

WALTER WRIGHT



14th September 1918

1899-1918 Aged 19

Private 80999 'A' Company 1-7th Battalion Durham Light Infantry (Pioneers).

Walter was born in East Bowling on 11th May 1899. His father Charles Edward Wright was a Bradford mill engineer, whose father had been a master millwright. His mother Sarah came from Darlington and worked in a Bradford mill when she met Charles. They married in 1885 and would have ten children together. She died in 1906. Walter was the seventh of nine surviving children. He went to Bradford Grammar School in September 1910, probably as a scholarship boy. He was a talented pupil: in 1912 he won the form prize for 4th Modern lower; at the end of his last year in 1914, he came first in German and Chemistry, second in Maths and Physics, and third in History, Geography and French. He left school when he was fourteen and when he enlisted he gave as his occupation 'Education Clerk'.

Walter attested shortly before his eighteenth birthday. His height was 5 feet 4 3/4 inches, and he was of slight build with a chest measurement of 22-24 inches. He was called up on 12th June 1917, as was usual one month after he was eighteen. He was posted to 258th Infantry Battalion in October, part of a Home Defence Division, and landed in France on 2nd April 1918. Although he was not yet nineteen, the great crisis caused by the German Spring Offensive caused the Government to lower the age for service overseas to eighteen and a half. He was immediately transferred to the Durham Light Infantry and posted to 1-7th Battalion, which he joined in the field on 5th April. This was a Pioneer battalion in 50th (Northumbrian) Division. Its usual tasks were building roads and light railways, digging trenches and making dugouts, but the men were trained to fight as infantry when the situation required. It had suffered very badly in the March attack, and Wright joined with a batch of replacements.



The 50th Division was one of those unfortunate units to find itself in the path of three German attacks in Spring 1918. On the third occasion in May it was under French command. From the 9th, half of 'A' Company was working on trenches and dugouts at Craonne, just north of the River Aisne. It was apparently still there on the 27th when the Germans launched Operation Blucher-Yorck, a devastating surprise attack which overwhelmed the British and French defences. Wright was taken prisoner moved back into Germany. British prisoners were used as workers by the German authorities, and owing to the privations Germany was suffering conditions for prisoners were not good. On 14th September Wright was in hospital at Worms, in the Ruhr, suffering from dysentery. He died at 11.30 in the morning and was buried there. His father and siblings did not learn of Walter's death until 18th December. We can only imagine that they must have felt relief when the Armistice was announced on 11th November, only to have their hopes dashed. Walter's elder brother Louis had enlisted in the Bradford Pals at the end of August 1914. He survived the war.

Old Bradfordians—'We will remember them'



Acknowledgements:

photo is from the School memorial book courtesy of the O.B.A. and B.G.S. The family was researched using Ancestry.com. His years at B.G.S. are recorded in the Annual Reports for

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper in .

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