

JOHN HERBERT PICKLES



2nd July 1917

1897-1917 Aged 20

Gunner 785781 Royal Field Artillery, 150th Brigade, 'C' Battery.

John Herbert Pickles was born in the first weeks of 1897. He was the only child of John Edward and Mary Hannah Pickles, both from Wilsden. At the age of eleven John Edward Pickles worked in a worsted spinning mill near Wilsden, but he later moved to Bradford, became a tailor and then a self-employed master tailor. He married in 1895, and the family lived in the Oak Lane area of Manningham. Their son John Herbert was known as Bert. He was a pupil at Bradford Grammar School for a single year in Form 3rd Modern lower. He started in September 1909 when he was twelve. At the end of his only year he came fourth in Art, in the middle of the form in Maths, English and Chemistry, and near the bottom in Physics, History and Geography. He left B.G.S. in July 1910, but he was still a schoolboy in the 1911 Census so it is probable he returned to his former secondary school Bellevue Boys' where 'Bert Pickles' is listed among the First World War dead.

What Bert did after school is unknown and no service record survives. He was seventeen when the war began and legally under-age for military service. He enlisted for service at Leeds on 21st June 1915, a time when recruitment was still voluntary, and joined the Royal Artillery. His artillery brigade, the 150th, was originally part of the 30th County Palatine Division, consisting mainly of Liverpool and Manchester Pals' battalions, which went to France in November 1915. Pickles did not serve in France before the start of 1916 as he was not yet 19, but he may have been present during the Somme fighting. At the start of 1917 his brigade became an Army Field Artillery Brigade and in April and May gave supporting fire during the Battle of Arras. At the start of June the brigade moved north in preparation for



the planned assault at Ypres. On 1st July it was out of the line at Vlamertinge, west of the city, and at night it sent a working party of 100 men to work on new battery positions. Pickles must have been one of the working party and received a fatal wound on the night of 1st/2nd July. He was evacuated to Brandhoek, where there were Field Ambulances and Casualty Clearing Stations which specialized in the treatment of severe abdominal injuries. Bert Pickles died of his wounds and was buried at Brandhoek Military Cemetery. His name is on the war memorials of Bellevue Boys School and St. Luke's Church, Manningham, as well as B.G.S.



Acknowledgements:

Bert Pickles' photo is from the School Memorial Book with thanks to the O.B.A. and B.G.S. The family was researched using Ancestry.com. His school career is from the B.G.S. Annual Report 1910. His enlistment date is from the Bradford Roll of Honour (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/bradfordww1/10816578314/in/album-72157637592179513/>). *Soldiers Who Died in the Great War* records he was killed in action, while the Medal Award Roll records he died of wounds. His burial at Brandhoek suggests the latter is correct—see <http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?/topic/206622-brandhoek-area/> accessed 21-6-2017. The 150th Brigade War Diary is from The National Archives reference WO-95-538-3.

It is my deduction that the 'Bert Pickles' on the Belle Vue Boys' School War Memorial is to be identified with J.H. Pickles on the St. Luke's Memorial panels, which now reside in St. Paul's Church, Manningham (Duncan Lodge catalogue of Bradford War Memorials).

Researched and composed by Nick Hooper (Nhooper1956@googlemail.com) in June 2017.