

Ernest Robinson was born in Ashton under Lyne, Lancashire, England on 1 September 1894. Ernest was one of nine children, the 3rd eldest son of Robert Robinson and Mary Armitage Robinson. The Robinson family emigrated to Canada in September 1904 and eventually settled on a homestead on Island Lake in the Hillsdale Municipality, Battleford District, Saskatchewan in late 1905. Despite the backbreaking labour, adverse weather and difficult conditions that homesteaders faced in those early times, the family persevered with the help of good neighbours and the Indigenous Cree People nearby, and their small community continued to grow. Ernest's mother, among others, was instrumental in the opening of a school and she ensured that her children were raised with a love of music and books. At eighteen, Ernest applied for his own homestead grant at SW23-44- W3 and began planning his future as a young farmer with his own land. But with war clouds looming, that dream was put on hold just a year and a half later when Ernest answered the call and enlisted in the Canadian Army in Winnipeg Manitoba on December 18, 1914. His occupation was given as "Farmer". Just 3 weeks later, Ernest's older brother, John Charles, enlisted, followed by his father Robert in July 1915. Embarking from Halifax aboard the SS Vaderland on February 23, 1915, Ernest and 957 other enlisted men plus officers proceeded to Shorncliffe, England as "reinforcements." Ernest was assigned to the 5th Canadian Infantry Battalion, 2nd Canadian brigade, of the 1st Canadian Division in early May 1915 and drafted to Belgium.

After heavy fighting in late April 1915, the Canadian Division was relieved on the Ypres front. On 5 May, the 5th Battalion left its positions on the Ypres canal and travelled to Vlamertinge, where it received reinforcements. After a period of rest and training at Outtersteene, near Bailleul, France, the battalion became involved in the Battle of Festubert. On 19 May, they went into the reserve trenches. On 22 May, they were ordered to leave the trenches and bivouac in an orchard near the front line. In the early evening of 23 May, the 5th Battalion was ordered to attack stronghold "K.5" at dawn. The men left at midnight and attacked the German communications trench and front line in front of K.5 at 2.45am on 24 May. They made their way through the communications trench, using hand grenades. After using bridges to cross a 10-metre-wide ditch filled with water, the 5th Battalion managed to take K.5 and a German trench to its left and right. The men dug in among the ruins of the trench. Repeated attempts by the Germans to counterattack were stopped by artillery fire. The 5th Battalion was relieved around 1 am by the Lord Strathcona's Horse, who continued the attack north-east of K.5 on 25 May, armed with gas bombs. The 5th Battalion suffered heavy losses. From 19 May to midnight 24 May alone, 61 were killed, 275 wounded and 21 missing. The battalion remained in reserve until 26 May, when it marched back to its quarters.

Ernest Robinson was first reported wounded and later reported missing after the attack at Festubert on 24 May 1915. One can only imagine the anguish of his family at home as they waited for more news. On 22 October 1915, the German government reported that Ernest had been captured and transferred to Kriegslazarette 123, in the Klein Seminarie, a Catholic college in Roeselare, Belgium. He died there "by poisoning" on 26 May 1915. This is possibly a clerical error. According to Red Cross records, a certain E. Robinson died in German captivity on 26 May 1915. He was buried in Roeselare in grave 657, number 730 on the plan, which translates as German Grave No. 730 on the CWGC list of the Roulers Communal Cemetery. During World War I, Roeselare was occupied by the Germans from 19 October 1914 to 14 October 1918. POWs and soldiers of the Commonwealth, France and Belgium were buried in the communal cemetery. If we put the list of names of the Roeselare municipal cemetery next to it, we see that Charles Robinson, service number 15941, of the 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers is buried in German Grave No. 730. According to Red Cross records, Charles Robinson died as a result of a gunshot wound to the chest on 26 May 1915 in Kriegslazarett 123, at Roeselare, the day after his battalion was forced to retreat after heavy fighting at Shell Trap Farm, also known as Mouse Trap Farm, between St Julien and Ypres. It remains unclear whether two Robinsons died at Kriegslazarett 123 on 26 May 1915 or whether it was a name change. Either way, Ernest Robinson went missing at Festubert on 24 May 1915 and has no known grave to date, although it seems possible he is buried in Grave 657 or in one of the unknown soldier's graves there. Ernest is commemorated at the Menin Gate and honoured and always remembered by his Robinson family descendants.