

# ARNOLD VINCENT BRUNT



3rd May 1917

1890-1917 Aged 26

## Private 18/1331 18th (Service) Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment, 2nd Bradford Pals.

Arnold Brunt was one of five Old Bradfordians who died on 3rd May 1917, three of whom served with the 2nd Bradford Pals. His parents John Brunt and Frances Emma Mills were both from Stoke-on-Trent, where they married in 1889. John and his elder brother William both became school masters. By 1890, the year of Arnold's birth, John held a position at the school at Pool-in-Wharfedale. By 1899, when his second child was born, a daughter named Irene, John was working in Bradford. By 1912 he was the head teacher of the Church of England mixed infants' Christ Church School on Simes Street, which stood within 200 yards of Bradford Grammar School. John Brunt was also a football official. In September 1911 he was the linesman at Valley Parade when Bradford City played Sheffield United, and he became the Secretary of the West Riding County Football Association.

Arnold attended Bradford Grammar School for less than a year, in 1904, in First Form Modern A. His time at the school was not a success academically as he came bottom of the form in five subjects and in the bottom four in four more. He left the school in July when he was still thirteen, and he was next recorded in 1911 working as an estate agent. His mother Frances had died in 1910, and in 1912 John Brunt married his house-keeper, Elizabeth Bennett, who was the same age as her stepson Arnold.

War broke out around the time Arnold passed the age of twenty-four. He was still single and living with his parents and sister. He did not volunteer in response to the early calls for men, nor to the creation of the Bradford Pals in September, and it was not until 1st May 1915 that he enlisted in the 2nd Bradford Pals as Private 18/1331. When they embarked for Egypt in December he had enough training to accompany them, and when they were transferred to France in 1916 he survived the battle of the Somme.



In Bradford the Third Battle of the Scarpe which commenced on Thursday 3rd May 1917 is practically forgotten, although three of the four Bradford battalions were engaged and suffered severe losses. The 2nd Bradford Pals had more men killed than at the start of the Somme on 1st July 1916, and lost a total of 284 killed, wounded and prisoners. The attack was planned for daylight, but a late change moved it to 3.45am when it would be pitch dark. The attackers were spotted by the light of the setting moon, and a German plane observed the white tapes marking the jumping off positions. As a result, the attackers came under severe artillery and machine gun fire as they crawled into no man's land. Although the British creeping barrage was described as 'Simply magnificent' when it opened at 3.44am, within thirty seconds the Germans opened an extremely heavy counter-barrage and the advancing waves were further depleted by machine-gun fire. Darkness, mist, smoke and clouds of dust caused the attackers to lose their bearings, and although the lightly-held first line was taken with relative ease, German prisoners turned on their captors when they realised how depleted the Pals were. German counter-attacks threatened to overrun the British starting positions, and at one stage the 18th Battalion were reduced to little more than fifty men and the head-quarters. It was mid-afternoon before the position was stabilized. The circumstances of the British defeat meant that the bodies of many of the fallen were not recovered for burial, Brunt's among them. His name is on the Arras Memorial in France.



### **Acknowledgements:**

The photo of the Aras Memorial was taken by the author. Brunt's family history was researched using Ancestry.com. His School record is from the BGS Annual Report for 1904. Kelly's Directory of Bradford 1912 records John Brunt as headmaster of Christ Church School. The Leeds Mercury 18th September 1911 records his officiating at the Bradford City match. The Bradford Weekly Telegraph 15th March 1918 reported that Arnold was now presumed killed on 3rd May 1917. (findmypast.co.uk). The Bradford Roll of Honour (<<https://www.flickr.com/photos/bradfordww1/9340053853/in/album-72157634776696882/>>) gives the family address as 37 Spring Cliffe, a gentle walk from Christ Church School, and his enlistment date.

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