

JASPER MACINTYRE WHITEHEAD



19th September 1918

1899-1918 Aged 19

Private GS/92287 London Regiment, posted 3rd (City of London) Battalion (Royal Fusiliers).

Jasper came from a wealthy textile machine manufacturing family and he was one of two sons to die in the First World War. He was born in Apperley Bridge on 15th May 1899, the sixth of seven children of John Henry and Sarah Whitehead. John was originally from Leeds where he followed his father into business. He married Sarah, who was from Glasgow, in 1891 or 1892. Their children were born over a period of thirteen years, so Jasper's elder brother was eleven years his senior.

Jasper was a pupil at Bradford Grammar School for four terms in 1913-14. He was in Forms 3rd and 4th Modern middle between the ages of fourteen and fifteen. He moved to Sedbergh School weeks after the First World War began and remained there until the end of the Summer Term 1917. He then became a cadet of the Royal Flying Corps O.T.C. hoping to become a pilot, but when he was finally rejected on medical grounds he was instead transferred to the London Regiment. Under the training system then in place he would have been called up in June 1917 one month after his eighteenth birthday. His four month period of basic training was undertaken in a Training Reserve Battalion, either a Young Soldier or Junior unit, before he was sent to a Graduated Battalion for further specialist training until he was old enough to serve overseas. When he enlisted the age at which conscript soldiers could be sent abroad was nineteen, but in April 1918 this was lowered by six months. In fact Jasper was sent to France in July of that year, by which time the Allies were about to go onto the offensive. After Battle Training at the Infantry Base Depot, Etaples, he was sent firstly to 19th Battalion London Regiment which was in a support line near the town of Albert in the Somme area. Only a week later he was posted to 3rd Battalion London Regiment, part of 58th (London) Division.



Whitehead joined this battalion on 7th August, on the eve of the Battle of Amiens. As 3/London was already moving into position to participate in the attack, it is probable that he remained in reserve with the 'Battle Surplus' and was one of the drafts totalling 435 Other Ranks who arrived between 12th and 21st August. In the month before his death Jasper was almost continuously in action. Commencing at 2.30 a.m. on 25th August, from a position near the River Somme, 3/London made eight attacks in twenty-three days and advanced nearly thirty miles. Battle losses of more than 90 killed and many more wounded necessitated the reduction of the battalion to two in place of the usual four companies. On 19th September No.1 Company was holding four posts near Epehy captured the previous day while No. 2 Company was in a railway cutting. Enemy shelling was heavy and Jasper was initially reported missing. His death was not confirmed until early December. He was He was nineteen years and four months old and was buried in Epehy Wood Cemetery. Almost exactly a year previously the family had received the news that his elder brother Captain John Walton Whitehead, who served with the West Riding Brigade Royal Field Artillery, had been killed in action near Passchendaele.

Old Bradfordians—'We will remember them'



Acknowledgements:

Jasper's photo is on the photo is from the Sedbergh School memorial website, <<http://pilgrimage.sedberghschool.org>>. The family was researched using Ancestry.com. I was unable to locate Sarah's maiden name—it was probably Walton, or perhaps Macintyre. Jasper's B.G.S. record is in the Annual Reports for 1913 and 1914. In 1911 his sister Stella married another O.B. who also lived in Apperley Bridge, Eric Walter Knowles who served in the 6th West Yorkshire. His sister Elise married Charles Vinter the son of another neighbour, the Headmaster of Woodhouse Grove School (my thanks to Tricia Platts for pointing this out to me).

For Jasper's military service, see *Bradford Weekly Telegraph* 6.12.1918 (consulted in Bradford Local Studies Library); *Soldiers Died in the Great War*; *UK Medal Award and Service Rolls*; *Medal Index Card*. The War Diary for 19/London (County of London) Btn (St Pancras), 141st Bde, 47th Div Piece 2738 and 3/(City of London) Royal Fusiliers, 173rd Bde, 58th Div Piece 3001, were read using Ancestry.com. For the training system in 1917-18 I used Tim Lynch, *They Did Not Grow Old* (Stroud, Spellmount; 1913), Chapters 6-8.

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