Sgt George McPherson (Ref: E/HB 2/654)

#### Sergeant George McPherson

George McPherson, born on 7 June 1887 in Aberdeenshire, was the youngest son of William and Jane McPherson, who by 1891 were living in Longtown, Cumberland. William McPherson was then working for the North British Railway company as a Permanent Way Inspector - indeed Longtown was primarily a railway centre, with a considerable Scottish community. George McPherson had three elder brothers, and four half-siblings by his father’s first marriage to Jane Irving. He attended Trinity School, a grammar school in Carlisle, as a pupil-teacher in 1905-1906.

In 1906, George McPherson was admitted to Bede College and on completion of his two-year course was awarded his teaching certificate. By 1911 he was employed by Durham County Council as an Assistant Teacher at Coxhoe Church School and was boarding with the Morcome family at Co-operative Terrace, Coxhoe, together with a fellow teacher, Arthur Turner. Both men were well-known members of the local football and cricket teams and of the Coxhoe Rifle Club.

When war was announced George McPherson was quick to answer the call, enlisting in Stockton on 31 August 1914. He joined the 5th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry and having received his first stripe was sent to France with the British Expeditionary Force in April 1915 as a lance corporal. He was again promoted in July of that year and the 5th Battalion was involved in actions during the Second Battles of Ypres.

Not long after another promotion in May 1916, to lance sergeant, McPherson contracted rheumatic fever and was confined to the 23rd General Hospital and other medical facilities for some weeks. On re-joining his unit he was appointed Acting Sergeant. His promotion to sergeant was completed on 10 July 1916 following his attachment to 15th Battalion, D.L.I.

McPherson was posted missing on 16 September following fierce fighting around Flers and Courcelette, during which tanks were used for the first time. The initial view of these novel machines must have been terrifying for any soldier facing the attack, and probably even to the infantry following them into action. McPherson’s body was later located, and he is [buried](http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/264414/McPHERSON%2C%20G) at [Australian Imperial Force Burial Ground](http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/26300/A.I.F.%20BURIAL%20GROUND%2C%20FLERS), Flers.

George McPherson is commemorated in Coxhoe with a [plaque](http://www.newmp.org.uk/detail.php?contentId=9443) and a [stained glass window](http://www.newmp.org.uk/detail.php?contentId=9446) at St Mary’s Church, a [monument](http://www.newmp.org.uk/detail.php?contentId=9442) in front of the Literary Institute in Church Street, and in a [memorial](http://www.newmp.org.uk/detail.php?contentId=10561) at the school in which he once taught, alongside his former colleague Arthur Turner. In Cumbria George McPherson is remembered at [Trinity School](http://www.trinity.cumbria.sch.uk/warmemorials/george-mcpherson/), on the Longtown [war memorial](http://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/4288), and on a [plaque](http://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/4287) and in the family memorial at Arthuret Church. His name is also recorded on the Durham County Council [war memorial](http://www.durhamrecordoffice.org.uk/Pages/DurhamCountyCouncilWarMemorial.aspx), and on the Bede College 1914-1918 [Cross](http://www.newmp.org.uk/detail.php?contentId=7017), [Plaque](http://www.newmp.org.uk/detail.php?contentId=10673), and [Roll of Honour](http://www.newmp.org.uk/detail.php?contentId=10674).

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