

## **Kenneth Reginald Flint KEMP**

Born 17 April 1895, Bedford Park, London  
Second Lieutenant, Croix de Guerre

Died 18 October 1918 aged 23  
Army Service Corps, Mechanical Transport

**Kenneth Reginald Flint Kemp** was the only child of Thomas Reginald and Bertha Kemp (nee Flint). Thomas Reginald Kemp dropped his first Christian name in later census entries and appears as Reginald Kemp. **Kenneth** was born into a family with legal skills.

Thomas Reginald Kemp (1866-1943) was the son of Thomas Richardson Kemp (1835-1905) who was born in Holloway, London and was a barrister in practice. His wife was Emily Jane Catherine Elizabeth Comer Plumtre (1845-1925) from Notting Hill.

Thomas Reginald Kemp was baptised on July 4, 1866 at St Mark's, St Marlebone, London. He went to Westminster School and qualified in law, and in 1891 was staying at 11 Westcliff, Dawlish with his great uncle, Charles Wade, a barrister at law. This may have been one of a number of visits to Dawlish which led to his eventual choice at retirement.

He married Bertha Flint (1864-1942) in Uttoxeter, Staffordshire in the first quarter of 1894 (GRO ref, vol 6b, p 433). Bertha Flint was baptised on 4 September 1864 and was the daughter of Abraham Augustus Flint (1821-1897) and Anne, nee Keates (1821- ). Abraham had been born in Uttoxeter and was, in 1891, a solicitor and Coroner for Staffordshire. Bertha was educated at Queen's College, Islington, London.

Reginald and Bertha Kemp set up home at 37 The Avenue, Bedford Park, Hounslow, and **Kenneth Reginald Flint Kemp** was born there in April 1895 and was their only child. He was baptised on 12 May 1895 at St Michael and All Angels, Bedford Park, Hounslow. He was sent to school at Westminster School and was 15 at the time of the 1911 census when the family lived at 16 Woodstock Road, Chiswick.

He was probably leaving school as the threat of war was building, and he became a painter and one example of his work is shown here. He was a member of the Royal Society of British Artists (RBA).

On 4th October 1916 **Kenneth Kemp** went to work in Flanders with Dr Munro's Field Ambulance Corps. He had enlisted on 2 March 1916 but was not called up for service until 4 June 1917.

Dr Hector Munro set up a 'Flying Ambulance Corps' to help the Belgians who had been caught badly unawares by the German attack of August 1914. It was under the general supervision of the British Mission to Belgium.

Dr. Munro advertised for "adventurous young women to equip an ambulance unit for service in Belgium," and of the 200 applications he received, he accepted four: Lady Dorothe Feilding, Mairi Chisholm, Mrs. Elsie Knocker, and Helen Gleason.

Lady Dorothe Fielding's letters home have been published as "Lady Under Fire On The Western Front", edited by Andrew and Nicola Hallam, and they give a vivid account of the hair-raising activities of the drivers, doctors and others who helped to bring the wounded of all nations back from the Front Line to casualty Dressing Stations, and then moving them on to hospital

care. She was awarded the Military Medal, the first British woman to receive the award which was presented by King George V at Windsor Castle on September 6<sup>th</sup> 1916. It was created in March 1916 to recognise acts of bravery in the field under fire. During the course of the War 115,600 Military Medals were issued.

The recommendation referred to her service to the Belgian Army and to the French Brigade de Marins in driving the Munro ambulance and attending to the wounded. Her colleague, Dr Henry Jellett had already been rewarded for such work.

The Munro field ambulance was provided in the absence of other services between February 1915 and March 1916 when a naval surgeon was appointed and later an ambulance provided to the Naval Siege Gunnery units.

The unit was based at Furnes (Veurne) and ranged between Dixmude and Nieuport on the coast. They were frequently out at night collecting wounded men to bring back to field hospitals or to transport to general hospitals behind the lines for treatment. In one letter she describes having "taken between 45 and 50 men in the Fiat- myself only" and in another "last month our six cars took 334 people... and in the last 8 months the total is 1,547 cases."

On 12<sup>th</sup> November 1916 Dorothie Fielding wrote,

"A new man arrived for us yesterday, one **Kemp**, to replace Newall who had to return. He seems nice, but we are sorry to lose Newall who was a very dependable chap and a hard worker."

On 21<sup>st</sup> November Dorothie wrote to her father, "I have just received a most compromising wire, which will show the sort of reputation I now have. '**Lady D F etc – Beseech you return my son immediately – Kemp.**'

"I think it is quite priceless and so does everyone else & I am being called a babysnatcher!!....The reason of it all is a youth called Kemp who came to replace Newall & is somewhat a rabbit. He came in for a good few obus (*shells*) at once and Jelly (*Dr Jellett*) took him up to N (*Nieuport*) teach him how to reverse a car under heavy fire, as he explained 'just to give the lad confidence'. This put the lid on it and the lad wrote home to Papa his nerves & health wouldn't stand it hence frenzied wires from his parent birds – about 3 a day! We explained he was under a military contract for 6 months & must stick it. He is already improved & I think a little hard work & being shot at as often as possible will soon buck him up."

**Kenneth Kemp** was 21 and it appears that he had been recruited to this work after enlisting.

Lady Dorothie Fielding's letters are full of personal comments about those working on the Belgian lines and underlying all is the sense of a woman dedicated and working as hard, if not harder, than all around her. There is also the reality that every day may be your last and there is no means of knowing when a shell or bomb may have your name on it. She was highly critical of a book written by Mrs Knocker, another of Munro's team based nearby in Pervyse.

On 15<sup>th</sup> January 1917 Dorothie wrote to her mother,

"Do you remember our last new member, one **Kemp** of 'Beseech you return my son' fame? He & Gurney were in one of the cars yesterday & a 11 inch obus (*shell*) neatly removed all trace of what a second before was a more or less complete house. As it took place alongside their car, it ought to teach him to be neurasthenic. He's getting on quite well tho' except he still drives abominably."

The winter of 1916/17 was severe with extremely low temperatures and much as the troops suffered in exposed trenches, the ambulance crews had to deal with frozen roads and shell holes that were treacherous to negotiate in the dark nights. Casualties had to be carried some distance to the ambulances which were often shelled in range of enemy guns. Vehicles had to be drained down to avoid burst radiators and build up of mud had to be scraped from under the body and wings to keep them mobile.

**Kenneth Kemp** later put his ill health down to strains involved in driving ambulances and carrying wounded on stretchers. During this time he was awarded the Croix de Guerre, possibly by the Belgians but more likely by the French whose naval brigade of Marins were supported by the ambulances based at Furnes.

The steady march of the German army across Belgium pushed the Belgian Army back towards the tiny tip between Nieuport and Ypres—the scene of much bitter fighting between 1914 and 1918. The Belgians held them along the river Yser by breaching dykes and flooding the land ahead of the German advance.

**Kenneth Reginald Flint Kemp** enlisted on 2 March 1916 but was not called up for service until 4 June 1917, and it was in the interval that he was in Flanders.

He was initially made a Private service no. M/ 334502 in the Army Service Corps (M.T.). This followed a medical examination on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1917 as a result of which he was marked down as "fit for transport but not for infantry". His own declaration on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1917 stated that he was "unable to march long distances and carry heavy weights" and that he had a "weak back". The medical diagnosis was of scoliosis.

*(The spine of an otherwise healthy person, curves or twists and it can happen any time from before birth (known as congenital), to adulthood (known as degenerative). It most often starts in children aged between 10 and 15 (known as adolescent idiopathic scoliosis). Idiopathic scoliosis is the term for curvature or twisting with an unknown cause, which occurs in around eight out of 10 cases.)*

He had been seen by a Medical Board on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1917 and been found "Unfit permanently for General Service" and fit for Light Duty at Home.

**Kenneth Kemp** applied for a Commission which he was entitled to do as a member of Westminster School Officer Training Corps. He was discharged as a Private on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1917 and appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant on the following day.

## Dawlish World War One Project

After a further Medical Board on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1918 he was then reviewed by a Medical Board Report on a Disabled Officer, on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1918. His disability was put down to 10 months as a field ambulance driver. A further report on 6<sup>th</sup> June showed him to be nervy and tremulous and suffering headaches. On 10<sup>th</sup> September it remarked that his sleep was more satisfactory and headaches less frequent.

In all of this time he had been attached to the Home Mechanical Transport Depot at Holborn. He was taken sick and placed on the Sick List on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1918 and died at home from double pneumonia on 18<sup>th</sup> October.

His parents arranged for his burial in Dawlish Cemetery. They retired to a house they had bought in the town, 'Up-Along' in The Drive. His mother died in March 1942 and his father a year later.

The grave in Dawlish Cemetery carries the inscription:

*In proud and tenderest memory of Kenneth Kemp, RBA, Croix de Guerre,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt, RASC MT, the beloved only child of Reginald and Bertha Kemp  
of Bedford Park, London.  
Died on active service October 18<sup>th</sup> 1918.  
By his wish he sleeps among the hills and valleys he so loved.  
Aged 23.  
"At the setting of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them."*

Underneath, on the second base plinth are the words:

*"Bertha"  
for 48 years the dearly beloved wife of Reginald Kemp, Up-Along, Dawlish.  
Passed over 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1942*

And on the base plinth itself:

*Reginald Kemp J.P.  
42 years Coroner for West Middlesex. Died March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1943 aged 76 years.  
"At peace with my beloved ones".*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Kenneth Reginald Flint Kemp** appears on the Devon Roll of Honour.

Dawlish War memorial inscription: KEMP K. 2ND LIEUT. (C. De G.) R.A.S.C.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: KEMP, KENNETH REGINALD FLINT Second Lieutenant  
18/10/1918 Age: 23 Army Service Corps

Grave Ref: 2153A. [Dawlish Cemetery](#)

Son of Reginald Kemp, J.P., and Bertha Kemp, of 18, Woodstock Rd., Bedford Park, London.

Devon Heritage site info:

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Kenneth Reginald Flint Kemp of the Army Service Corps. Son of Reginald Kemp, J.P., and Bertha Kemp, of 18, Woodstock Road, Bedford Park, London. Born in Chiswick in 1895. Died 18 October 1918 aged 23. Buried in Dawlish Cemetery.

The Imperial War Museum also records a Memorial tablet:

SOUTH WALL OF SOUTH AISLE of ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH

Bath Rd, Chiswick, Hounslow, Greater London, W4 1TT, England

OS Grid Ref.: TQ 212 789

Denomination: Church of England

**Description**

BRASS PLAQUE ATTACHED TO WALL, CROSS AT THE TOP CENTRE OF THE PLAQUE

**Inscription**

TO THE DEAR MEMORY OF KENNETH KEMP, R.B.A., BORN IN BEDFORD PARK APRIL 17TH 1895  
& WHOSE SHORT GLORIOUS LIFE WAS LIVED THERE UNTIL HE JOINED THE FORCES IN THE GREAT WAR.  
HE DIED ON ACTIVE SERVICE OCT 18TH 1918,  
TO THE ENDLESS SORROW OF HIS DEVOTED PARENTS, REGINALD & BERTHA KEMP

Last known address: 18, Woodstock Rd., Bedford Park, London W4

Next of kin: father, Reginald Kemp, J.P.

References:

Officer records in the National Archives, Kew

Research Papers by Wendy Cowan

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothie\\_Feilding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothie_Feilding)

"Lady Under Fire On The Western Front", edited by Andrew and Nicola Hallam – the letters of Lady Dorothie Fielding, M.M. and Croix de Guerre.

<http://www.edwardianpromenade.com/war/wwi-wednesday-women-ambulance-drivers/>

<http://www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/Tserclaes2.html>

refs via subscription websites:

Census data