

JOHN EWART PATTERSON



3rd June 1916

1887-1916 Age 28



Corporal Royal Engineers, 18th Division Signalling Company.

John Ewart Patterson was born in Bradford on 14th July 1887, the eldest of three sons of Jasper Patterson and Harriet Ashenhurst. Jasper was a Scot from Edinburgh who moved to South Shields, then to Bradford. In the space of twenty years he progressed from a printer's compositor (whose job was to set the type for printing newspapers and books) to a journalist, and then to general manager of the 'Argus', one of Bradford's three daily newspapers. Harriet came from the hamlet of Farnly Tyas near Huddersfield. When they married in 1885 she was an assistant librarian in Bradford.

John started at Bradford Grammar School in 1901, when he was fourteen years old. At the end of his second year, his best subjects were English (second) and Geography (fourth). The following year he skipped from Form Three Modern to Form Five, but his work suffered in consequence, and he left BGS in 1904. John Patterson was described in *The Bradfordian* as '*an all-round athlete and a popular member of the rugby football team*', in which he played with the future Yorkshire and England stand-off F.E. Steinthal. In April 1903 Patterson was 5ft. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. tall and weighed a little over 9 stone. He was a '*plucky full back. Smart at catching and picking up,*' although his kicking was in need of improvement. He broke his collar bone in the match against Leeds Grammar School in March, which brought his season to a premature end.

After school John worked for his father as a journalist on the 'Argus'. His obituary in another Bradford paper, perhaps supplied by his father, described his '*literary ability*' at school, and his '*keen sense of humour and originality of style*' as a journalist. He transferred his passion for rugby football from the amateur code to the professional Bradford Northern team which played in the Northern Union (now known respectively as Bradford Bulls and Rugby League), about whom he wrote under the pen-name 'Discipulus'.

Soon after war broke out John went to Sheffield to enlist in the Royal Engineers. He was attached to the Signalling Corps, which was at that time part of the engineers. Within a month he was promoted to corporal and he was made a despatch rider (which suggests he had an interest in motor cycles). He went to France in July 1915 with 18th Division. On one mission he located and rounded up a pair of spies who had been aiding the German artillery to target British positions. They were shot. On another occasion his determination to deliver his message required him to ride at night over roads that were sheets of ice. The 'Argus' states '*he was "chaired" by his comrades for his pluck.*' It was while he was on another night mission that he collided with a French vehicle, and he died in the 54th Field Ambulance. He was unmarried.

Both of his brothers George and Francis also studied at BGS. George died fighting at the Somme in September 1916. Francis did not serve in the war and became an architect.

Old Bradfordians—'We will remember them'



Acknowledgements:

My thanks to the OBA for permission to use the photo from the Roll of Honour. The family history was reconstructed using records on Ancestry. These were supplemented with information from the Bradford Grammar School Yearbooks for 1902-3 and 1903-4 (my thanks to the School Archivist Lesley Purcell for access), The Bradfordian for March and April 1903 (author's collection), and the 'Bradford Daily Telegraph' (on microfilm at West Yorkshire Local Studies Library, Bradford).

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