

CYRIL HULME BOWES



1st July 1916

1892-1916 Aged 24

Second Lieutenant 2nd Battalion West Riding Regiment. (formerly 13204 West Riding Regiment).

Cyril Bowes was born in Streatham and Wandsworth, south-west London, in 1892, the only child of George Henry Poynter Bowes and Lilian Briggs. George was born in Wakefield where his father was a teacher at the prison. By 1891, George and his brother John were living in south London where they both worked as bank clerks. In the same year George married Lilian Briggs, who was from Crewe, Cheshire, where her father had been Mayor. Ten years later, the brothers were in north-west England and both were working as insurance inspectors. George, Lilian and Cyril lived in Preston. From this point, George and Lilian disappear from the records until their deaths. Cyril seems to have been entrusted to his uncle John, who lived near Bradford, in Menston, and who now owned a printing business. Cyril was sent to school in Wolverhampton, possibly because his grandfather lived there, and he spent a year at Bradford Grammar School in 1905, when he was aged 12-13.

Nothing more is known about Cyril's education, nor about his early years at work. Later events suggest that he was still based in West Yorkshire and that he had no contact with his parents. When war broke out in 1914, Cyril was on business in Paris. He returned to Britain to volunteer at the recruiting office of the Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment in Halifax, where he enlisted in the 9th (Service) Battalion. It is possible that he still lived in or near Bradford—the author J.B. Priestley who lived in Manningham took the tram to Halifax to enlist in the 10th 'Dukes', rather than joining his friends in the Bradford 'Pals'. Bowes was allotted regimental number 13204. The 9th 'Dukes' went to France in July 1915 as part of 17th Northern Division. Cyril must have been a useful soldier as he was promoted to Corporal, then Sergeant. He subsequently took a competitive exam at the Military College in France and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the 2nd Battalion of the 'Dukes' (it would not have been good for disci-



pline had he returned to his former comrades).

Cyril's new battalion was part of 12th Brigade, 4th Division, VIII Corps. On 1st July they were on the immediate right of the Bradford and Leeds 'Pals'. They were a support battalion whose main task was to carry materials for the Royal Engineers to consolidate the captured positions. They left their trenches at 08.55 a.m., and three of their four companies entered the German front line which had been captured by the initial assault. Their primary objective was a salient in the enemy lines called the Quadrilateral by the British (the Germans knew it as the Heidenkopf). A mixed party from the four battalions of 12th Brigade held on in the Quadrilateral until dusk, when they were forced to withdraw. Bowes was one of three officers of the 2nd Dukes killed. When the battlefield was cleared in May 1917, following the German withdrawal, his body was still identifiable and was buried in the original plot of what became Serre Road No. 2 Cemetery.

Cyril's break with his parents is made clear by his nomination of his uncle John as his legate. It was probably he who ensured that the Cemetery Register recorded that Cyril was '*The son of George H. P. and Lilian Bowes.*'

Old Bradfordians—'We will remember them'



Acknowledgements:

It is not easy to track down George H. P. Bowes in the records so there are gaps in the family story. There is valuable information in Judith A. Knaggs, *For Our Tomorrow* (published privately, 2008), p.14. Unfortunately the source is not specified, and the year of death is given as 1917. Wolverhampton Grammar School have not responded to my request for information. It is stated on 'Great War Forum' website that Cyril Bowes attended Dulwich College. However, the Archivist Mrs Soraya Cerio informs me that they have no record of him as an Old Alleynian. I am grateful to Tricia Platts for sharing her research with me.

The photo of Bowes' grave was taken by the author.

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