

WILLIAM NICHOLSON MOSSOP



8th May 1918

1888-1918 Aged 29

Captain and Adjutant, M.C., Mentioned in Despatches, 1/6th Battalion (T.F.) West Yorkshire Regiment.

William was born in Bradford on 10th June 1888. He was the third son of Janette Bain Christie, the daughter of a successful Edinburgh draper, and Isaac Mossop who came from Whitehaven in Cumberland where his father was a sea captain. After leaving St. Bee's School Isaac trained at Edinburgh as a physician and surgeon, where he met Janette. They married in 1873 and had ten children. The first six were daughters, followed by four boys. The family lived on Victor Road, on the far side of Lister Park from the modern school, and from around 1890 they occupied the former vicarage of St. Luke's Church, where they also worshipped. Isaac played a leading role in the medical, philanthropic and religious life of Bradford. He was also a J.P. and a leading Freemason, and in addition he was for 34 years a member of the Artillery Volunteers, their surgeon and honorary colonel, until his death in 1916. Janette had died in 1905.

All four Mossop boys went to the Bradford Grammar School. William started in the Junior School in 1898 when he was ten. In the Senior School he was in the Classical forms, except for his final year (1905-6) in the Matriculation Form. He was an enthusiastic secretary of the Junior Debating Society, but it was as a forward in the First XV that he made the greatest impression. *The Bradfordian* summed him up thus aged seventeen: 'Weight 11st. 2lbs; Height 5ft 6 1/2 ins. A very useful man; uses his weight, tackles very safely, dribbles and follows up well ... Has turned up to practices consistently.' He was described later as an earnest Church and Sunday-school worker. After B.G.S. he went to work for a Bradford wool importer, James Hill & Sons Ltd., and when hostilities began he was manager of their wool department at Biella in north Italy. He must have hastened home for on 7th September he submitted an application for a commission in the West Yorkshire Regiment. Despite a complete lack of military training William was appointed Second Lieutenant on 9th September—he was certified medically fit by his father. It is possible that William was initially posted to the regiment's Reserve Battalion (later the 2/6th), however although he had



no formal officer training he went to France with 1/6th Battalion on 15th April 1915.

William Mossop served in France and Belgium for the best part of three years. He was wounded on 12th August 1915 and possibly again later in the year. In March 1916 he was promoted to temporary Lieutenant and became the battalion's adjutant with responsibility for its organisation and administration. A fractured lower leg suffered on 5th July caused him to miss most of his battalion's service during the Battle of the Somme. He was passed fit for active service in October, but was able to attend his father's funeral on 28th December. He resumed his duties in France in 1917. He was a brave officer who was awarded the Military Cross and a Mention in Despatches. William, by now a Captain, received the wound from which he would die on 25th April 1918. 1/6th and 1/5th Battalions West Yorkshire were holding a line near Wyttschaete (Belgium) in the final stage of the second thrust of the German Spring Offensive. They knew it was crucial to hold on as long as possible. The Germans broke through on both flanks and around 7 a.m. Lt. Col. Wistance, O.C. 1/6th, reportedly said to Mossop and the survivors of the H.Q. detail: 'we are in for it now. We must put up the best show we can.' Wistance was killed by a machine-gun bullet while Mossop, shot in the upper thigh was taken prisoner. He died in a German military hospital in Ghent on 8th May where he was buried.



Acknowledgements:

Mossop's photo is from the School memorial book courtesy of the O.B.A. and B.G.S. The family was researched using Ancestry.com. For his B.G.S. years, see the B.G.S. Annual Reports 1899-1906 and *The Bradfordian* October 1905-May 1906 (vol. x-xi) *passim*. For Isaac Mossop, additionally see *Bradford Daily Telegraph* 29-12-1916 and *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* 26-12-1916.

Mossop's military career is difficult to be certain about. The main documents are his Officer Personal Record (T.N.A. WO WO374-49286) and references in the *London Gazette*. It is certain that he served with 1/6th Battalion in France—his school-fellow Capt. E.V. Tempest, *History of the 6th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment. Vol.I. 1/6th Battalion*, (Percy Lund Humphries & Co, Bradford, 1920), 223, stated 'His conscientious work and steady devotion give him the right to be regarded as one of the most faithful servants the Battalion ever had.' However, Capt. E.C. Gregory, *History of the 6th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment. Vol.II. 2/6th Battalion*, (Percy Lund Humphries & Co, Bradford, 1920), 192, has a confused reference to a Capt. W.C. Mossop. I am convinced that this can only be W.N. Mossop, and although there is some confusion in this reference, I have used it as the source for Mossop's wound on 12th August 1915. The 1/6th War Diary (T.N.A. Piece 2794/2: 1/6 Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment 1914 Aug - 1919 Feb) notes an unnamed officer was wounded on that date. The source for the second wound is the *Manchester Courier* 2-11-15. The records for the fractured leg are in his Officer file.

Soldiers Died in the Great War gives Mossop's battalion as 1/5th West Yorks., while the Medal Index Card states he served with both 1/6th and 1/5th. I can find no evidence that he served with 5th Battalion (e.g. John Sheehan, *Harrogate Terriers. The 1/5th (Territorial) Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment in the Great War*, (Pen & Sword Books, Barnsley, 2017). Commonwealth War Graves Commission states that Mossop died on 11th May 1918. This is an error. All the documents in his Officer file give the date as 8th May, as does the Red Cross record of his death (<https://grandeguerre.icrc.org/en/File/Search#/3/2/224/0/British%20and%20Commonwealth/Military/Mossop>), his probate record and the *Yorkshire Evening Post* 22-8-18.

All newspapers were consulted through finmypast.co.uk, except for the *Bradford Daily Telegraph*. Two brothers saw service, as did his brother-in-law. All survived.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper in May 2018. Thanks to Tricia Platts for discussing some knotty issues with me. For further information, contact Nhooper1956@googlemail.com, or see <http://www.bradfordgrammar.com/former-pupils/bradford-grammar-school-in-ww1/>.