

ROBERT CECIL CORDINGLEY



4th June 1916

1888-1916 Age 27



Lieutenant 9th Company Canadian Machine-Gun Corps.

Robert Cecil Cordingley was born in Bradford on 17th September 1888, the fourth of five sons of John James Cordingley and Ann Brayshaw. John's father, also John, farmed seventeen acres in Wyke and dealt in sheepskins. The John James was the last of seven children. His first recorded occupation in 1871 was a 'warehouse boy', yet a decade later he was a cloth merchant employing two men. In the early twentieth century, the company premises were at 6, Canal Road. The family lived in Horton. Robert went to Bradford Grammar School from 1897 until 1903, from the ages of nine to fifteen. He was remembered as a good sportsman, who captained the winning gymnastics team when he was in Form IV lower. Like his three elder brothers, he went to work in one of Bradford's industries, in his case he was for several years a chemist for a cloth dyer. During these years he remained single, and also led an active life. He was for five years a member of the volunteer 2nd battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment, and he played for Horton, later Bradford, RUFC. However, he looked for a greater challenge, and following a visit to the USA, in 1910 he joined the tide of emigrants to the prairies of Canada. There he obtained a homestead of 160 acres in the province of Alberta, on the condition that he planted 30 acres and fenced the whole. His elder brother Mark Perceval followed him, about the same time. He married and raised a family in the village of Boyle, where he lived until the 1960s.

After the outbreak of war in 1914, Robert felt it his duty to volunteer (his brother Percy did not). At first he enlisted in the 31st battalion Canadian Infantry, regimental number 79153, and attained the rank of Corporal. His previous military experience at home led him to gain a commission in the 56th battalion, another Alberta unit, which embarked for Britain on 20th March 1916. The 56th provided reinforcements for battalions already on the Western Front. Cordingley was transferred to the recently formed 9th Canadian Machine Gun Company, part of 3rd Canadian Division, with the rank of Lieutenant commanding 'B' section. They were armed with the standard British heavy machine-gun, the Vickers, which was broken down into two segments for mobility, the barrel

and the tripod.

At the start of June 1916, the 9th Canadian MG Company was ordered forward from its training camp at Poperinge, near Ypres to support the Canadian positions at Sanctuary Wood and Zillebeke which were being threatened by the Germans. Cordingley's section were sent forward to Zillebeke village, which came under heavy bombardment. The Bradfordian learned some of the details of his death: *'One of his men was carrying the tripod, but was knocked over by the concussion of a shell, a splinter hitting his bayonet. He was hurt, but not wounded. Cordingley, it seems, saw the man fall and thought he was wounded. Not wishing to lose the tripod, a heavy affair and not easy to replace, to quote the words of a brother officer, "he gallantly rushed back and picked it up, although, at the time, the shells were coming fast in salvos of three – many of them weeping-gas shells, which made one nearly blind." It is supposed that he again started for the trench when he was hit... His body was found a few hours afterwards alongside the tripod and he was buried close by where he had fallen. It is gratifying to learn that he was popular ... from what we knew of him as a boy, he certainly would be.'*

Cordingley was buried in Railway Dugouts Burial Ground, south east of Ypres. He was unmarried and aged 27. Two of his brothers, John and Lawrence served and both survived the war.



Acknowledgements:

It is hoped that the details of Robert Cordingley's BGS career will become clearer when the school Year-books and the Bradfordians for his era emerge from the archives.

Cordingley was one of four, possibly five, Old Bradfordians who died and were former members of the Horton/Bradford Rugby club.

WAR DIARY OR INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (Erase heading not required.)			Army Form C. 2118.
Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages will be prepared in manuscript.			Remarks and references to Appendices
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information
YPRES	3.6.18	7.30 a.m.	D section 4 guns moved from YPRES to LILLE ROAD. This was ordered later by the 3rd Division.
		8.30 a.m.	4 guns from BUND advanced to form new line gapance from I 2 a d. 4.6 north to I 16 a 7.8 which is not posted.
		10 a.m.	2 guns of B section under Lieut Cordingley reported BUND, and ordered by 8th B.M.G.C. to go to ZILLEBKE.
			C section withdrawn from new line to relieve 8th B.M.G.C. Heavy shelling.
BUND.	4.6.18	7.15 a.m.	Enemy artillery operates on ZILLEBKE VILLAGE and communication trenches. Heavy shelling put on at ZILLEBKE VILLAGE and a fire made on Line COVERS WALK.
	5.6.18		Casualties. Lieut Cordingley killed 3 am ZILLEBKE VILLAGE. Heavy artillery work most of day. ZILLEBKE heavily bombarded. Enemy is fairly quiet. Casualties 1 man suffering from shell shock was evacuated.

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