

CECIL HOYLE BROADBENT



1st March 1916

1881-1916 Aged 34



Photo courtesy of Oundle School Memorial

Second Lieutenant 1/4th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (Territorial Force). Cecil Broadbent was born on 25th October 1881 in Cannock, Staffordshire. His father James, from Stalybridge in Lancashire, managed a branch of the Manchester and Liverpool Bank. Cecil's mother Eliza was from Scarborough. Cecil was the fifth of their seven children, and their third son. From 1895 he was a boarding student at Oundle School, Northants, where he became a prefect and was in the cricket XI in his final summer. He left in 1900. Although Oundle's new Headmaster, Sanderson, had introduced Science and Engineering to the curriculum, Broadbent's interest was in Classics. He was a clever scholar and won many speech day prizes. He won a Major Scholarship to Trinity College Cambridge, going up in 1900, and in 1903 he took a First in the Classical Tripos. If Broadbent had any military experience, it would have been with the Cambridge University cadets who were affiliated to the local Volunteers. The Oundle Officer Training Corps was founded in 1902.

From university Broadbent embarked on a career as a schoolmaster. His first position was as Classical Master at Christ's College, Brecon (1903-1906), before he joined Bradford Grammar School. The Bradfordian described him as a *'sound Classical Scholar'*. With L.W.P. Lewis, Senior Classics Master, Broadbent edited two volumes of excerpts from Livy and Ovid to form Latin readers for use in schools. He assisted with the school rugby XV's and the paper-chases which were staged for younger boys. In 1913 he batted for the Masters against the School XI, a match his side lost by 100 runs, and the following year he opened the bowling. On each occasion he made only four runs. He had better luck in the Bacchus Cup for golf, reaching the fourth round in 1914. He was a keen Old Oundelian who visited the school and was keen to know their athletic results.

With the outbreak of the war in 1914, the Headmaster enthusiastically supported the creation of an O.T.C. at B.G.S. in October 1914. Mr. Wykes was the first Commanding Officer, assisted by four masters, among them Second Lieutenant Broadbent. He worked *'keenly and energetically'* but *'he felt impelled to seek a larger scene'* and obtained a commission in the 2/4th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, based at Wakefield. The Bradfordian wrote

'we look forward to the time when we shall have the pleasure of welcoming him ... after the war is over.'

After only a few weeks training, on 19th September Broadbent was sent with a draft of officers to France to fill the vacancies in his regiment's 1/4th battalion, part of 49th West Riding Division. He served with them in the trenches at Ypres through late 1915, including the gas attack in which O.B. David Rickards was killed. In February 1916, the division moved to the Somme area recently taken over from the French. Broadbent was appointed the battalion bombing instructor, and then commander of the 146th Brigade Bombing School behind the lines, where men were instructed in the use of hand grenades. He wrote cheerful letters to former colleagues, in one expressing the belief that his new command was *'somewhat safer'* than the front.

Alas, it was not. On 1st March, Broadbent was seriously injured by the premature explosion of a Mills Bomb. He was taken to hospital but died the same evening. He was buried in Warloy-Baillon Communal Cemetery, near Albert. News of his death was printed in the Bradford Weekly Telegraph on 10th March. Major Moorhouse wrote *'he was a most capable officer and had endeared himself to everyone. No loss yet sustained by the battalion—and we have had many—will be more difficult to repair.'* Broadbent was a single man who had lived in lodgings. His name is on war memorials at Old Colwyn, North Wales, where his mother lived, as well as at Oundle School, and Trinity College Chapel. It is fitting that he is now remembered where he taught.



Acknowledgements:

Broadbent's photo was obtained from lib.militaryarchive.co.uk/library/Biographical/library/Oundle-Memorials-of-the-Great-War/files/assets/basic-html/page22.html. Mrs Elspeth Langdale, the school Archivist, kindly sent me the information about his school days.

The main sources for this biography are: the family and military records were researched on Ancestry.com; his entry in De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour was read on the same site. The Websites of Oundle School and Trinity College, Cambridge complement each other: <http://trinitycollegechapel.com/media/filestore/general-documents/RollOfHonourWWI.pdf>. These sites concern Old Colwyn War Memorial <http://historypoints.org/index.php?page=old-colwyn-memorial-fww>; http://www.oldcolwynmemorial.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/100_3518.jpg. The latter is his application for a commission in the 2/4th K.O.Y.L.I. The Bradford Weekly Telegraph was consulted through the World War One index in the Local Studies Library, MacMillan House, Bradford. The references to Broadbent in The Bradfordian are from the issues of November 1913, July 1914, July 1915, and March 1916. The Major Moorhouse's tributes combine excerpts printed in The Bradford Weekly Telegraph (reprinted from the Bradford Daily Telegraph) and The Bradfordian.

I am very grateful to Robert West, former Senior Classics Master at B.G.S. and my colleague for his advice. Nick Hooper, January 2016. Contact: Nhooper1956@googlemail.com.

The photo below, published in The Bradfordian in 1915, shows the O.T.C. on parade on the playing fields at Frizinghall. Broadbent appears to the officer on the right with the cane under his arm. His application for a commission gives his height as 5ft 10 1/2ins.

