

# PHILIP KEIGHLEY



24th December 1915

1896-1915 Aged 19

## Private 2469 1/6th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment (Territorial Force).

Philip Keighley was born in the middle of 1896 in Bradford. His parents were Fred Keighley, born in the town of the same name, and Lucy Anne Cooke, from Bradford. Their seven children were born over a period of twenty years, all of them sons apart from the eldest. Fred was from a mill-owning family, and he was himself successful. In 1911, he and his five elder sons were all in business on their own account or worked in Bradford's woollen manufacturing trade. Two of the boys had a spinning business, which may have been the firm of Keighley Brothers, Worsted Manufacturers, of Industry Mills, Sugden Street (off Thornton Road). The success of the family was plain from the fact that they moved out of Bradford into the country at Esholt, where they occupied the ten-roomed, detached Holme House.

Philip was the baby of the family. He went to the Bradford Grammar School when he reached the age of twelve, in summer 1908. In his early years he was several times near the top of his form in Latin. Travel to the Grammar School in the centre of Bradford was possible by train from the now demolished Esholt Station. In his final year he competed in the athletic sports for 1912, and the Bradfordian later reminded its readers that *'he won the mile race after a tough struggle.'* We do not know what Philip did when he completed his studies at BGS, aged sixteen. His education prepared him for a business career, and it is likely that he followed his elder brothers into the wool trade. He was one of several Old Bradfordians who played for Baildon Rugby Union club.

When war broke out in 1914, he was quick to enlist, joining the many Old Bradfordians who were in 'C' Company of the Bradford Territorials, based at Bellevue Barracks near Bradford City's ground. Although Philip was old enough to join the Army, he was under age to serve overseas when the 6th battalion went to France, landing on 16th April 1915 with 49th West Riding Division. This did not prevent him from accompanying them. He shared in the seven months of trench work, five of them at Ypres holding what was described as the 'key to Calais'. This ordeal has been described in the biographies of other Old Bradfordians who



Photo courtesy of the Old Bradfordian Association.

were killed during these months.

In December there was the prospect of divisional rest, a complete break from the line, but first they faced their greatest ordeal. A large-scale German gas attack on the morning of 19th December killed eighteen men of the 1/6 West Yorks., two Old Bradfordians among them. It is likely that Keighley was among the one hundred men wounded by the German shelling that accompanied the attack. It was difficult to evacuate the wounded through the deep mud and intense enemy fire, and the first ('golden') hour after an injury was crucial to the chances of survival. Philip survived this ordeal and was passed back by way of Essex Farm Advanced Dressing Station, to the Casualty Clearing Station near Poperinge, and then by hospital train to a base hospital on the coast at Etaples run by the St. John's Ambulance Brigade. This is where he died of his wounds on Christmas Eve.

Philip's body was buried in the British Military Cemetery at Etaples. His name is remembered in the Memorial Institute at Esholt, and also on the family plot in Undercliffe Cemetery, Bradford (E475/6 Unconsecrated Section).





### Acknowledgements:

The information for this biography was compiled from the records on CWGC; Ancestry.com; The Bradfordian; *Kelly's Directory of Bradford and its Suburbs 1912* (reprint by TWC Publishing); Captain E.V. Tempest, *History of the Sixth Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment*; "Listen To Our Stories". Remembering World War One at Undercliffe Cemetery Bradford' (2014), which contains some inaccuracies, including the spelling of Philip's name; *Yorkshire RFU Commemoration Book 1914-1919 and Official Handbook Season 1919-20*.


Other internet links which were consulted include:

<http://museumstjohn.org.uk/etaples-reports-project-introduction/>;

[http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/13319608.Bradford\\_mill\\_to\\_be\\_converted\\_to\\_flats/](http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/13319608.Bradford_mill_to_be_converted_to_flats/) (8-6-2015) for Industry Mills;

[www.rightmove.co.uk/property-for-sale/property-44763592.htm](http://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-for-sale/property-44763592.htm) for Holme House.

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