

GEORGE GORDON PATTERSON

1889-1916 Age 27



25th September 1916

Second Lieutenant, 1st-7th Battalion King's Own Liverpool Regiment (Territorial Force).

George Patterson was born in Bradford on St. Valentine's Day 1889. He was the second of three sons born to Jasper Patterson, a Scot from Edinburgh, and Harriet, nee Ashenhurst, who was from Clayton West, near Huddersfield. Jasper had worked his way up in the newspaper industry until he was managing director of the 'Daily Argus', one of three Bradford daily papers. The family occupied a substantial house in Cunliffe Villas, close to the modern site of Bradford Grammar. In 1907, Harriet died at the early age of 48.

All three Patterson boys attended Bradford Grammar, George from 1902 until 1905, between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. Art was his best subject, for which he received an 'Honourable mention' at the 1905 Speech Day, and his French was so bad that he dropped it for his final year. He twice skipped forms, but it is telling that although a journalist's son, he came 30th of 31 in English (unlike his elder brother John who became a journalist). When he left school he worked as a commercial traveller for a paper merchant.

George was a single man when war broke out and it is not clear when he made the decision to enlist. John volunteered for the Royal Engineers shortly after hostilities began and served as a motor-cycle despatch rider on the Western Front. George seems to have applied directly for a commission—it is possible that he had some experience in the Territorial Force—and shortly after he received his commission in the King's Own Liverpool Regiment on 1st September 1915, he married. His bride was Ada Harriet Virr. She was four years older than him, and the daughter of a wool merchant from Eccleshill. George was posted to the 7th Battalion, which had landed in France in March 1915, and doubtless he expected soon to be posted overseas. In reality, it was only in late May 1916 that he joined them at the front. Shortly after George's disembarkation, his father received the news that his eldest son had been killed in a collision while on a mission at night.

The 7th Liverpool were not involved in the opening stages of the Somme offensive, and it was only in late July that they moved into the area. On 9th



August they were sent into the line to participate in XIII Corps' attack at Guillemont. The vivid account in the battalion War Diary describes the confusion and disorientation of attacking in a battlefield rendered featureless by relentless shellfire. Companies and platoons were isolated from supplies of water and ammunition, with no real idea of where the German positions were, and suffered badly from their own artillery. In five days the 7th Liverpool suffered 163 casualties. After a period in rest in early September they held the front between High Wood and Delville Wood, suffering another one hundred casualties. Then on the night of 23rd-24th September the 7th Battalion took over the front at Flers, in order to take part in the general attack ordered for the 25th. The three Liverpool battalions of 165th Infantry Brigade succeeded in taking Goat and Gird Trenches. In achieving this success, 7th Liverpool lost three officers killed in action, of whom Patterson was one, and eleven wounded. The chaplain to the battalion wrote to Ada Patterson that 'at midnight ... he [George] led his platoon in a magnificent attack on the Boches trenches. His company attained their objective and held it; but while they were holding it a shell came, and your husband was killed instantaneously.' He assured Ada that the burial place was registered, however George's grave was later lost so his name is on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing. Jasper had lost two of his three sons in a few weeks. George's widow Ada re-married in 1922, dying in 1976. George and Ada had no children.



Acknowledgements:

George Patterson's photo comes from the O.B.A. Roll of Honour, with thanks. The family history has already been published in the biography for his elder brother, John Ewart Patterson (died 3rd June 1916). His school record is from the B.G.S. Annual Reports published midsummer 1903, 1904 and 1905. I have still to consult George's Officer File WO 374/52665. For his commission, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/29295/page/9099/data.pdf> 14th Sept 1915, accessed 13-9-2016. The World War One index at Bradford Local Studies Library was helpful in finding the references to George's death in the Bradford Weekly Telegraph (6-10 and 13-10-16). I have found Chris McCarthy, The Somme. The Day-by-Day Account (London, 1993) of great assistance. The 1st-7th Battalion King's Own Liverpool Regiment War Diary was accessed using Ancestry.com.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper, September 2016
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