

GEORGE ALBERT TWIVY



3rd May 1917

1894-1917 Aged 23

**Lance Corporal 241321, 2nd-6th Battalion
West Yorkshire Regiment (Territorial Force).**

George was the youngest child of Tom Twivy, a joiner and builder, and latterly an undertaker, who lived in the Undercliffe district of Bradford. In 1877 Tom married Sarah Ann Driver, a dressmaker and daughter of a wool buyer who lived a few streets away. They had three surviving children, and perhaps as many as five who died in infancy. Sarah herself died in 1895, at the young age of forty when George was about one year old. Tom never remarried, and his eldest child Blanche acted as his house-keeper until she married in 1905.

George was a pupil at Bradford Grammar School when he was aged twelve and thirteen, in 1906 and 1907, probably on a City Council scholarship. In Forms Second Modern Middle and Third Modern Lower he was placed 30th and 22nd respectively, near the bottom of his class. He left school aged thirteen or fourteen to start work as a Draper's apprentice. He was not one of the young men who rushed to the colours in August and September 1914, nor did he join either of the Bradford Pals' Battalions. On 5th January 1915 he volunteered for the Reserve Battalion of the West Yorkshire Territorials, known as the 2nd-6th. It had been formed on 9th September 1914 as a feeder unit for the 1st-6th Battalion, and at the time of George's enlistment was still stationed at Belle Vue Barracks, near Bradford City's Valley Parade ground. The recruits lived at home and turned up at 9am to drill. George was aged around twenty-one, and it is possible his apprenticeship had just ended. The 2nd-6th had among its officers many Old Bradfordians, and the newspapers announced an Old Boys' Company was to be formed. Other reasons for joining this unit were that it accepted men an inch shorter than those Kitchener battalions took, it featured in a film which was shown in Bradford cinemas, and it was even promoted as 'another "Pals" Battalion for Bradford.'

The training of the 2nd-6th was hindered by the constant drain of trained men to reinforce its parent battalion and by chronic equipment shortages. It was not until the start of January 1917 that the 2nd-6th went to France as part of 62nd West Riding Division. Their first experience of the line at Beaumont Hamel



in February coincided with the thaw and the men had to spend days up to their knees or even waists in glutinous mud. If casualties resulting from enemy action were relatively few, exposure caused many to be hospitalized. On 11th April the 2nd-6th was due to participate in a hastily prepared operation alongside the Australians at Bullecourt. This was cancelled when the tanks which were to spearhead the attack broke down miles behind the front, yet the Battalion still paid a heavy price from German shellfire.

George Twivy survived these events, but the Battalion was about to endure a calamity which he would not survive. At 3.45am on the morning of 3rd May they took part in an assault on Bullecourt. Colonel Hastings vainly protested that with only 400 men his battalion was too weak for its allotted tasks. The German barrage weakened the line as it advanced, and even though the wire was destroyed in places machine guns inflicted further losses as men bunched at the gaps. The second wave moved on into the village' led by OB Captain Gregory, however they were overwhelmed by the numerous German defenders. Many parties of men simply disappeared, their 'bodies buried or blown to smithereens.' One officer was last seen pulling the pins out of grenades with his teeth to throw with his unwounded hand. The 2nd-6th lost 75% of its men killed, wounded and missing. Of the 111 men recorded as dying on that day, the bodies of 103 were never found, among them that of George Twivy. It was a year before his death was confirmed officially. His name is on the Arras Memorial to the Missing.



Acknowledgements:

George's photo is from the Memorial Book, with thanks to the OBA and School. George's birth date is not known. His age is given as 32 by the CWGC, a transposition error for 23. His family history was researched from the census and birth/death records on Ancestry.com. His school dates seem to be given wrongly in *The Bradfordian* (July 1918) as 1906-1908—he is recorded in the Annual Reports for 1905-1907.

In 1912 George was arrested on a charge of gross indecency with another male, and both men were acquitted (<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/interactive/5085/41238_1831101881_0665-00273?pid=134430&backurl=http://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26db%3DWestYorkPrison%26h%3D134430%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26_phsrc%3DKih29%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26rhSource%3D2352&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=Kih29&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true>).

His enlistment date is from the Bradford Roll of Honour (<<https://www.flickr.com/photos/bradfordww1/11401428363/in/album-72157638727543366/>>). For the recruitment of the 2nd-6th Battalion, reports in the *Yorkshire Observer* 21st-28th October, quote from Wednesday 28th. Captain EC Gregory, OB, wrote *History of the Sixth Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment. Vol. II. 2/6th* (Percy Lund, Bradford, 1923). For the events of 3rd May, in which he participated, 90-102, quote from 100. The proportion of dead on the Arras Memorial to the Missing was researched using the CWGC database. It does not take into account wounded who died later. Very few of the missing turned up as prisoners.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper (Nhooper1956@googlemail.com) in May 2017.