

THE DOCTORS GEORGE MOWAT

PROLOGUE: It transpires that there were at least two medical practitioners with the name George Mowat who participated in military activities in southern Africa during the Second Anglo-Boer War. What follows are historical notes relating to some aspects of their life.

DR GEORGE MOWAT (1873-1916)



Captain George Mowat wearing the uniform of the South African Scottish Regiment together with the ribbons of the QSA and KSA



Presented are the Queen's South Africa medal with 3 clasps: Cape Colony, Orange Free State and Transvaal inscribed G.MOWAT, Surgeon, and the King's South Africa medal with 2 clasps: South Africa 1901, South Africa 1902 inscribed Civ.Surgn. G.MOWAT

Dr. George Mowat was born 17th September 1873 in Blythswood, Glasgow, Lanark, Scotland, the youngest child of Robert Mowat J.P. and Elizabeth Irvine née Hunter. He was educated at Garnethill School, Glasgow, and at Glasgow University, where he graduated M.B. and C.M. on 22nd October 1895. He practised for some years in Cumberland, Northwest England.

During the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) he served as a civil surgeon. On 11th January 1900, George Mowat of "Longcroft", Thornton Hall, East Kilbride signed a holographic Will beginning "I, George Mowat, being about to proceed to South Africa as civilian surgeon in the British Army and in view of the uncertainty of life", leaving his estate to his 3 sisters, and his father as executor.

On the 29th January 1900 London Times Shipping List ⁱ carried the following entry: "The transport Manhattan ⁱⁱ reached Queenstown ⁱⁱⁱ at 9 o'clock yesterday morning. She took on the 5th and 9th Batteries, RFA, composed of 9 officers, 340 men, 274 horses, 12 guns, and 22 vehicles. The officers of the 5th Battery are Maj. Lane, Capt. Stewart, and Lts. Gray and Roberts; and the 9th Battery Maj. Wedderburn, Capt. Wilson, and Lts. Bird, Addison, and Hamilton. Civil Surgeon George Mowat also joined."

His obituary states that, for his services in "the Boer war, (he was) twice mentioned in dispatches, and gain(ed) the South African medal".

In 1909, he returned and settled in South Africa and was appointed shortly afterwards one of the Railway Medical Officers in Yeoville, Johannesburg. In 1914, his address was listed as the Belfast-Lydenburg Line, Linesklip near Belfast, Transvaal ^{iv}.

When the 1914-1918 war broke out, he joined the Pretoria Regiment obtaining a combatant commission as a lieutenant, later promoted to captain, and served through the campaign in German South-West Africa ^v.

On the close of hostilities, he joined the South African Infantry and was sent to Europe with the South African contingent as a captain ^{vi} in the 4th South African Infantry (South African Scottish). Whilst serving thus, he was killed on the first day of fighting in the Battle of Butte de Warlencourt fought between 12th -19th October 1916.

In his book *The History Of The Transvaal Scottish* Capt. H. C. Juta describes Mowat's final hours as follows: "On October 12th, The South African Scottish, under Major (D.R.) Hunt, went over the top under a hail of machine gun bullets falling through the thick mist and smoke; so heavily did they suffer, that they failed to reach the first objective, and were relieved on the 13th when they moved back to High Wood. During the action, Capt. Mowat was killed while gallantly leading, well in front of his men, to within five yards of the German trench. Lieut. Polson and Lieut. Quinton also were killed" ^{vii}.

His father was informed by telegramme on 18th October 1916. Mowat is reported as having been buried in "No Man's Land, ½ mile east of Le Sans, 3 miles S.W. of Bapaume" ^{viii}. South African casualties were approximately 1,150 including 45 officers, 16 of whom were killed ^{ix}.

His South African Army Service Records have not been traced. I can only speculate that a WW I Memorial Plaque may have been sent to his family.

The official entry of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission reads as follows:

MOWAT, GEORGE Initials: G Nationality: South African Rank: Captain
Regiment/Service: South African Infantry Unit Text: "A" Coy. 4th Regt. Age: 43
Date of Death: 12/10/1916 Additional information: Son of Robert and Elisabeth
Irvine Mowat (née Hunter), of Glasgow. Casualty Type: Commonwealth War Dead
Grave/Memorial Reference: I. H. 30. Cemetery: Warlencourt British Cemetery



His death was memorialised on the Cambuslang War Memorial, Cambuslang Park as
"South African Scottish, Captain George Mowat"

Carl Philipp Gottfried von Clausewitz (1780-1831)
"War is the continuation of policy by other means"

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)
"My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity."

Acknowledgements:

1. Sincere thanks is extended to Audrey Portman [researcher], Prof. J C de Villiers and Meurig Jones (Casus Belli) without whose assistance this account would be very much the poorer.
2. University of Glasgow Story, First World War Roll of Honour, for the photograph of Captain George Mowat (1873-1916)
3. University of Cape Town Library Services

References:

1. © 2006 Militaria Collector
2. British Medical Journal. Casualties in the Medical Services. 1916 (4 November), 633
3. Buchan, J. The History of the South African Forces in France. Thomas Nelson, London. 1920
4. Cambuslang War Memorial, Cambuslang Park. Image.
<http://warmemscot.s4.bizhat.com/warmemscot-ftopic425.html>
5. Commonwealth War Graves Commission <http://www.cwgc.org/>
6. Croft, Lieutenant Col (later Brig. Gen) W.D. Croft. Three Years with the 9th Division
7. Dublin Journal of Medical Science. 1916; 140 (3): 192-211 Part II.
Reviews and bibliographical notices
8. Ferguson, N. The Pity of War. Basic Books, 1998
9. FreeBMD : transcription of Civil Registration index of births, marriages & deaths for England and Wales <http://freebmd.rootsweb.com>
10. Juta, H.C. The History of The Transvaal Scottish. Publ: Hortons Ltd, Johannesburg, 1933.
11. Mitchell J H. Transvaal Scottish Regimental Association. The Regimental History <http://www.jocks.co.za/history.htm>
12. South African Archives Repository, Pretoria
13. South African Military Archives, Pretoria
14. South African Medical Record. Obituary Captain George Mowat, M.B., C.M. 1916 (October 28) 325.
15. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints :
<http://www.familysearch.org>
16. The Medical Register. 1914
17. University Of Glasgow Roll Of Honour : The University Contingent of the Officers' Training Corps who served with the Forces of the Crown 1914-1919, issued by the University Court of the University of Glasgow. Publ: JP Maclehose, Jackson and Co. 1922. <http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk>
18. Uys, I. Rollcall: The Delville Wood Story. Publ: Uys Publishers, Germiston. 1991
19. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Carl von Clausewitz

Wednesday, 05 October 2011

The following addition information has come to light:

1. Mowat travelled to SA with 5th and 9th Batteries, RFA.
2. When he arrived in SA he joined the Kaffrarian Mounted Rifles
3. His QSA medal was issued against WO 100/226 and WO 100/352 Civil Surgeon
4. His KSA medal was issued against WO 100/140 (!) 17th Battery Royal Field artillery
5. Pretoria Regiment was sent on the GSWA campaign (as was the Kaffrarian Mounted Rifles)
6. His military record with the Kaffrarian Mounted Rifles, 17th Battery Royal Field artillery and 4th South African Infantry (South African Scottish) are mislaid probably lost

The MOWAT FAMILY of GLASGOW Family History

The following information is related, though incidental to, the biography of George Mowat.

William MOWAT (1796-) m. Jane FRASER (1802-)

Robert MOWAT (grocer/tea merchant) b. Govan, Glasgow 20th November 1834 d. Cambuslang 31st January 1920 m. Elizabeth Irvine née HUNTER b. (1834-1905 *)

Together they produced 8 offspring:

1. Violet Anderson MOWAT b. 1862 Milton, Glasgow
2. William Mowat (joiner) b. 19 OCTOBER 1863 Blythswood, Glasgow, Lanark d. 1908 m. Elizabeth Irvine HUNTER
3. Robert Wishart Mowat (tea merchant) b. 12 AUGUST 1865 Blythswood, Glasgow, Lanark d. 1952 Harrow

The South African copy of the **Death Notice of George Mowat**, completed 18 November 1916 and signed by Robert MOWAT, provides the following information: Robert Wishart MOWAT (tea merchant) and his wife Elizabeth Irvine HUNTER lived at "Blycameo", 42 Buchanan Drive, Cambuslang, Glasgow, South Lanarkshire; that George Mowat was K.I.A. 12 October 1916 age 43 years, was unmarried and lived in Yeoville, Johannesburg.

4. Adam Hunter Mowat (importer / cashier) b. 19 JUNE 1867 Central District, Glasgow, Lanark d. 16 August 1916 Guillemont (Battle of the Somme) France

No	Surname	Rank	Service Number	Date Of Death	Age	Regiment/Service	Nationality	Grave/Memorial Ref.	Cemetery/Memorial Name
1	MOWAT, AH	Private	7787 Attestation June 1915	16/08/1916	49 yrs	3 rd Corps/8 th Battalion, Royal Scots	United Kingdom	VII. J. I.	GUILLEMONT ROAD CEMETERY, GUILLEMONT

5. Jane Fraser (Frazer *) Mowat b. 25 APRIL 1869 Central District, Glasgow, Lanark

[*] **George Mowat's holograph Will** : this is the spelling as it appears in the holograph Will dated 11th January 1900, which, firstly was certified as original and of the hand of George Mowat on 13th April 1917, then transcribed, later to be recorded in Lanarkshire on 24th April 1917; and filed in South Africa on 31st August 1917.

6. Elizabeth Violet Mowat b. Blythswood, Glasgow 15 September 1871
7. George Mowat b. Blythswood, Glasgow 17 September 1873 d. Somme, France 12 October 1916
8. Annie Cecilia (Cecelia *) Mowat b.c. 1876 Millpool/Millfield, Buteshire

Annie Cecilia (Cecelia *) Mowat joined the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (Q.A.I.M.N.S.); and on 21st June 1905 was appointed a staff nurse. *Inter alia* British Journal of Nursing June 16, 1917 records the following: "In the June Birthday Honours List of 1917, the following was announced – 'His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to award the Royal Red Cross Decoration to the undermentioned Ladies, in recognition of their valuable services with the Armies in the Field: — Royal Red Cross, 1st Class. Miss Annie Cecilia Mowat, A.R.R.C., A(cting)/Matron, Q.A.I.M.N.S.' " She was Mention in Despatches twice in 1916.

(References: THE LONDON GAZETTE, JULY 18, 1905 - 4986 ; SUPPLEMENT TO THE LONDON GAZETTE, 4 JUNE, 1917 - 5487 ; SUPPLEMENT TO THE EDINBURGH GAZETTE, JUNE 4, 1917 - 1079; BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING June 16, 1917 (58) :413 ; THE LONDON GAZETTE, JANUARY 1, 1916 (29422) – 69; THE LONDON GAZETTE, JUNE 15, 1916 (29623) - 5957.

DR GEORGE MOWAT (1876-1961)

George Mowat graduated M.B., Ch.B. at the University of Aberdeen on 4 April 1898.

During the South African War (1899-1902) he served as a civil surgeon. As did so many other medical and nursing personnel, late 1900 Mowat contracted typhoid^{xi}. Initially he responded to treatment only to relapse^{xii}, in time becoming sufficiently debilitated to be repatriated "an invalid"^{xiii} with others aboard "The Canada"^{xiv} on 18th April 1901.

Returning to England, he practiced for a short time in Manchester. He had been senior house-surgeon at the Royal Albert Infirmary, Wigan, and the sister of the children's ward there was later to become his wife. They married in Norwich during the March QRT 1904.

About that time he established a practice at Bolton, being appointed police surgeon there in 1903, a post he held for 40 years. The Medical Register (1914) lists his address as 24 Higher Bridge Street, Bolton.

During the 1914-1918 War, he again saw active service, holding a combatant commission of captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps and serving for a time in the then Mesopotamia.

His main hobbies were bridge and golf: in his day he had been a good golfer and was captain of the Bolton Golf Club. His son, Mr. George Gordon Mowat (b. Bolton, June QRT 1905) was a consulting Aural Surgeon to the Bolton and district group of hospitals.

Dr. George Mowat died on 22nd January, 1961 aged 85. He was predeceased by his wife.

References:

1. British Medical Journal. Obituary George Mowat, M.B., Ch.B. 1961 (March 4); 680
2. FreeBMD : transcription of Civil Registration index of births, marriages & deaths for England and Wales <http://freebmd.rootsweb.com>
3. Roll of service in the Great War, 1914-1919. Aberdeen University Studies: No. 84 Ed: Mabel Desborough Allardyce, Aberdeen University Press [1921]

ⁱ London Times Shipping List for July 1899 - December 1902 : dateline 29 January 1900 (Monday) page 10e

ⁱⁱ S.S. Manhattan was commissioned for Atlantic Transport Line circa 1895, transferred to the National Line 1898; chartered to Phoenix Line 1911-1914; transferred to Atlantic Transport Line 1914; and scrapped in Italy 1927.
[Ref: <http://www.atlantictransportline.us/content/43Manhattan.htm>]

ⁱⁱⁱ Cobh is a seaport town on the south shore of the Great Island in Cork Harbour, Ireland. Following a visit by Queen Victoria in 1849 it was renamed Queenstown; only to revert to Cobh in 1922

^{iv} The Battle of Bergendal (also known as the Battle of Belfast), the last set-piece battle of the Second Anglo-Boer War, was fought in this vicinity.

^v The following is a useful history of this campaign:

1. Paterson, H. First Allied Victory - The South African campaign in German South-West Africa, 1914-1915. The South African Military History Society Journal 2004; 13 (No 2: December)
2. Juta, H.C. The History of The Transvaal Scottish. Publ: Hortons Ltd, Johannesburg, 1933 : Chap. II pgs. 75-103. Activities of the Pretoria Regiment recounted pg. 95-

^{vi} Date of first gazette: August 1916.

^{vii} With few exceptions, all officers and men of "A" and "B" Companies were killed. "One saw a large party of South African at full stretch with bayonets at the charge - all dead; but even in death they seemed to have the battle ardour stamped on their faces." W.D. Croft

^{viii} Doc 4/1591 South African Records Branch Office, 65 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1 July 31, 1917.

^{ix} Amongst the many seemingly pointless battles of WWI, the Butte de Warlencourt launched towards the end of the Battle of the Somme [1916] ranks amongst the most profound. The narration which follows derives from Militaria Collector. As this excellent website appears to have been shutdown / discontinued, I am quoting the archived note on the Battle of Butte de Warlencourt for reference:

"12-19th October 1916 At 14:00 with the 2nd and 4th Regiments leading and the 3rd and 1st in reserve they crossed the parapets at the start of the Battle of Butte de Warlencourt. After dawn on the 13th October the 2nd and 4th Regiments were pulled back to High Wood. On the 14th October B Company of the 3rd Regiment took the "pimple" plus a few surrounding trenches, this "pimple" was a prominent feature on the battlefield. The A Company of the 3rd Regiment relieved them on the night of the 15th October. On the 16th October the 3rd Regiment retired to the support line being replaced by the 1st Regiment. On the 18th October A, B and C companies of the 1st Regiment attacked the German positions. Only around forty men from C Company survived this initial attack. As for the A and B companies only a handful of survivors lived, the rest were totally annihilated! On the 19th October a company of the 3rd Regiment went into the attack with limited success. That evening the remnants of the Brigade were relieved by the 6th K.O.S.B. and by the 20th October all troops were back at High Wood. The Butte de Warlencourt was never taken and was only occupied at the end of February 1917, when the enemy retreated. In the ten days of fighting the South African casualties were approximately 1,150 including 45 officers, 16 of whom were killed."

^x George MOWAT certified to his mother's death in 1905

^{xi} BMJ Jan. 5 1901: 64. The following have been discharged from hospital in South Africa to duty: Lieutenant C. E. TRIMBLE, Civil Surgeons G. MOWAT, S. H. SHARPE, A. H. MCKENZIE, W. J. I. BRUCE, GERALD HIRKLOTS, H. A. SPENCER, Major J. S. EDGE.

^{xii} BMJ 1901 Feb 23: 492: Civil Surgeon George MOWATT is reported seriously ill from enteric fever at Pretoria February 11th, and on the 16th as showing no change. BMJ 1901 March 16: 683: In the progress report from South Africa Civil Surgeon MOWATT, much improved, Pretoria, March 2nd.

^{xiii} London Times Shipping List for July 1899 - December 1902: dateline 24 April 1901 (Wednesday) page 12a-c : The Canada left for England April 18 with the following invalids: 14/Hussars - Maj.E.J.Tickell; RFA - Capts. M.J.F. Fitzgerald, E.M. Connolly, 2/Lt. H.M.T. Pym; 2/Bedford - Capt.E.A.S. Ely; 2/Worcester - Capt.B.K.W.Bacon; 1/KRRC - 2/Lt.W.S.W.Parker-Jervis; 1/ R.Dublin Fus. - Lt.E.A.A. de Salis; RAMC - Maj.R.E.Kelly, Lt. & Qm.H.W. Glover; Brabant's Horse - Capt.J.S.Browne; CIC Bodyguard - Maj. R.H.B. Magee; Robert's Horse - Lt.R.F.G. Penrose; RHA- Lt. G.L.Butler; 4/R.Fus. - 2/Lt.R.B.de B.Hodge; 3/Norfolk - 2/Lt.H.Burnand; 1/Inniskilling Fus. - Lt.-Col.R.L.Payne; 3/W.Riding - Lt.F.C.Stonor; 3/Durham L.I. - Capt.E.C.Sowerby, 2/Lt.E.S. Curling; ASC - 2/Lt.C.G.S.Martelli (? R.G.H.Martelli); I.Y. - Lt.R.G.Cave; Australian Bushmen - Lt.C.E.S.King; 4/Victorian Contingent - Lt.-Col.N.W.Kelly; Prince of Wales L.H. - Lt.A.E.Gray, Rev. J.F.Prince; Civil Surg. G. Mowat

^{xiv} S.S. Canada was launched in Belfast in 1896, part of the White Star-Dominion Line; served as a troop transport during the Second Anglo-Boer War; was again commandeered in August 1914 to transport troops from Canada to England, then to act as a floating prison German prisoners for the remainder of 1914, and again as a transport ship until 1918; was transferred to Leyland Line ownership in 1921; and remained in August 1926 scrapped in Italy. [Ref: <http://www.greatships.net/canada.html>]