

# CLAUDE ERNEST FERRAND



22nd May 1916

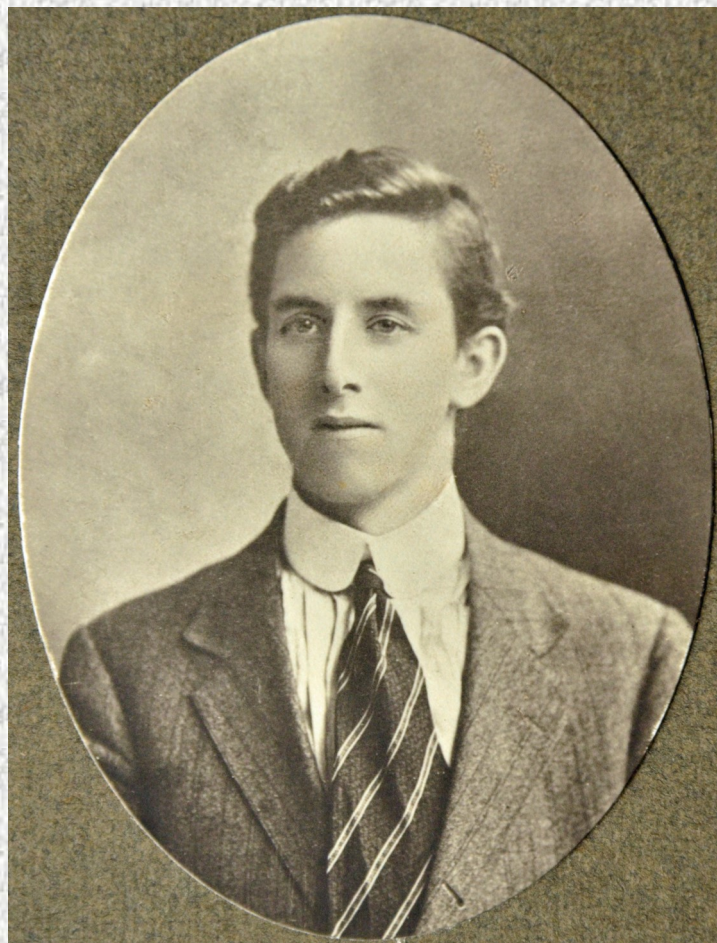
1891-1916 Age 25

**Private 18/252 2nd Bradford "Pals", 18th (Service) Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment.**

Claude Ferrand was born in Bradford in 1890, the only son of Samuel Mellor Ferrand and his wife Rebecca, nee Hellowell. They also had a daughter, Corina. The family were from Almondbury, near Huddersfield, where they were known as 'Farrand'. Samuel appears to have been illegitimate as no father is named on his baptismal record. His mother Judith was a dress-maker, and his first known occupation when he was 12 was as a 'doffer' in a woollen weaving mill in Horton, Bradford. By 1883, Samuel had made his way to London, where he was a cabinet maker. When he returned to Bradford (by 1888), he had married a second time, to Rebecca, and he was in business as an antique furniture dealer operating from a large house close to Lister Park. This was then a respectable residential area.

Claude attended a local school, perhaps Bellevue High School, before he went to Bradford Grammar in September 1905 when he was fourteen. It is possible he was intended to spend a year in the Commercial Form at BGS, however he left after only a few weeks, leaving no trace in the school records. He subsequently became an assistant to his parents in their furniture business. When war broke out in 1914, Claude was twenty-three. He did not volunteer immediately but enlisted in the 2nd "Pals", recruitment for which began in February 1915. It was perhaps his physique which delayed him—the physical standards for this battalion were relaxed to permit those with a chest size of 33 inches to enlist. The new recruits at first lived at home until in May they joined 31st Division, which included the 1st "Pals", at Ripon. Claude first saw active service in Egypt, where the division was sent in December 1915 to defend the Suez Canal against a feared Turkish attack. Here men from Bradford fraternized with soldiers from India and made what was probably their first acquaintance with curries. In March 1916 they were transferred to France, where the 'Big Push' was being prepared.

The 2nd "Pals" first took over part of the front line in the Somme area on 24th April. They spent the following month rotating between the trenches, rest and reserve. They entered the front line again on 17th May, and while there at 8.30 p.m. on the 22nd Claude was one of three men detailed to spend the night in no man's land in an attempt to locate a sniper who had shot five soldiers over the previous two nights. What happened was described a week later



in a letter from Second Lieutenant Nowell: *'It is indeed a terrible thing which causes me to write you these few lines. On the night of the 22nd inst. your dear son, Pte. Ferrand, of the "A" Company ... along with Cpl. Walden and Pte. Seed, were out on a listening patrol when a bombardment started. Afterwards, as I was starting out to visit the post, Pte. Seed crawled in slightly wounded to say he couldn't see or hear anything of Pte. Ferrand and Cpl. Walden. We immediately searched all around, but in vain. The following night another search was made, but no signs of these two fine soldiers could be seen. We have come to the conclusion that your dear son, along with Cpl. Walden, was slightly stunned with the shell which slightly wounded Pte. Seed. Your son was an excellent soldier, and one of the few battalion scouts ... Hope you will hear some good news in the near future.'*

A further week elapsed before Claude's corpse was found on 8th June, when a short trench was being dug into no man's land. Thus it was possible to give him a burial in the nearby Sucrerie Military Cemetery, Colincamps. The remains of Corporal Walden were never found.



### Acknowledgements:

Researching the Ferrand family on Ancestry is complicated by variations in spelling their name—it seems to have been Samuel who changed the spelling from 'Farrand' to 'Ferrand'. His mother also appears as 'Farren' in one census, which does not appear in searches for Ferrand. Samuel died in 1945, still living at 72, Oak Lane. His daughter Corina married Ernest Wright. On his 1883 marriage certificate, Samuel names his father as 'Charles Ferrand, deceased' which is at variance with his baptismal record and what I can find regarding his mother.

The Higher Commercial Form at BGS admitted boys aged 15 who must have 'reached a certain standard on the Classical or Modern Side'. The Modern side prepared for 'Mercantile life' and so included two foreign languages, Economics, Accounting and Commercial Law. In Fifth Modern Ferrand would have studied French and German, Maths, English Literature, History and Geography, Natural Science, including Practical Chemistry and Practical Physics, Art and Writing, Manual Training, Gymnastics and Drill. Perhaps this curriculum or the school ethos was not to his liking.

The 1st Bradford "Pals" battalion was full by December 1914 when recruitment was paused, which suggests Claude lingered before he volunteered. His Service Number 18/252 (given wrongly as 181252 on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website) suggests he volunteered relatively early.

David Raw, *Bradford Pals* (Pen and Sword Books, Barnsley, 2005) describes the raising of the 2nd "Pals" on pp.64-77. He recounts the listening patrol incident on pp.144-6 from the perspective of Private Ernest Walden, a former police constable in the City Force, from a letter written by Captain Keevil. Raw states that Ferrand had a brother in the Leeds Pals. The 1911 Census is clear evidence that Ferrand was the only son, and *The Bradfordian* (Raw, p.158 n. 52) does not support the contention. Lance Corporal George Mason Ferrand (No. 15/325) had different parents (1911 Census). Laurie Milner, *Leeds Pals* (Barnsley, 1991), p.231 has George Major Ferrand in error. Second Lieutenant Nowell was himself an Old Bradfordian who would die a few weeks later as a result of wounds received on 1st July.

Thanks to the OBA for permission to use Ferrand's photo from the Roll of Honour.

Compiled and composed by Nick Hooper, May 2016 (Nhooper1956@googlemail.com).