

LESLIE VINCENT GREENOUGH



15th June 1918

1896-1918 Aged 21

Private 33936 1/1st Battalion Oxford and Bucks. Light Infantry ('1st Buckinghamshire').

Leslie Greenough was the only Old Bradfordian who was killed in Italy during the First World War. He was born on 8th December 1896 at Grove House (sometimes also known as Somerset House), Pearson Road Odsal. He was the only son of Arthur Elsworth Greenough, a wool merchant and dealer in woollen waste with his premises on Manchester Road, and Sarah Elizabeth Kellett. Leslie started in the Bradford Grammar School junior department when he was eleven. He left in 1911 at the age of fifteen after completing 4th Modern Lower. It is likely that he then joined his father in business.

Leslie was not yet eighteen when the war began, and it is probable that he attested under Lord Derby's Scheme late in 1915. He was mobilized on 5th January the following year, and his initial posting was to the Mechanical Transport section of the Army Service Corps. Although disparagingly referred to as 'Ally Sloper's Cavalry' this corps played an essential role in supplying the armies in the field. However, at some unknown time Leslie was transferred, or he asked to be transferred, to the infantry. He served with 1st Buckinghamshire Battalion of the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, part of 48th (South Midland) Division. In November 1917 this division was part of the Anglo-French force sent to Italy to shore up the Italian Army following its catastrophic defeat at Caporetto. While the journey across France and Italy was described as 'one of the most magnificent holidays the Battalion ever had', the experience of mountain warfare was less welcome. It took the Buckinghamshire Battalion five hours to climb onto the 8000 feet high Asiago Plateau. Leslie is shown in the photo wearing the pith helmet and khaki drill uniform issued in May to help the men cope with the heat.



On the evening of 14th June a warning was issued that an Austrian attack was imminent. The Buckinghamshire Battalion took up its positions in the support line with orders to hold them to the last man in the event of an enemy breakthrough. These positions were subjected to an intense bombardment with high explosive and a large proportion of gas shells. The Austrian shooting was described as 'exceedingly good' and shells rained down for four or five hours, exploding ammunition dumps and felling trees in the dense forests. Because it did not play a leading part in the battle, the battalion's losses were light, eight men killed and forty-two wounded. Greenough was most likely killed in the bombardment. Because the British successfully defended their positions it was possible to recover his body for burial in Boscon British Cemetery. Although his family were Wesleyan Methodists, he was remembered on the war memorial of St. Matthew's Church, Bankfoot.



Acknowledgements:

Greenough's photo is from the School memorial book courtesy of the O.B.A. and B.G.S. It was probably taken within a month of his death as khaki drill was issued in place of the usual serge clothing, with pith helmets, on account of the heat on 19th May. The family was researched using Ancestry.com. His years at B.G.S. are recorded in the Annual Reports for 1908-1911. For the family business, John Greenough & Son, Wool Merchants, see *Kelly's Directory of Bradford, 1912*. *Bradford Roll of Honour* gives his enlistment date. The Medal Index Card and Soldiers Died in the Great War gives his A.S.C. serial number. The prefix 'M' indicates he was in Mechanical Transport.

Very useful for the circumstances of Leslie's death was Capt. P.L. Wright, D.S.O., M.C., *The First Buckinghamshire Battalion, 1914-*, Hazell, Watson & Vilney, Ltd. London and Aylesbury, 1920), 91, 104-11.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper in June 2018. For further information, contact Nhooper1956@googlemail.com, or see <<http://www.bradfordgrammar.com/former-pupils/bradford-grammar-school-in-ww1/>>.