

MALCOLM BRUCE PATERSON



1st July 1916

1893-1916 Age 23

Private 16/687, 16th (Service) Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment, 1st Bradford 'Pals'.

Malcolm was the son of Malcolm McCulloch Paterson from Leeds, and Constance Tattersfield of Heckmondwike. The elder Malcolm was the son of a Scot and he was a civil engineer who specialized in water supply and drainage, for whose expertise there was much demand in an expanding industrial centre such as Bradford. Malcolm and Constance married in 1883, and for more than twenty years they lived in the same house on Nab Lane in Shipley. Malcolm Bruce Paterson was the youngest of their four children, born on 23rd June 1893. His two elder brothers both went to Leeds University and qualified as civil engineers, training with their father before they worked in Britain's African colonies. Alexander went to Salt's Schools, whereas George was at Bradford Grammar School from 1893 to 1901. Their mother died in 1904, shortly before Malcolm went to B.G.S. when he was eleven. His sister Marjorie became house-keeper to their father. Malcolm attended the School until summer 1909, although he missed a year. Geography, History and Art were his best subjects overall. He left when he was sixteen, and unlike his brothers he did not become an engineer. In 1911 he is found boarding on a farm near Scarborough where he was learning to be a farmer, and in 1914 he was an agricultural student at Leeds University.

By the time war started, Malcolm and his father lived in Pannal near Harrogate. Marjorie had recently married and left home. In mid-September, Malcolm went to Bradford to enlist in the Bradford 'Pals' Battalion being raised by the Lord Mayor. As a Cadet in the Leeds University O.T.C. he could have applied for a commission, so it was perhaps by deliberate choice that he remained a Private, unless he was considered an unsuitable candidate. The early weeks in the 1st 'Pals' cannot have been easy for Malcolm, living at home and travelling to Bradford to drill at an ice-rink on Manningham Lane and in Lister Park. There was a direct rail service from



Harrogate to Bradford Market Street (later renamed Forster Square) via Otley, but it was only in January 1915 that the battalion moved into a camp on the edge of Skipton.

After a sojourn in Egypt commencing in late December, the 1st 'Pals' arrived in France in March 1916 in preparation for the attack on the Somme planned for the summer. On 31st June at 6.35 p.m. they left camp at Bus-les-Artois to make their way through the communication trenches to their assembly position about one hundred yards behind the British front line. They arrived at 3.00 a.m. and awaited Zero hour at 7.30 a.m., when they would advance as the second wave of 93 Brigade's attack. As soon as they climbed out of their trenches they encountered a storm of fire. Paterson was probably killed before they reached the British front, as his body was recovered and was buried in Railway Hollow Cemetery which lies in the old British support line.

Both his brothers Alex and George served in the war, as officers in the Engineers and the Artillery, and both survived.



Acknowledgements:

The photo of Malcolm's gravestone in Railway Hollow Cemetery is by the author. Information about the Paterson family was researched on Ancestry.com, including the Institute of Civil Engineers registers. There is a skeleton biography of Paterson at <<http://www.shingleyww1.org.uk/People%20Paterson,%20Malcolm.html>> accessed 25-6-2016. Malcolm's school record is in the B.G.S. Annual Reports for 1905-1909. He is on the Leeds University Roll of Honour, where he is listed as 'Student and Cadet', <<http://westernfrontassociation.com/great-war-people/memorials/1646-the-university-of-leeds-otc-and-roll-of-honour.html>>, and he gave his occupation as 'Agricultural Student' when he enlisted. The date is a deduction from his regimental number. On the eve of war, the North Eastern Railway Harrogate-Bradford service was ten trains each way daily (P.E.Baughan, Railways of Wharfedale, (Newton Abbot, 1969), 199. For the 16th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment, see David Raw, Bradford Pals, (Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2008).

Alex McCulloch Paterson had been a Captain in the Special Reserve, Royal Engineers prior to the outbreak of war, and finished the war as a Major. George Stewart Paterson seems to have been a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Garrison Artillery, then transferred to the R.A.F. in 1918.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper June/October 2016 (Nhooper1956@googlemail.com).