

WALTER KILSHAW NEWTON



31st March 1918

1896-1918 Aged 22



Second Lieutenant 10th Battalion (Service) West Yorkshire Regiment.

Walter was born on 3rd February 1896 at the Bavaria Hotel, Silver Street, Heaton, where his father Isaac was the publican. Both Isaac and Walter's mother Margaret (nee Kilshaw) were from Lancashire and had moved to Bradford where in 1891 Margaret was a domestic servant and Isaac worked in a silk mill. They married in 1894 and Walter was the first of their four children, one of whom died in childhood. Later Isaac took on the Mowbray Arms, Lily Street, Manningham where Walter lived while he attended Bradford Grammar School. He was in the Modern Forms for three years from 1909 until 1912, and he did well in Maths, French and German. He left school aged sixteen to be apprenticed to a wool merchant as a 'wool sorter and classer' (1911).

Walter was eighteen when war began, and it was not until 4th December 1915 that he attested for service when he was two months short of his twentieth birthday. His medical inspection shows he was a well-built young man for the time, around 5 feet 8 inches tall and weighing 147 lbs. He was called up on 12th March 1916 when he was posted to the 20th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment as Private 20/243—on 1st September under the re-organisation of training this became 89th Training Reserve Battalion and Walter's number 5/76135. In June he was appointed Lance Corporal, and then he was accepted for officer training. He reported to No.7 Officer Cadet Battalion at Fermoy near Cork on 4th November. He gave his father's occupation on his application as 'Hotel Proprietor' rather than the less socially acceptable occupation of 'publican'. He was commissioned into the Special Reserve on 1st March 1917.

Second Lieutenant Walter Newton went to France on 23rd April 1917. He served first with 17th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment (2nd Leeds), a 'Bantam' battalion formed of men under the regulation minimum height. During 1917 this unit

saw action during the Third Battle of Ypres, then it amalgamated with 15/West Yorkshire on 16th November. Newton was not mentioned in 17th battalion's war diary, and at some point he transferred to the 10/West Yorkshire. The earliest reference to him was on the night of 22nd/23rd January 1918 when he was wounded whilst part of a wiring party. The telegram informing his parents of his admission to First General Hospital at Etretat described the injury as 'severe gun shot wound right side'. He made a remarkably rapid recovery, was discharged to duty on 1st March and returned to the front on the 21st.

This was the day that the long-expected German Spring Offensive started. At first the 10/West Yorkshire held its ground south-west of Cambrai but was then ordered to withdraw to conform with the retreat of units on its flanks. As it fell back part of the battalion became separated and one party was overrun and Lieutenant Colonel Simner taken prisoner. Following a retirement of nearly 25 miles in seven days, the survivors of 10/West Yorkshire held the front at Bouzincourt (west of the old British front line of 1916) from 27th to 31st March. Newton was killed in action on their last day in the line. His body was not recovered for burial and his name is recorded among the missing on the Arras Memorial.



Acknowledgements:

Walter's photo is from the School memorial book courtesy of the O.B.A. and B.G.S. The family research was carried out through Ancestry.com. His time at B.G.S. is recorded in the Annual Reports for 1910-1912. The Bavaria Hotel is now a butchers while the Mowbray Arms is derelict. Newton's Medal Index Card records his service with 17/West Yorkshire and the date of entry to France. In his Service Record correspondence from his father also states he served with this battalion. His Officer Personal Record TNA WO339-76254 refers only to his service with 10/West Yorkshire. It includes copies of three telegrams sent to his parents. He was paid the Base allowance rate 23rd January until 20th March, then the Field rate 21st-31st March. Both battalion War Diaries are available on Ancestry.com. The telegram dated 26th January states he was wounded on 23rd January, while in the 10th Battalion War Diary names him in the entry for 22nd. Presumably he was wounded during the night. For the Training Reserve, <<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/regiments-and-corps/training-reserve/>> accessed 2-3-2018, and Tim Lynch, *They Did Not Grow Old. Teenage Conscripts on the Western Front 1918*, (Spellmount, Stroud, 2013), 90-2. For 17/West Yorks., <<http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/battalion.php?pid=5041>> accessed 2-3-2018. The route followed by 10/West Yorks in March can be followed starting with the trench map 1:20,000 Moeuvres, 3 Jan 1918 <<http://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=14&lat=50.1316&lon=3.0653&layers=101724045&b=3>>.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper in March 2018. For further information, contact Nhooper1956@googlemail.com, or see <<http://www.bradfordgrammar.com/former-pupils/bradford-grammar-school-in-ww1/>>.