

JAMES ERIC APPLEYARD



20th July 1918

1895-1918 Aged 23

Acting Captain, M.C., 8th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment (T.F.).

The Appleyard family business in Pudsey was the manufacture of sizing, grease and soap from boiling animal carcasses. James Eric Appleyard's parents James Appleyard and Frances Annie Hainsworth had seven children, of whom three survived infancy. James Eric was born in Pudsey on 2nd March 1895, the second surviving child. He attended the Bradford Grammar School from the start of 1905 where he did well in the Modern forms. In September 1908 he moved to Giggleswick School, where he was in Shute House, for his final year of school. He and his elder brother Oliver, also an O.B., joined their father in the family business. They were the fourth generation of the family known to have been in this business. Although the family lived in Pudsey, James joined several former pupils of B.G.S. as members of Horton (later Bradford) rugby union club.

James was nineteen when the war began. He joined the Leeds University Officer Training Corps before the end of 1914 and in March he was gazetted Second Lieutenant in the 1/8th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment, the Leeds Rifles. He joined the battalion on active service in the Ypres Salient in September 1915 and served continuously until July 1917. In 1916 he was promoted to Acting Captain and served as a company commander. On 21st July he was affected by the German bombardment of Nieuport, in Belgium, with mustard gas shells. He went on 'special leave' to England for fourteen days on 23rd July, but did not return to his unit until the end of October with a draft of 101 recovered men. In mid-November he was again gassed when his battalion was in a support position in the Ypres Salient. He recuperated in Lady Carnarvon's Hospital for Officers in London, and during his absence on 1st February 1918 his battalion was amalgamated with the 2/8th Battalion and so became part of 62nd Division. The date of his return is not known, however by July he was in command of 'B' Company.

At 3 a.m. on 15th July 1918 the 62nd Division were transferred by rail, bus and finally on foot to the French sector on the River Marne. They were to participate in Marshal Foch's counter-attack which



marked the turning of the tide in 1918 and commenced on 18th July. This was an international battle, with French soldiers supported by American and Italian as well as British divisions. On 20th July the 8th and 2/5th West Yorkshire were to advance along the wooded slope on the right bank of the River Ardre, with Appleyard's company on the left front. They only reached their starting position just before zero hour at 8 a.m. after what has been described as a 'nightmare journey of ever narrowing roads and track ways with guides who had no idea of the destination.' Not only was the ground entirely unfamiliar to the officers, and their maps decades out of date, but so obscure was the position that the barrage fired by French and Italian gunners was one thousand yards ahead of the attackers' believed position. Finally the German defences consisted of mutually supporting machine-gun posts which were in depth, well dug and camouflaged. As the West Yorkshire battalions advanced they came under fire from both sides and the front. Within an hour the advance was held up. Appleyard was one of eight officers killed, and the battalion's casualties were in excess of 300. Appleyard was awarded the M.C. at some point, although when and what for remains to be discovered. He was buried in the C.W.G.C cemetery south of Marfaux, which perhaps is located where the greatest density of bodies was. Whether he succeeded in advancing that far is not known. He is remembered on the memorial at Farsley.

Old Bradfordians—'We will remember them'



Acknowledgements:

The photo of James Appleyard was published in the *Yorkshire Rugby Football Union Commemoration Book 1914-19 and Official Handbook. Season 1919-20*. Family research was carried out using Ancestry.com. His years at B.G.S. are recorded in the Annual Reports for 1906-08; or his year at Giggleswick, there is very limited information at <<http://www.giggleswick.org.uk/Alumni-Publications>>. I searched newspaper entries using Findmypast.co.uk, and the *London Gazette*. There is a brief biography at <<http://westernfrontassociation.com/great-war-people/memorials/1646-the-university-of-leeds-otc-and-roll-of-honour.html>> accessed 23-6-2015, superseded by this account. Appleyard's appointment as Second Lieutenant dated 25th January was cancelled on 5th February, and he was gazetted on 23rd March 1915 (references from *The London Gazette*). He is not listed as a Horton/Bradford player in the team lists of 14 March and 3 October 1914, but is listed in the club roll of honour (above).

No Officer Personal Record for James Appleyard is listed in T.N.A. His war service was researched using (1) the War Diary for 1/8th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment up to the end of December 1917 (T.N.A. Piece 2795/1; the battalion was amalgamated with 2/8th Battalion on 31-1-1918 and so became part of 185th Brigade, 62nd Division); (2) the War Diary for 8th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment from 1st February 1918 (T.N.A. 3083/1). Both war diaries were read through Ancestry.com. My understanding of the operation at Marfaux was enlightened through reading Fraser Skirrow, *Massacre on the Marne. The Life & Death of the 2/5th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment in the Great War* (Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2007), 187-202, and hearing his talks at W.F.A. York Branch and Bradford W.W.1 Group meetings. He has been generous in sharing his knowledge. I visited the ground over which Appleyard and Kay attacked in 2015, and their graves. James is remembered on Farsley War Memorial.

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