

SAMUEL KERR BREINGAN



26th May 1917

1892-1917 Age 24

**Second Lieutenant 3rd (Special Reserve)
Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment,
attached 9th (Service) Battalion.**

Although he was born in Bradford on 2nd September 1892, Sam Breingan came of Scottish parentage and described himself as a Scot. His father Alexander William Breingan was from Alloa in central Scotland, where he had worked in a wool mill. His route to Bradford was an obscure one. In 1889 he married Mary Wallace Conchar in Birmingham where her father John, from south-west Scotland, was a wine merchant and latterly a horse-breeder. By 1891 Alexander Breingan lived at 32 Victor Road in Bradford, a comfortable house near Lister Park which would be the family home for over twenty years. He was a wool merchant with premises in central Bradford. Alexander and Mary had four children. Sam was their second child and elder son. He started at Bradford Grammar School in September 1901 immediately after his ninth birthday. He was a talented pupil. At the end of his first year he took the form prize, and he twice skipped forms as he rose through the school on the Modern Side. He was clearly intended for a business career. In July 1907, the end of his final year, he was sixth overall in Sixth Remove Modern, taking first place in Geography and History, second in German and sixth in French. Sam left school before his 15th birthday, and in 1911 he was working as a 'silk manufacturer's assistant', perhaps in the employ of Samuel Lister whose mill towered above Victor Road. When he enlisted in 1914 he gave his occupation as 'clerk', and later as 'silk salesman'; however at the time he was also studying for entrance to Durham University.

At the outbreak of war Sam was one of the early volunteers in September for the Bradford Battalion, the 1st Pals. Within weeks he submitted his first application to become an officer, with the support of his former headmaster and his commanding officer. Although lacking military experience, he showed his enthusiasm by drilling the Bradford Volunteer Force. His stated preference was for the Dorset Regiment. His first applications were turned down for reasons unknown. He may have been considered insufficiently gentlemanly as he was unable to ride and he had not attended university. The C.O. of the Bradford Pals would not take him as he had served



in the ranks. Alexander Breingan even enlisted the support of the M.P. for Alloa before in June 1915 Sam was granted a commission in the 3rd Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment.

Second Lieutenant Breingan was sent to join his regiment's 2nd Battalion on the Western Front in June 1916. It moved to the Somme in August and took part in two major attacks during September, which Sam survived. After attending a Lewis Gun course he returned in early October. On the 9th, while his battalion was holding a newly captured trench near Lesboeuifs, Sam was hit by shell fragments in his right thigh, forearm, neck and scalp. He was sent to hospital in Rouen for a week, then moved to Manchester. He was fortunate in that two days later his battalion suffered heavy casualties from machine guns in an attack.

Sam's individual wounds were small and healed soundly, although he complained of shooting pains in his back and what were described as 'foreign bodies' remained in his neck. In March 1917 he was passed fit for General Service and returned to the front, posted to his regiment's 9th Battalion near Ypres. He was attached to 'D' Company. He had been with the battalion for a month when it returned to the line near Zillebeke. At about 5.30 am on 26th May a shell hit the company HQ dugout, wounding one officer and killing two more, including Sam. His body was buried in the nearby Railway Dugouts burial ground, also known as Transport Farm. The grave was marked with a wooden cross. Sam's mother had already died in 1913, and the shock of Sam's loss may have hastened his father's death in September 1917. His brother Alexander, also an OB, was in the newly formed O.T.C. and served in the Royal Flying Corps. He survived the war and settled in Australia.



Acknowledgements:

There is no photo of Sam Breingan in the memorial book, and his name was not on the original list for the War Memorial. It was added to the base. Sam's school achievements are taken from the BGS Annual Reports 1901-1907. I have not found any sporting exploits recorded in The Bradfordian, although standing at 5' 11 3/4" and weighing 153lbs (in 1914) he would have stood out in a crowd.

Sam enlisted in the 1st Bradford Pals as Private 16/143. His Officer Personal Record WO339-48298 is a bulky file containing over 120 pages. These concern (1) his several applications for a commission (2) the Medical Boards relating to his wounds (3) the search for a will, then the reassignment of his probate from his father to his sister Jeannie. His wounding and death were printed in the Bradford Weekly Telegraph, 20th October 1916 and 1st June 1917. He is buried at IV.C.8 in Railway Dugouts Burial Ground (Transport Farm). The War Diaries for the 2nd and the 9th Battalions York and Lancaster Regiment are available on Ancestry.com.

Alexander Conchar Breingan was at BGS 1911-15.

The photograph of the York and Lancaster regiment's badge is from the author's collection. The photo of the Breingan family monument in Nab Wood Cemetery is from <<http://warmemorials.myfastforum.org/viewtopic.php?t=3924&start=0>>. This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper (Nhooper1956@goolemail.com) in May 2017.

