vast glory of sacrifice" (*Mitre* 1917)

In loving memory of Lennox A. Robertson:
"We are forlorn like children, and experienced like old men, we are crude and sorrowful and superficial – I believe we are lost" (Remarque, 6.105)

1918

May 1918:
With much improved health, Roe reports to be content in his new placement after being transferred from 9th Field Ambulance Corps to No.1 Canadian General Hospital in Etaples, France.

In loving memory of George Roe:
George Roe did survive the war, yet, there is no record of the events of his life following the war.

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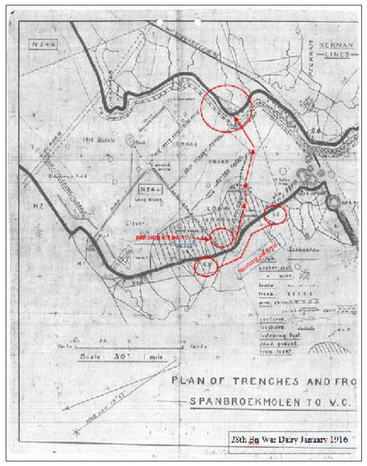

Figure 3: Demonstrates the often lengthy path the Field Ambulance Corps would travel with wounded soldiers who were in need of treatment

Field Ambulance Corps

Role in the War:
The Field Ambulance Corps provided medical aid to wounded men and treated any soldiers who became ill. They also evacuated wounded soldiers from the battlefields or trenches.

The main purpose of the Field Ambulance Corps was to treat wounded men so they could return to battle. They would perform operations on soldiers who needed immediate medical attention.

Location:
The Field Ambulance Corps were situated close behind the front lines. On average, the medical stations were approximately 600 yards behind the trenches. During battle, the members would emerge from their location and join the men in the trenches to provide treatment or to evacuate wounded soldiers.

Foundations:
A typical section of the Field Ambulance Corps consisted of approximately 65 men. Some positions included 1 Captain/Lieutenant, 1 Sergeant/Corporal, 1 Bugler, 3 wagon orderly Privates, and 36 bearers Privates, among other ranks. The function of the Field Ambulance Corps relied on horses and wagons for transportation. **No members of the Ambulance Corps carried any weapons or ammunition**

Figure 4: Example of transportation stretcher used to carry wounded soldiers