

# WILLIAM ARTHUR DAWSON



23rd July 1916

1891-1916 Age 25

## Lieutenant 7th Battalion (Service) Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

William Arthur Dawson was born in Bradford in 1891 to William Dawson and Fanny Rodgers. When they married both worked in the cloth industry. They had four children, of whom William was the youngest. His father was able to leave the wool industry and establish himself in business as an auctioneer and estate agent. The business must have been prosperous: in 1911, the family lived in a twelve room house in Manningham, with the company offices in the centre of Bradford's business district at Market Street. His eldest son, George Frederick, was a partner with his father in the business.

William went to Bradford Grammar School in 1903 when he was aged twelve. His first year was quite successful in Third Form Modern and he showed some aptitude in modern languages and in History. The next two years he spent in Fifth Modern Upper with much less success. He left when he was fifteen and went to work for his father and brother. When war broke out, William was an early recruit to the 1st Bradford 'Pals' in September 1914. He subsequently applied for a commission, which he received in April 1915 and he was posted to the 11th Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. This battalion did not see active service, and he was subsequently transferred to the 7th Battalion which he joined in France in April 1916.

Dawson's battalion was not in action on the disastrous 1st July, but the following day it was moved up to Ovillers where it lost 170 men over the next twelve days. After a week out of the line, when the men had baths and received an issue of clean clothes, carried out a practice assault and a route march, they were sent to the Bazentin Ridge. This had been seized by the British in a well-planned attack on 14th July, however initial success had not been followed up. On 21st July, the 7th battalion were told to hold one thousand yards of trench with



only 480 men, and then received orders that they would attack the German intermediate line near Bazentin-le-Petit at 12.30 a.m. on the 23rd. In the intervening twenty-four hours they lost a further 80 men to German shelling. The attack itself was a failure, with very few men able to get through the German wire and heavy losses caused by machine-gun fire. Losses for four days spent in the line amounted to eleven officers and 290 other ranks. Dawson was one of the officer casualties. He was initially reported to be 'wounded and missing', and only later was it confirmed that he had been killed in action. His body was identified and buried, and it now lies in Caterpillar Valley Cemetery.

For his parents, worse news was to follow: William's elder brother George was also killed in action during the Somme fighting, on 25th September, leaving a widow Edith.



### **Acknowledgements:**

The information concerning the Dawson family was researched using Ancestry.com. William Arthur Dawson's school years were researched in the Bradford Grammar School Annual Class Lists. The photo was published in the Bradford Daily and Weekly Telegraph (I am grateful to Tricia Platts for supplying this with the report that he was wounded and missing). The War Diary of the 7th Loyal North Lancs. is also available through Ancestry. The Graves Registration Report Form for W.A. Dawson (Commonwealth War Graves Commission) shows that his body was re-buried in Caterpillar Valley Cemetery after the war. He may originally have been in Martinpuich Road Cemetery, Bazentin (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/61400/CATERPILLAR%20VALLEY%20CEMETERY,%20LONGUEVAL>) which was concentrated to Caterpillar Valley after the war.

Compiled and composed by Nick Hooper, July 2016 (Nhooper1956@googlemail.com).