

# ADOLF GEORGE HAAKE



26th August 1916

1889-1916 Age 29

## Private 3120, 21st Battalion Australian Infantry.

Adolf George and his twin sister Clara were born in Bradford in January 1889. Their parents Adolf and Clara were both from Hanover, a state in Germany whose rulers were also the British monarchs from 1714 until Victoria became Queen in 1837. By 1861, Adolf was resident in Bradford and worked as a clerk for a foreign (presumably German) exporter of Bradford's woollen yarn and cloth. His career was uneven, judging by the descriptions of his occupation. In the late 1870s, he married Clara who was seven years his junior. Their first child Else was born in 1878, and eight more followed at regular intervals until Margaret Cecilia in 1891. Adolf George was their youngest son. The family lived in the same house at 40 Ashgrove, Little Horton, for over twenty years. Adolf died in his 75th year in 1914, a few months after war broke out, having never become naturalized as a British subject.

Of Adolf and Clara's three sons, two are known to have attended Bradford Grammar School: Christian, who was the elder, left in July 1899 aged around thirteen; Adolf George had already finished at the school by this time, and he must have continued his education elsewhere. Whether the middle brother Ernest went to B.G.S. is not known. Christian and Adolf George Haake both sought their fortunes in the British Empire. Christian sailed for Canada in 1906, in the company of another O.B., Blagbrough F.G. Adolf George worked in textiles. In 1909 he returned from Bombay, India, when he was twenty, his occupation was 'Draper'; two years later he was listed as a 'Clerk in a weaving mill'; and in 1911, when he took the S.S. Ballarat for Melbourne, he had been a 'Piece Overlooker'. In Australia he worked as a 'commercial traveller', a sales representative in Victoria colony. In March 1914, he married Katherine Rosa Muller, from Dunedin, New Zealand, who was clearly also of German ancestry.

At the outbreak of war, Adolf George Haake was not among those who joined up in a heady rush of enthusiasm—he was now the father of a daughter, Berta. His enlistment on 7th July 1915 may have been influenced by the ANZAC landings at Gallipoli earlier that year and the raising of a new infantry battalion in Victoria, the 21st. His medical inspection gave his height as 5' 8" and his weight as 11 stones, of grey eyes and brown hair. In November 1915 he embarked with the 7th reinforcement draft for Gallipoli. He survived the winter without mishap, but



following the evacuation he suffered a severe fracture to the base of the skull while in Egypt. He was only fit to follow his unit to France on 30th May, and he joined them in the field on 4th August. By this time they were engaged in the desperate struggle for Pozieres during the Somme offensive.

Following a fortnight in rest, the 21st Battalion went into the line on the night of 22nd-23rd August. At 04.45, on the 26th, two companies attacked Mouquet Farm. Haake was initially reported missing, and it was only in July 1917 that an enquiry pronounced that he had been killed. His widow continued to hope that he was a prisoner of war, until early in 1918. His mother's enquiries resulted in the Red Cross sending her the testimony of a comrade: *'He belonged to A Co [mpany]. At Mouquet Farm he got badly wounded when we went over, in the German trench. He appeared to be very bad indeed. We could do nothing for him and he had to be left where he was.'* (7th May 1917) The same man added later that *'I knew Haake. Met him first in Egypt ... He was in No. 1 Platoon. A. Company. At Mouquet Farm our battalion Hopped over. When we had gone to Fritz's 2nd trench. We held it till 3.p.m. (about 8 hours) Our party here was under murderous shell fire. A great number were killed, in the trench near by me, I saw Haake wounded ... our own mortars were falling short and the whole of the area where Haake was lying went up ... Many bodies entirely disappeared.'* A counter-attack forced the Australians to withdraw. As a result, Haake's burial remained unknown and he is recorded on the Australian Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux. His mother did not notify the School of his death, and his name is not on the memorial. His widow Katherine never remarried and died in New Zealand in 1978. Berta's married name was Doig, and she had four daughters, Alison, Roslind, Celia and Kate.



## Acknowledgements:

Adolph or Adolf? In the records up to 1909, the form Adolph was employed for father and son—subsequent records employ the form Adolf. For simplicity's sake, I have used the more modern English usage of Adolf. Haake's image is in the Public Domain—it is taken, with thanks, from the Australian War Memorial (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P07303.001>). The full image is reproduced below. The family history was reconstructed mainly from records on Ancestry.com, with other sources listed below. The series of Year Books published by B.G.S. available in the Archives at the time this biography was compiled only starts in July 1899. The current evidence that Adolf George attended B.G.S. is the list of O.B.s in the British forces published in *The Bradfordinian* for July 1916, where his initials were given as 'A.C.'

For Hanover, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Hanover\\_\(region\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Hanover_(region)). Germany was the main market for Bradford's textile exports, and in 1860 forty per cent of its worsteds were being distributed by companies which bore German names (S Duxbury-Neumann, *Little Germany. A History of Bradford's Germans*, (Stroud, 2015), 27. Prior to 1881 Adolf Haake was in business with Matthias Nacken (curiously, Adolf's fellow lodger in 1871 was Wilhelm Nacken). Following the dissolution of their partnership, he continued the business as Haake & Co. (<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/24997/page/3560/data.pdf>). However, in the 1911 Census, he was described as Foreign Correspondent for a cloth merchant. Christian's voyage to Canada was drawn to my attention by Tricia Platts. F.G. Blagbrough's brother George's death in action will be remembered in December 2016.

For the Red Cross correspondence with Clara Haake, see <https://www.awm.gov.au/images/collection/pdf/RCDIG1039867--1-.pdf>; for Haake's service record, <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=4362456&S=1&N=77#/SearchNRRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=4362456&T=P&S=1>; for the 21st Battalion War diary for the day of his death, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RCDIG1005391/?image=7>.

The notifications of Haake's marriage to Katherine in 1914, and of her death in 1978, are at [https://www.myheritage.com/research/collection-10450/australian-newspapers?](https://www.myheritage.com/research/collection-10450/australian-newspapers?ac-)

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