

GEORGE STANLEY BLAGBROUGH



11th December 1916

1882-1916 Age 34

**Major, East Yorkshire Regiment, attached
16th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment, 1st
Bradford 'Pals'.**

George was the third son of Walter Blagbrough and Alice Isabella Tordoff. Walter was from Halifax where his father was a linen draper, while Alice was the daughter of a Bradford tea and coffee merchant and chocolate manufacturer. They married in 1867, and Alice bore eleven children of whom ten survived. Walter was a wool stapler, a merchant supplying the raw material on which the fortunes of Halifax and Bradford were built. By 1881 they lived in Bradford, in a large house on Ashburnham Grove overlooking Lister Park. Their eighth child George was born there on 27th February 1882.

George started at Bradford Grammar School in 1896 when he was fourteen. In his last three years he was in Form Sixth Classical, and he gained Higher Certificates in seven subjects, with a distinction in History. He left his mark as a cricketer, as 'an accurate and penetrating opening bowler' who took 79 wickets in his three years in the First XI. In the 1900 season he took 34 wickets and made 219 runs (average 15.64). His best match figures were 8-32 against the Old Boys. The season after he left in 1901, The Bradfordian lamented 'Blagbrough is no longer present to mow down our adversaries' wickets.' He was also a versatile player for the First XV, at forward, half-back and centre. The Bradfordian's sketch said he 'shone repeatedly by plucky saves and good kicking... Inclined to trust to his own weight and strength instead of passing. A good place kick and punt.' At 11st. 11lbs he was well built for his era.

George did not proceed to university, instead taking a position as a master at the recently founded Bridlington Grammar School. The first headmaster there had been Bradford's Senior Science Master until 1899. In 1910, when Bridlington acquired an Officer Training Corps, George was commissioned as Second Lieutenant to assist in officering it. With the outbreak of war, Blagbrough volunteered in September, not for a regiment local to his employment, but with the 1st Bradford 'Pals'. A man of his military experience was a useful asset as officers were in short supply, and he was appointed a temporary Captain on 23rd September. He remained



with the battalion throughout its training in England, accompanied it to Egypt and then to France in 1916. In June of that year he was attached to the General Head Quarters Staff. Not only was this a tribute to his qualities, it probably also prolonged his life as he missed the carnage of 1st July. Further indications of the esteem in which he was held followed. Later in July, he received a permanent captaincy in the Regular Army, and then returned to the 1st 'Pals'. He was appointed as second in command on 2nd August, however his battalion was only notified six weeks later on 19th September, when George had just returned from three weeks' sick leave at home.

In October the 1st 'Pals' returned to the Somme, at Hebuterne. For two weeks at the end of the month Blagbrough was attached to the artillery to improve inter-arm co-ordination. On 11th December, when the battalion were in the front line, the War Diary recorded the Germans shelled it with 'whizz-bangs', and the death of Major Blagbrough in action—the two seem to be connected. His Commanding Officer wrote:- 'The regiment has lost an exceptionally fine officer, and I personally consider that I have lost a friend.' The Doctor wrote:- 'He was looked up to by everyone as a soldier, and many a man found a true friend in him when in trouble.' His servant added, 'That the men have lost a devoted and zealous officer is testified by the many expressions of keen regret heard on all sides.' His body was taken to the cemetery at Couin for burial. As well as on the B.G.S. memorial he is commemorated on the family grave in Nab Wood Cemetery, Shipley, and at Bridlington and Bridlington School.



Acknowledgements:

Blagbrough's photo is courtesy of the O.B.A. Roll of Honour. The family history was researched using Ancestry.com. His career at B.G.S. comes from the Annual Reports for 1899-1902, and Andrew Smith, *Cricket at Bradford Grammar School. An illustrated history 1884-2003* (2003) - I am grateful to Andy for supplying me with his book. The rugby sketch is from The Bradfordian for April 1902. His promotions were recorded in the London Gazette, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/28407/page/5952/data.pdf>, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/28984/page/9692/data.pdf>, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/29809/supplement/10603/data.pdf>. A biography of Blagbrough was published in De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour (accessed through Ancestry). There is a less complete account at <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/great-war-people/remember-on-this-day/5297-10-december-1916.html#sthash.OILpJ2hl.dpbs>, accessed 9-11-2016. The Bradford Daily Telegraph reported his death on 16-12-1916, with a short biography. The testimonials are from De Ruvigny. The 16/West Yorks War Diary is difficult to find on Ancestry.com—it is at http://interactive.ancestry.co.uk/60779/43849_2362_0-00000?pid=735125&backurl=http://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DmQO2%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D60779%26_F80088F0%3DP072S163%26_F80088F0_x%3D1%26gss%3Dangs-d%26pcat%3D39%26fh%3D0%26h%3D735125%26recoff%3D76%26ml_rpos%3D1&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=mQO2&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true (a tip I owe to the kindness of Tricia Platts). The image of Blagbrough below as a rugby player is from Andy Smith's book.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper, November 2016 (Nhooper1956@googlemail.com).

