



Robert William Draper & Ellen Draper 1881-1917 : 1884-1969 26 Bromley Street

Robert himself never lived in Bromley Street, but his widow, Ellen moved here sometime in 1917 after her husband was killed in action in Belgium.

Robert and Ellen met and married in London in March 1908 at Marylebone Registry Office – their oldest child Robert was born in September 1908 followed by younger sisters Elsie (born March 1910) and Dora (born December 1911). By this time Robert had already worked as a Cycle Fitter (1901 census) and spent some time serving in the South African Police Force. Ellen was a Parlourmaid in Hampstead, London.

In the 1911 census the family are listed as living in Kedleston village with Robert's occupation is listed as "Chauffeur". A wage slip showing his quarterly wages for summer 1913 preserved in the archives at Kedleston Hall confirms that he worked for

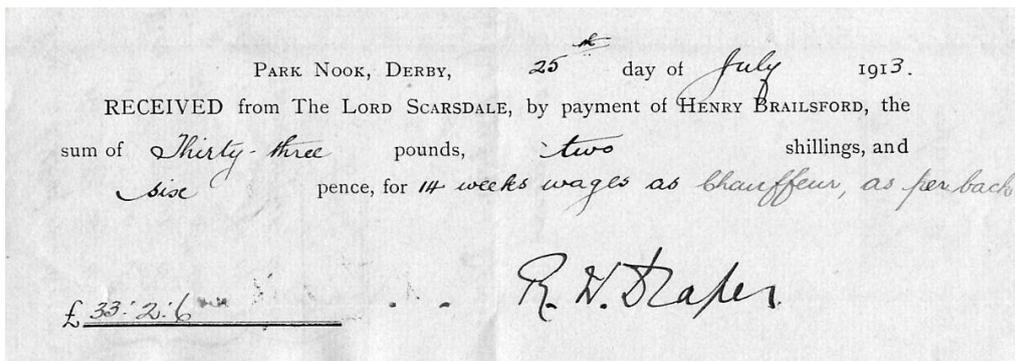
Lord Curzon and the Scarsdale family.

Robert volunteered for enlistment in August 1915 aged 34 years. It was probably his skill as a driver that meant he was assigned to the Army Service Corps (Motorised Transport) section – this was at a time when very few people had experience of driving motorised vehicles.

Robert spent about eight months training in Wincanton, Somerset, and in that time he was promoted to Corporal (with pay).

On 6 April 1916 he embarked for France with the 2nd Australian Divisional Supply Column before he was transferred to the 17th Divisional Supply Company.

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Robert and Ellen Draper continued

Each Division of the army had a certain amount of motorised transport allocated to it, although not directly under its own command. The Divisional Supply Column Companies were responsible for the supply of goods, equipment and ammunition from the Divisional railhead to refilling points and, if conditions allowed, to the dumps and stores of the forward units.



A soldier and vehicles of the 960 Motor Transport Company, ASC. © IWM image Q71933.

A Company usually comprised five officers and 337 other ranks of the ASC, looking after 45 3-ton lorries, sixteen 30-cwt lorries, 7 motor cycles, 2 cars and 4 assorted trucks for the workshop and stores of the Supply Column itself.

Robert spent the rest of his service in Northern France where he undoubtedly witnessed some of the major battles of the war including the Battle of the Somme (July to November 1916) and the Battle of Arras (April to May 1917).

He was killed in action on 28 May 1917 and is buried in Vlamertinghe Military cemetery in Belgium. He is named on the war memorial at St Alkmund's Church, Derby.

At this date Ellen was still living in Kedleston village and in May 1916 she volunteered with the Red Cross to do home work "knitting, needlework and war hospital supplies" but in December 1917 she gave up – her husband had been killed in May 1917 and perhaps caring for three small children after such a bereavement left her little time or energy for war work.

Sometime late in 1917 she must have moved to 26 Bromley Street – perhaps she lost the accommodation that went with the chauffeur's job when Robert was killed. She lived in Bromley Street for many years before she moved to 61 Statham Street in about 1934. Her daughters continued to live with her until 1936. For several years she lived alone but by 1945 she was sharing the house with two other women: Ada Saunders and Helen Glass. 61 Statham Street was her home until the late 1950s. She continued to live in Derby at an unknown address until she died in 1969.

