

## Lieutenant John Rookhurst Platt



John Rookhurst Platt was born on the 15th May 1890, the son of Samuel Radcliffe Platt from Oldham, and Helen May Platt nee Roberts.

In 1891 he was living with his parents, sister and 12 servants at Platts Lodge, Werneth Park, Oldham:

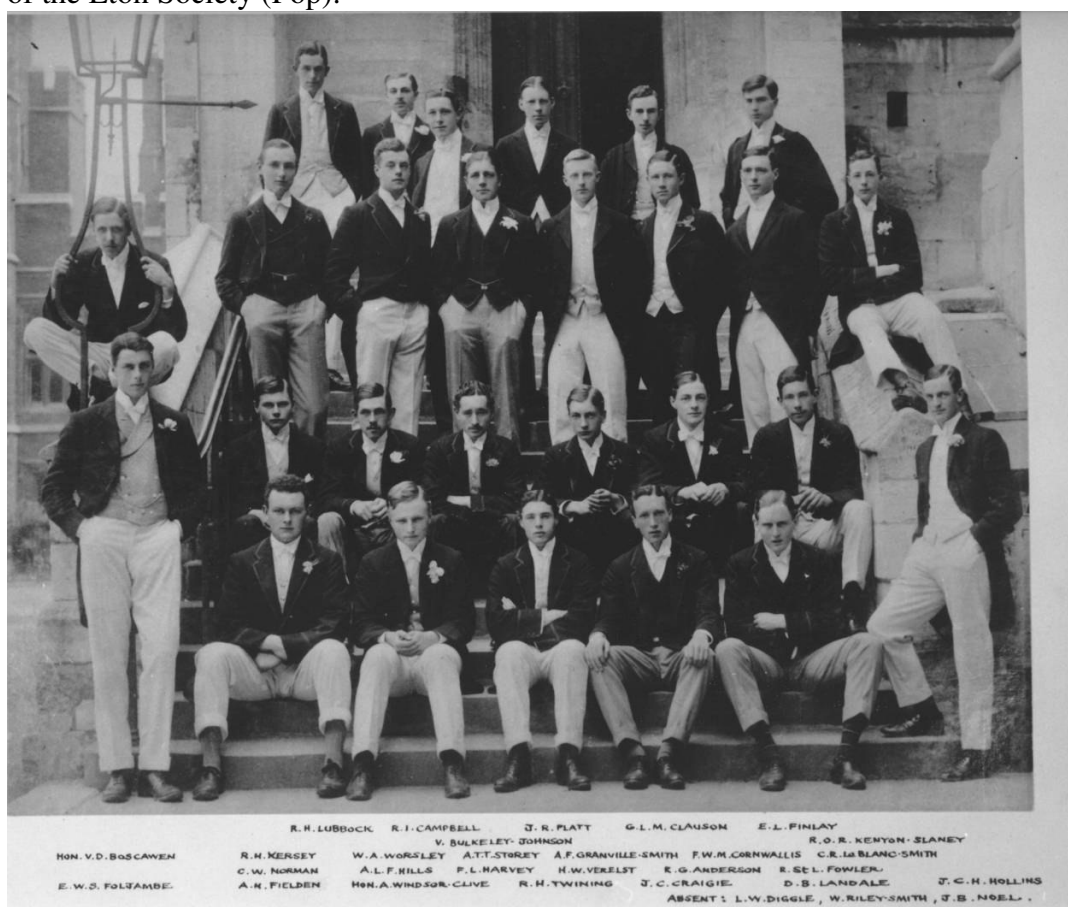
Samuel Platt, 45, Head, Mechanical Engineer, born Oldham  
Helen Platt, 28, Wife, Ireland  
Alice Platt, 5, Daughter, Oldham  
John Platt, 0, Son, Oldham  
Eliza Grainger, 41, House Keeper, Southwick, Sussex  
Emma Clarke, 28, Housemaid, Chester  
Lizzie Hiden, 23, Housemaid, Evesham, Worcestershire  
Ellen Banks, 22, Kitchen Maid, Ashburton, Herefordshire  
Emma Heath, 21, Housemaid, Clifton, Staffordshire  
Ella Wargent, 18, Scullery Maid, Newtown, Herefordshire  
Ellen Smith, 16, Laundry Maid, Clifton On Teme, Worcestershire  
Edith Swann, 21, Housemaid, Middlesex, London  
Mary Northover, 17, Nurse Maid, Warminster, Wiltshire  
Frank Elwis, 25, Footman, Finningley, Nottinghamshire  
Ellen Johnstone, 27, Ladies Maid, Berwick On Tweed, Northumberland  
Mary Colling, 23, Nurse, Tavistock, Devonshire



*Platts Lodge, Werneth Park, Oldham*

In 1901 aged 10 he was a boarder at Manor House School, in Cheam, Epsom, Surrey.  
In 1902 on the 5th September, his father, Samuel Radcliffe Platt who was the head of Platt Brothers, a large Textile Machine Company in Oldham, died aged 52.

From April 1904 until July 1909, he was at Eton in Mr. Tatham's house. Although he won none of the major subject prizes, he consistently won prizes for his performance in Trials (end of term exams) and holiday tasks, as well as getting three distinctions in Trials. He ended up as Captain of the Oppidans, the senior non-Scholar in the school, and was a member of the Eton Society (Pop).



*Eton Society (POP) Photograph, 1909, (top centre)*

In 1911 he was at Oxford University and his mother and sister were living at Youlston Park (23 rooms), Shirwell, Barnstaple, Devonshire:

Helen May Platt, Head, 48, Private Means, born Carrigaline Cork

John Rookhurst Platt, Son, 20, Oxford Undergraduate, born Oldham

Nancy Quinelda Platt, Daughter, 15, School, born Chester Cheshire

Evelyn Radcliffe, Sister, 52, Carrigaline Cork

Frank Vivian Radcliffe, Nephew, 25, Land Agent, Oldham Lancs

Theodore Michael Roberts, Visitor, 57, Examiner To Civil Service Commission and Co, born Dublin

Mathilde Lemhardt, Governess, 38, Stuttgart, Nationality German

Ellen Wherton, 42, Housemaid, Clay Cross Derbyshire

Emma Ellston, 27, Housemaid, Halwill N Devon

Edith Bale, 17, Housemaid, Bratton Fleming Devon

Edith Mounty, 17, Kitchen Maid, Witham Ricing Somersetshire

Albert Smith, 15, Scullery Boy, Barnstaple N Devon

Ernest Lewis, 15, Pantry Boy, Newport Wales

Ellen Ackroyd, 26, Ladies Maid, Enfield Middlesex

Sarah Gregory, 48, Ladies Maid, Stoke Staffordshire

William Worth, 18, Garden Boy, East Down Devon

Florence Callaghan, 24, Parlour Maid, Clobelly N Devon

He matriculated from Magdalen College, Oxford on 13 October 1909. He was awarded third class honours in Modern History in 1913.

An avid golfer, he won the Amateur Championship at Baden-Baden in August 1912 and played against Cambridge in 1913.



*Magdalen College, Oxford*

After leaving Magdalen, he was adopted as prospective Unionist candidate for Oldham and showed promise as a platform speaker.

In the First World War he became a 2nd Lieutenant on the 5th October 1914, and a Lieutenant on the 13th April 1915 in the Royal Field Artillery, 2nd Durham Battery, 3rd Northumbrian Brigade; (later 252nd Brigade, RFA).

The War Diary for his unit is Ref WO 95/2817 (252 Brigade, Royal Field Artillery).

He served with his unit from their embarkation from Newcastle upon Tyne to Le Havre via Southampton on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1915.

The Battery first saw action on 24 May 1915 when it fired against a major German attack. From 7 to 22 June the Battery was positioned on the south side of Zillebeke pond, near Kruisstraat and then, from 23 to 30 June, at Neuve Église, where it remained until 18 July. From 19 July to 15 August it was positioned at Pont de Nieppe with its Brigade HQ in Armentières, firing at infantry trenches and artillery positions. It spent the period from 16 August to 24 October at Houplines, before moving to billets south-west of Bailleul with its Bde HQ in Noote Boom. During the summer, he must have served primarily as a forward observing officer (FOO) for the unit's War Diary noted retrospectively that he and 2nd Lieutenant E.R. Bastell had "both done splendid work [as FOOs] in identifying targets and maintaining the good feeling and confidence of the Infantry". On 1 November the whole Brigade moved to Noote Boom, where, on 25 November, it exchanged its cumbersome ex-naval 4.5" guns for smaller 18-pounders. It stayed here until 17 December, moved to Hondeghem, and by 21 December had taken up firing positions at Kruisstraat..

There was no let up for Christmas as his unit at Kruisstraat fired 67 High Explosive and 79 Shrapnel shells on the 25<sup>th</sup> December 1915 and on the 31<sup>st</sup> December the war diary states "Each battery fired 60 rounds between 11pm and 11.50pm and the same between midnight and 12.50pm without provoking retaliation."

On 27 March 1916, he was acting as a Forward Observing Officer (FOO) beside Hill 60 where he was plotting shell fire when his group of men was hit by a High Explosive shell. He and Corporal J. A. Shaw were severely wounded and died of their wounds the same day, aged 25 and 21 respectively.

His Colonel wrote:

"He was always keen efficient, in every way an Officer and a gentleman. I had the pleasure only a month ago of recommending him for the Military Cross."

From the Captain of his Battery:

"I must say that I never yet met any man with John's brain, imagination and possibilities, and one who was so untiringly devoted to his duties.

It was a privilege to work with him, and on Whit Monday 1915, when the Adjutant was wounded and the situation was very critical he took over the duties of Adjutant a task that only a really brilliant man could have performed with but six months experience, and yet everything went smoothly."

The Secretary of the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society wrote:

"I represent a member of Jock's friends whose thoughts are deeply concerned with you in your bereavement. The fact that he was so widely popular with men who met him at golf,

and the other lighter things of life, makes his death the more tragic, but it may be some comfort to you now to be reminded of his popularity, and now all his strength, wit, enthusiasm and transparent honesty are lost to us."

President Herbert Warren of Magdalen College wrote in the May 1916 edition of The Oxford Magazine:

"He came in on the History Demys, showing himself the best classical scholar in the competition. He had distinct ability both for languages and history. The attractions of a good time, the prospect of a good income, and the seductions of golf, however, militated against his Schools [final examinations], and those who knew him were well aware he could do much more intellectually than he achieved here. He played golf against Cambridge in 1913 and took his degree with Honours in History in 1914.

When the call of the War came he not only obeyed it himself, but did his best, often not so easy, to persuade others, especially in Oldham, with which his family was connected. He had been adopted as Unionist candidate. "He made," writes a gentleman who met him in this work, "a remarkable speech, and showed promise of real distinction in platform work." Entering the army, he joined the Royal Field Artillery.

His Colonel wrote to his mother to give particulars, as he said, "of our greatest loss since we came out." "Platt was forward observing officer beside Hill 60," he continues, "and was observing shell fire when a H.E. (High Explosive) shell came. He only had time to say, 'I'm hit', when he became unconscious. I had recommended him only a month before for the Military Cross. He was liked by all the men and loved by his own Battery; always keen, efficient, and in every way an officer and a gentleman."

His Brigade-Major endorsed this opinion of his character, promise, and ability, and so did the Labour candidate who had been selected to oppose him at Oldham.

Had he been spared it is clear that he would have made first a fine soldier and later a very useful civilian. Always pleasant and quick-witted, he had gained evidently the deepening and strengthening of character which was what he wanted to go far and achieve much."

He is buried at Railway Dugouts Burial Ground, Grave Ref III E 13.

### **Probate record and Will**

Platt, John Rookhurst of Youlston Park near Barnstaple, Devonshire died 27 March 1916 in Belgium from wounds received in action. Probate London 16 June to Joseph Platt Hall, electrical engineer, Samuel Roberts Radcliffe, major, His Majesty's Army, and Eric George Claydon, solicitor. Effects £234,559 8s. 3d.

In his Will, he left £4000 to his friend Lieutenant John Churchill Craigie (Member of the Conservative Club). He was in the Grenadier Guards and had become a Captain by the end of the War and had won the Military Cross.

The remainder of the £234,559 after expenses was formed into 35 shares and divided up between his:

- Mother - Helen Mary Platt (16 shares - 46%)
- Sister - Alice Mary Brownlow (6 shares - 17%) and her children in the form of a Trust (6 shares - 17%)
- Aunt Evelyn Alice Jane Radcliffe (1 share - 3%). She was his mother's sister and her husband Samuel had died in 1908.
- Cousin Samuel Roberts Radcliffe (3 shares - 8.5%). He was a Major in the RFA (172<sup>nd</sup> Bde) and received the DSO in January 1918 for the capture of Jerusalem and was Mentioned in Despatches. He was killed aged 33 on the 30/04/1918 and is buried in Kantara War Cemetery, Egypt. (Grave Ref: D -140)
- Cousin Frank Vivian Radcliffe (3 shares - 8.5%)



**WAR DIARY**  
or  
**INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.**  
(Brass heading not required.)

SHEET No 29  
3<sup>rd</sup> Northumbrian RFA  
(TF)

Army Form C. 2118.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in P. & Regs. Part II and the Staff Manual respectively. This page will be prepared in manuscript.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Sheet 28 H23B59	1916 March			
	23		Nie	
	24		Amr expended 26A 6AX	Plt
	25		do 54A 159AX	Plt
			Gp Laws H.W. No 1145 a casualty - shell shock.	Plt
	26		Amr expended 23A 6AX	Plt
	27		do 66A 69AX	Plt
			1 <sup>st</sup> JR Platt 2 <sup>nd</sup> Battery, wounded by shell fire on Hill 60, dies same day.	
			Captain J Ashaw No 942, 1 <sup>st</sup> Bty do do dies following day.	
			Gp Turnbull J No 1617 2 <sup>nd</sup> Bty do and sent to Hospital	
	28		Amr expended 63A 89AX	Plt
			Captain J Ashaw No 942, 1 <sup>st</sup> Bty, died of wounds	Plt
	29		Amr exp <sup>d</sup> 22A 24AX	Plt
			Gp Ferguson I No 2 <sup>nd</sup> Bty, killed by rifle bullet near Klauwepoot farm.	
	30		Amr exp <sup>d</sup> 19A 13AX	Plt
	31		do 38A 4AX - from J W Magee No 1645 killed by shell fire near Jena Chateau.	Plt

1577. Wt. 1000/15773 500,000 1/15 D.D. & L. A.D.S.S./Form C. 2118

War Diary record of March 1916, Ref WO 95/2817



LIEUTENANT  
JOHN ROOKHURST PLATT  
ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY  
27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 1916 AGE 25  
IN THE SECURITY OF DUTY DONE



Railway Dugouts Burial Ground, nr Ypres.





Railway  
Dugouts  
Burial Ground

A – Hill 60  
B – Menin Gate, Ypres



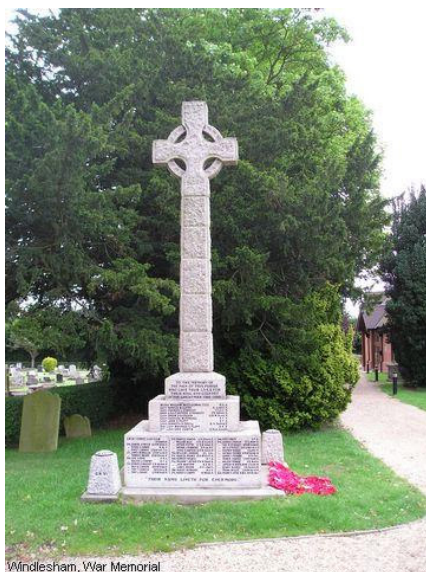
*Hill 60, after the War*

Hill 60 was so named because it is 60 metres above sea level. Even with such a slight incline - the man-made result of spoil from a nearby railway cutting in the nineteenth century (no longer present) - the hill proved an invaluable vantage point from which to view the wider battlefield and so was much sought and fought after by the allied and German forces. A plaque there records that it was taken from the French by the German forces on 10 December 1914, recaptured by the British on 17 April 1915, retaken by the Germans on 5 May 1916, ceded back to the British on 7 June 1917 (the first day of the Messines offensive), taken once again by the Germans in April 1918 (during the great Spring push) and its final capture by the British on 28 September 1918.

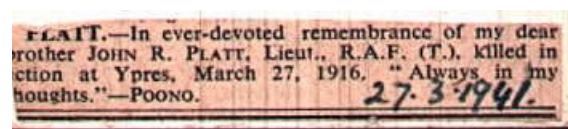
The sanctuary steps at St George's Memorial Church, Ypres were given by Nancy Quinelda Radcliffe Platt in memory of her brother John Rookhurst Platt. His name, along with his brother Sub-Lieutenant Maurice C Platt K8 41, RN Div. (Antwerp), RNVR who died on the 26th November 1918, are on the War Memorial at Windlesham in Surrey near where his widowed mother Helen May Platt was living at New Place, Sunningdale, Berkshire. Their names are also on the family grave at Chadderton Cemetery.



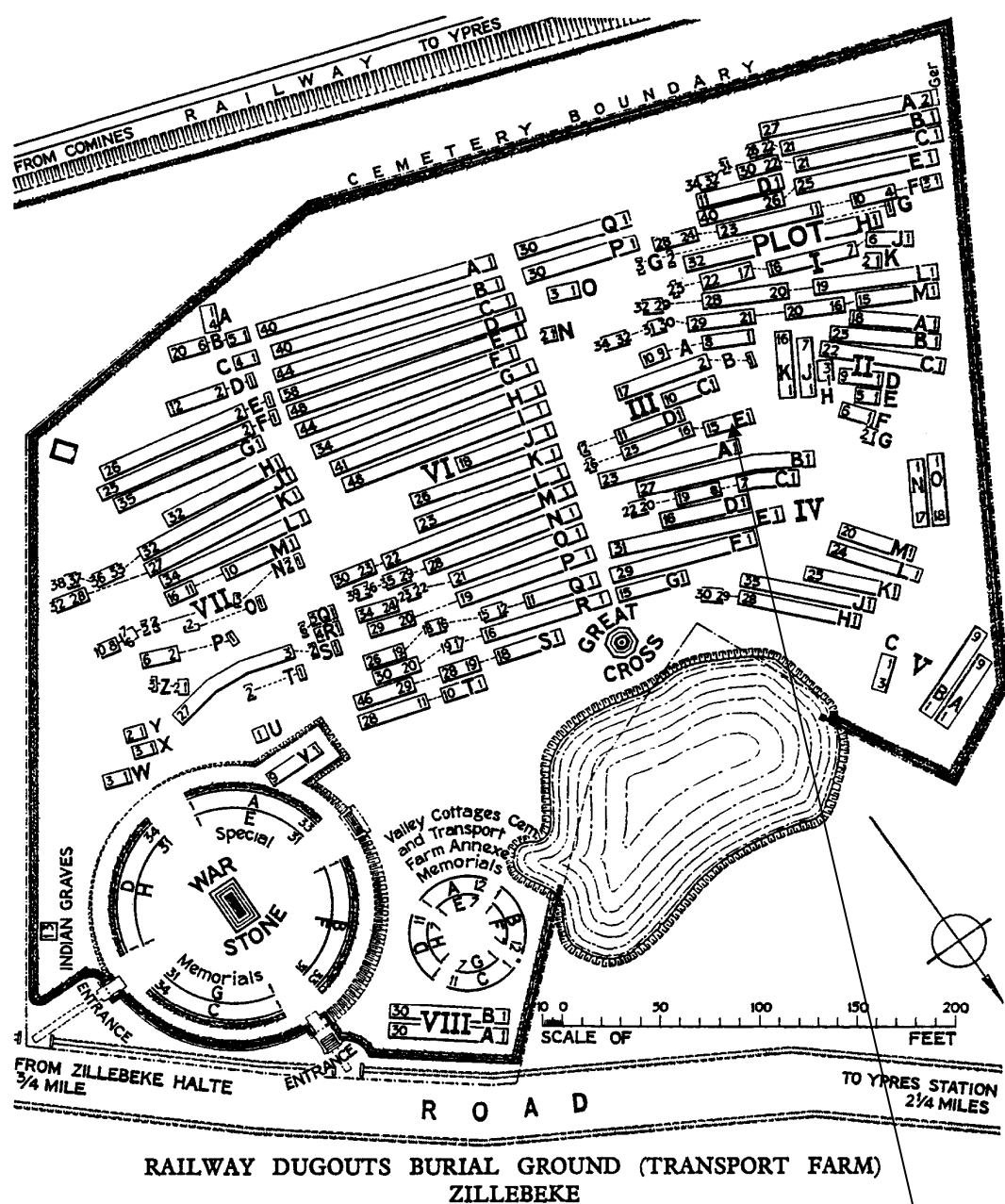
*Platt Family Grave, Chadderton Cemetery, near Oldham*



*Windlesham, War Memorial*







Gravestone Ref of John Rookhurst Platt, III E 13

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#### References:

1. 1891, 1901, 1911 Census
2. Eton College Archives (Penny Hatfield)
3. War Diary (252 Brigade, Royal Field Artillery). Ref WO 95/2817, National Archives, Kew
4. Notes from Professor Richard Sheppard, Magdalen College, Oxford (2011)
5. Herbert Warren, Oxford's Sacrifice, The Oxford Magazine, 34, no.17 (5/5/1916), p. 284.
6. Memorial Book, Magdalen College Archives, Magdalen College (Sean Rippington)
7. Oxford University Archives, Bodleian Library, Oxford (Nicola Hilton)
8. London Gazette & Commonwealth War Graves Commission