

ERNEST WILLIAM GILYARD



22nd November 1917

1890-1917 Age 26

Private 28688 2/5th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment.

Ernest Gilyard was born in Bradford on Christmas Day 1890. His father Arthur was a Chartered Accountant who worked for his father's firm, William Gilyard & Son, Parkinson Buildings, Hustlergate. In 1880 Arthur married Annie Wright, a farmer's daughter. Ernest was their only child, born after a decade of marriage. Arthur and Annie lived on Aireville Road in Frizinghall. Ernest went to Bradford Grammar School when he was twelve, in September 1903. He followed an unusual path in that he joined the senior school in First Form Modern, then went into Fourth Modern Upper, before spending his last year in Third Classical Upper. In this final year at school he came top in Latin and near the top of the form in most other subjects. Despite this success he left the school in July 1906, aged fifteen, and went to work for his father as an articled clerk. Later in the same year his mother died. His father remarried in 1909.

When the war began Ernest was twenty-three. He did not volunteer for the army, but on 29th May 1916 he was conscripted and reported for duty at Shipley. He was sent for training with the West Yorkshire Regiment but when in September 1917 he was posted overseas it was to the 2/5th Battalion which recruited mainly from York and Harrogate rather than to the Bradford battalion. Thus when he went into action in the Battle of Cambrai on 20th November he had very little service.

On the evening of 21st November the 2/5th Battalion had taken up a supporting position north-west of Graincourt. The following morning the Germans, who had recovered rapidly from the shock of the British attack two days before, launched strong counter-attacks from the north. Elements of the 2/5th Battalion were sent forward to shore up 185th Brigade's front-line battalions, the 2/6th and the



2/8th, and played an essential role in holding back the German assaults. Although engaged in hard fighting, the battalion's casualties were light and only twelve men were killed. This was attributable to the fact that it was the Germans who were in the open and so were exposed to the fire of machine guns and rifle grenades. Ernest Gilyard was one of those twelve who were killed on that day. His body was not found, and it was over two months later, on 15th February 1918, that the *Shipley Times and Express* reported that he had been missing since 22nd November. When his father received confirmation of his only son's death is not known.

Ernest's name is on the Cambrai Memorial to the Missing at Louverval.





Acknowledgements:

Ernest Gilyard's photo is from the School memorial book courtesy of the O.B.A. and B.G.S. The family was researched using Ancestry.com. His years at B.G.S. are recorded in the Annual Reports for 1904-1906. De Ruvigny's *Roll of Honour* vol.4 outlines his brief career. *Soldiers Died in the Great War* supplies the place of enlistment. The phrase 'served with the Expeditionary Force in France from 26 Sept. following' must refer to 1917 not 1916 since the 2/5th went to France in January of the former year. Ernest was thrifty young man, leaving effects to the value of £1684, more than £70,000 in today's values (<<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/default.asp#mid>>).

For the action of 22nd November, see Fraser Skirrow, *Massacre on the Marne. The Life and Death of the 2/5th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment in the Great War*, (Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2007), 156-62. See also the biographies of Geoffrey Barker and Harold Smith who died in the same action.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper in November 2017. For further information, contact Nhooper1956@googlemail.com, or see <<http://www.bradfordgrammar.com/former-pupils/bradford-grammar-school-in-ww1/>>.