

GEORGE NORMAN TAPP



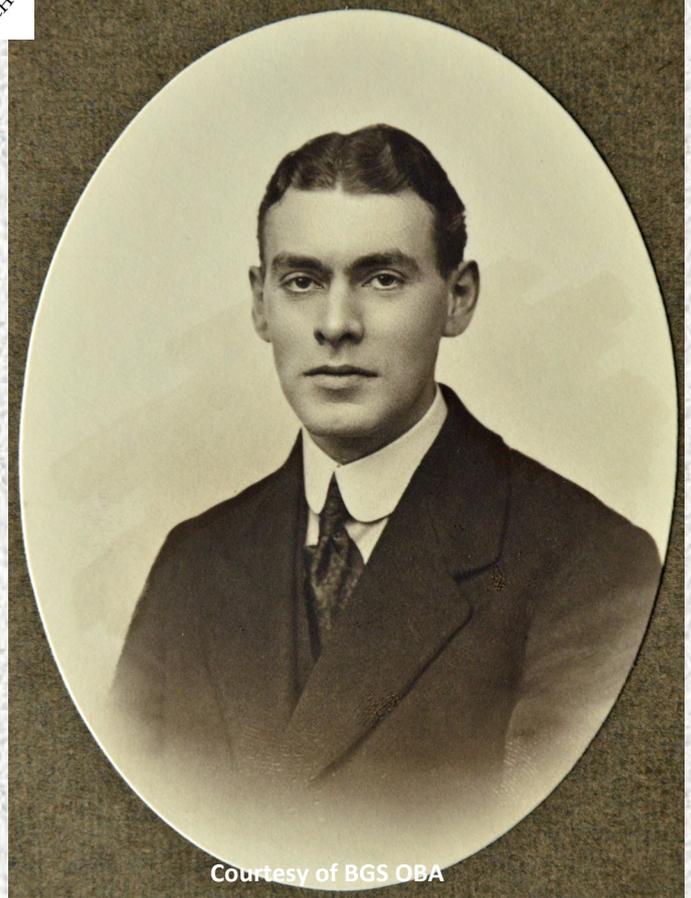
28th March 1916

1887-1916 Aged 28

Second Lieutenant, 14th Battalion Cheshire Regiment, attached 2nd Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. George Norman Tapp was born in Bradford in 1887, the only son of Henry Dawes Tapp and Sarah Kate Onions. They also had a daughter, Frances Muriel. Henry and his younger brother Clement were printers and partners in Tapp and Toothill, a successful company of stationers, printers and office furnishers with a substantial print-works in Stanningley (now the site of a Morrisons), and shops in Bradford, Leeds, and London. Sarah was the daughter of an Independent Minister and eleven years older than Henry. She married in her mid-thirties after teaching at her mother's school for ladies. Norman attended Bradford Grammar School from 1897 until 1903, leaving aged fifteen. In his final year, he was in the Commercial and Civil Service Form, winning the Form Prize. His strengths were French, Science and Arithmetic (he came 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively).

After school, Norman joined the family firm and at the time of the 1911 census was managing the office furniture department. Doubtless in time he would have succeeded his father as managing director. By this time the family lived at Springfield Hall, Hightown, Liversedge. Norman was involved at the very beginning of the Boy Scout movement. Lieutenant-General Baden-Powell held his first camp on Brownsea Island, Dorset in 1907. In July that year, a lad named Harry Rayner from Hightown called on Norman, now 19, to request his help to found a Scout Patrol. Tapp also became scoutmaster of a second Patrol at Dewsbury. These provided opportunities for boys of diverse social and educational backgrounds.

When war broke out Tapp was quick to volunteer. Disappointed to be posted to the Army Service Corps, in September he transferred to the 'Leeds Pals', the 15th West Yorkshire Regiment. In December, while training at Colsterdale Camp, Ripon, he stepped on a broken bottle. Infection set in and he became dangerously ill, requiring treatment at the Royal Military Hospital, Beckett's Park, Leeds. In the era before anti-biotics, it was feared he would die, but he recovered and applied for a commission. Although lacking military training perhaps his scouting experience qualified him to be an officer. On 8th July 1915 he was appointed Second Lieutenant in the 14th Cheshire Regiment, a reserve battalion training at Rhyl in North Wales. Tapp was subsequently attached to the 2nd Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, and landed in France on 12th March



Courtesy of BGS OBA

1916. On 15th March, Tapp joined his battalion at Dernancourt, near the Somme front, and was posted to 'A' Company. His first taste of the trenches came two days later.

The 18th March was, according to the battalion War Diary, a *'Quiet day, except for the normal rifle grenades and the occasional "oil cans."* [discharged from German trench mortars] *At 10pm 2nd Lieut. G.N. Tapp was wounded in the foot by an "oil can". L/Cpl Sellars was badly wounded at the same time and ... died of wounds.'* Tapp's own letter home related, *'I was going along a trench with L/Cpl Sellars when an "Oil can", about a dozen yards in front of us, burst in the trench. These things are very big and travel slowly, so we saw it falling and had time to run back a few yards before throwing ourselves on our faces. Then the thing burst, and we were covered with earth and sandbags. Poor Sellars, being behind got the worst of it ... It was sometime before I could extricate myself. There was nobody anywhere, about, and I dare not shout, lest the Germans might hear and knowing they had made a hit, send another one in the same place... so we had to wait until someone came, which they did after a time. They sent for a stretcher-bearer for Sellars, and helped me back to the dug out, where I found that a fragment had cut through the sole of my boot!'* Infection again set in and on 28th March Tapp died at 56th (South Midland) Casualty Clearing Station. He was buried at the St Pierre Cemetery, Amiens. The telegram announcing the news precipitated his mother's death. Henry sold up Springfield Hall and moved to East Keswick.



Acknowledgements:

There are two online biographies of Norman Tapp: <http://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/spenborough/branch-information/spenborough-roll-of-honour/world-war-one-1914-18-officers>, compiled by Charlie Turpin, and <http://www.leeds-pals.com/soldiers/george-norman-tapp>, by Stephen Wood. Neither is entirely accurate, but I have benefitted greatly from their work. For Tapp's work with the Boy Scouts, see also <https://www.facebook.com/SpnValleyDistrictScouts/photos/a.293218440804005.65784.293209787471537/568072166651963/?type=1&theater>, and for the origins of scouting, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scouting>. His last letter was published in the Yorkshire Observer for 31st March.

I used Ancestry.com to research the family history and Tapp's military service. At various times the family lived in Great Horton, Manningham and Liversedge. References to Tapp and Tootill can be found <http://photos.bradfordmuseums.org/view-item?i=53461&WINID=1457562814331>, <http://www.leodis.net/display.aspx?id=2403>, <http://www.leodis.net/display.aspx?resourceIdentifier=5106&DISPLAY=FULL&COMMENT=YES>. Their Bradford branches were on Charles St. and Market St. Following Henry's death in 1934, Clement became Managing Director, and was followed by his son Clement Charles Tapp. The company printed the Grattan catalogue in the 1970s but failed to adapt to changing technology so lost the contract. It filed for insolvency in 1998 (<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/notice/L-55056-309>).

For Tapp's school career, I am grateful to the School Archives for access to the 1903 Yearbook. The Bradfordian, July 1900, reports he won the Form I B Modern prize and the special History prizes.

The 2/KOYLI War Diary (WO-95-2402-1_1) was downloaded from the National Archives. I have not yet been able to consult Tapp's Officer's File (WO 339/34095).

The photo of Tapp is courtesy of BGS OBA.

Compiled by Nicholas Hooper, March 2016 (Nhooper1956@googlemail.com).