

HARRY INNERDALE SIRCOM



19th June 1916

1892-1916 Age 23

Private 16/732 16th (Service) Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment (1st Bradford "Pals").

Harry Sircom was born in Bradford on 14th August 1892. His parents were Frank Sircom, originally from Bristol, and Annie Innerdale, from Oldham. Frank's father moved to the north-west in the 1870s, where he was briefly a partner in a cotton business, and then ran or owned a brewery. Frank went into the textile industry, first as salesman for a silk velvet manufacturer in Lancashire, then as manager of a Bradford silk mill, finally establishing a business as a manufacturer's agent dealing in silk upholstery. Bradford's largest maker of silk velvet was Lister, whose mill still dominates the skyline.

Harry went to Bradford Grammar School in 1904 when he was 12, and left in 1907 shortly before he was 15. He was on the Modern side of the School which prepared boys for the mercantile life; his French improved rapidly, and in Sixth Remove in his last year he was second in Chemistry, third in Geography and fifth in History. When he left school he probably joined his father and sister Elsie in the family business situated at Cheapside in the centre of Bradford. The 1911 census records his occupation as warehouseman in the same goods for which his father was an agent. By 1914, he described himself as a 'manufacturer's agent' like his father. As the family prospered, they moved away from Bradford to Hurst (or Hirst) House, a substantial eleven-roomed residence on Hirst Lane, near the River Aire and the canal on the Bingley side of Shipley.

When war broke out Harry was 22 years old. He is said to have enlisted in Bradford in September, although the 1st Bradford "Pals" battalion was only formed in October: and he was number 732 in the list of the 'first thousand' published by the Bradford Daily Telegraph in November. For the first three months the "Pals" lived at home and drilled at a skating rink in Manningham wearing a blue uniform. They proceeded by way of Skipton, Ripon and Fovant in Wiltshire, to Liverpool, where they embarked for Egypt in December 1915, before landing in France in March 1916. By the end of the month they were behind the Somme front at Bus-les-Artois.



On 4th June the 1st "Pals" went into the line near Colincamps. According to the battalion War Diary, this tour was fairly quiet up to 9th June, when German artillery was reported as being active and five men, including Privates Sircom and Rishman of 'A' Company, were wounded. Harry was evacuated by train to a base hospital at Rouen. The Bradford and Shipley newspapers reported what happened next: his left leg had to be amputated, his parents were informed and were on their way to visit their son in France, but they learned at Southampton that he died on 19th June and was buried in St. Saver Cemetery, Rouen.

Harry Sircom was 23 and unmarried when his life was cut short. His parents and sister moved to Shelf, near Halifax. Harry's was remembered on the family tomb in Hirst Wood Cemetery, Shipley, at St. Peter's Church, Shipley, and on the BGS War Memorial.



Acknowledgements:

The Sircom family history was reconstructed using the records available on Ancestry.com. The London Gazette published notices in 1874 and 1876 dissolving Henry Sircom's partnerships in the firms of Westlake, Sircom & Co., brewers, of Cheltenham and Bristol, and H. Grimshaw & Co., cotton manufacturer, Manchester. In 1881 and 1891 Henry was a brewer again, living in Stalybridge, then Salford. There may have been a rift between him and his son Frank, who later named his son after his wife's brother rather than his father. The cause may possibly be explained by the appearance in the 1891 census of Henry Furze Sircom as Henry Sircom senior's 'son'. He was first recorded as the *nephew* of Henry Sircom's wife Jane Furze, the son of her brother Henry. Henry Furze then adopted the surname of his aunt's husband and was recorded as his 'son' in the 1891 census. This hints at a family scandal.

The first known address of Frank Sircom's family in Bradford was Kensington St., Girlington, which would suit an employee of Lister. They subsequently moved to Lynthorne Rd., Manningham Lane, then Tower Road and Hirst Lane, Shipley. His business operated from Cheapside Chambers, Bradford.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website wrongly states that Harry Sircom died on 9th June—in fact this was the day he was wounded, and he died of wounds later, as is confirmed by the Burial Registration, Register of Soldiers' Effects, Soldiers Who Died and the local newspapers. His wounding is recorded in the War Diary under 9th July (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#?imageld=43849_2362_0-00029).

The Bradford Daily Telegraph (24 June 1916) and the Bradford Weekly Telegraph (30 June 1916) reported his death. The Shipley Times and Express, quoted Shipley ww1.org (<http://www.shipleyww1.org.uk/men%20who%20served%20base.htm>), also gives incorrect dates.

The photo is courtesy of the BGS Old Bradfordians Association Roll of Honour.

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