

# RALPH GRAHAM ATCHISON



21st July 1917

1892-1917 Aged 25

## Acting Bombardier 92nd (Howitzer) Brigade Royal Field Artillery.

Ralph was the child of James Ralph Stanley Atchison and his wife Eliza Dorothy, whose maiden name was Haxby. James was originally from Liverpool, while Eliza's family moved to Bradford from the country near Brimham Rocks in the 1860s. They married in 1878. James was a 'warehouseman', as was Eliza's brother Robert, and the two formed a partnership together, although an unequal one—in subsequent censuses James was described as a 'Manufacturers' agent' dealing in Worsteds textiles and was an employer, whereas Robert remained a warehouseman and a 'worker'. The company of Atchison & Flaxby had its premises at 6 Drake Street, near the centre of Bradford.

James and Eliza had five children, although the eldest, Charles, died in infancy. Ralph was the youngest, born in Idle on 4th January 1892. He went to Thorpe Modern School, Idle, until he went to Bradford Grammar School in September 1904 when he was twelve. He was there for three years, in Forms 3rd, 4th and 5th Modern Middle. After his first year he was awarded the prize for modern languages, and was second for the Form prize. If he did not achieve so highly in his next two years, he was an able student. He left the school in 1907 when he was fifteen and went to work as a 'warehouseman', for his father. When war broke out he was twenty-two and his father had died a few weeks earlier. He must have been eager for a change of life, for he volunteered before the month was out. His choice fell on the artillery rather than one of the local infantry regiments, and he was posted to the 92nd Howitzer Brigade, Royal Field Artillery. This was part of 20th (Light) Division, a New Army formation, and Ralph went to France with it in July 1915. He served throughout the Battle of the Somme in 1916, but in January 92nd Brigade was detached



from its division to become an Army Field Artillery Brigade. The circumstances of Ralph's death are difficult to establish, increased by the fact that the Brigade War Diary is missing for the month in which he was killed. The location of his burial, Canada Farm Cemetery, to the north-west of Ypres, and the timing in July, suggests that 92nd Brigade was taking part in the preliminary bombardment for the Third Battle of Ypres. The Germans held the commanding ridges around the Ypres Salient, which they used to focus retaliatory fire on British positions, which suffered severely from heavy shells and Mustard Gas.

For Ralph's two sisters July was a harrowing month. Their mother had died two weeks earlier, and another brother, Harold, was also in the artillery. He would be killed in action in 1918. Ralph's name appears on three memorials in Idle, in addition to Bradford Grammar School.



## **Acknowledgements:**

For acknowledgements, contact Nick Hooper (Nhooper1956@googlemail.com). This temporary version will be replaced in August.