

HENRY GRATTAN



22nd September 1918

1899-1918 Aged 19

Private 57755, 2nd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment.

Henry Grattan was known as 'Hal', probably to distinguish him from his father with whom he shared his first name. Henry senior was from Bradford and was manager for a 'Dress Goods Manufacturer'. In 1898 he married Jeanie (Jane) Crawford, born in Huddersfield of Scots parentage. Hal was their first child, born on 27th June 1899 in Horton, Bradford. He was followed by a brother and a sister. Their father did very well in business. When he died in 1944 his effects were worth the equivalent of £1 million by today's values. However, no link with the modern Bradford mail order company of the same name has been discovered.

Hal Grattan was aged eleven when he started at Bradford Grammar School in 1910 in Second Modern. He joined the Officer Training Corps when it was formed in October 1914. His final year was in the Higher Commercial form and he came near the top in Accounting. He left school in July 1916 soon after he was seventeen. He gained a scholarship to Leeds University but was unable to take it up on account of the war. Hal knew he would be conscripted when he reached the age of eighteen years and one month, but he desired to be a pilot so he became a cadet in the Royal Flying Corps O.T.C. at Hastings. After he was finally rejected on medical grounds, Hal was transferred to the London Regiment for his basic and specialist training. In response to the crisis caused by the German Spring Offensive starting in late March 1918, the Government reduced the age for young soldiers to serve overseas to eighteen and a half. Hal was at once sent to France on 15th April where he was posted to 19th (St. Pancras) Battalion London Regiment. The photo shows him wearing the cap badge of this regiment. However, he was soon transferred to 'A' Company, 2nd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment, apparently in early May.



Hal's first months with 2/Worcesters passed fairly quietly in the Ypres area. At the end of August the battalion was bussed to a camp west of Arras, and then moved up to the old Somme battlefield where the British were driving the Germans back towards the Hindenburg Line. On 19th September the battalion hastily erected bivouacs in a field a few miles behind the front line. The weather was showery. The next day it moved into the reserve line, then on 22nd it entered the front line with orders to attack Limerick Post, north-east of Epehy, at 9.30 p.m. The battalion war diary relates that the companies were late in assembling and the attack was postponed until 5 a.m. the next day, when 'A & B Companies walked into their objective without opposition.' However, a detailed narrative of the operation in the Diary gives a different story. The attack was organized at very short notice and by 7 p.m. the night was 'thoroughly wet' and moonless. The guides got lost so the British barrage had already commenced to move forwards before the attackers were in position. As they advanced the German barrage fell upon them. Three men were killed and nineteen wounded. Hal Grattan must have been among the wounded. He was evacuated to a Casualty Clearing Station eight miles away at Lechelle. He died of his wounds and was buried there. The attack resumed at dawn on 23rd September and by 7 a.m. the position was taken.

Old Bradfordians—'We will remember them'



Acknowledgements:

Grattan's 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 1911 to 1916. In the 1944 grant of Probate Henry Grattan senior's effects were valued at £26439—I used <<https://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/bills/article-1633409/Historic-inflation-calculator-value-money-changed-1900.html>> to calculate the modern value.

I am very grateful to Bradford Local Studies Library for emailing me a scan of the death notice for Hal Grattan which appeared in *Bradford Weekly Telegraph* 11.10.1918—this is essential for his post school career.

I consulted the War Diary for 19th Battalion, London Regiment (St Pancras) using Ancestry.com (T.N.A. Piece 2738: 141 Infantry Brigade) and also for 2nd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment (Piece 2430/2: 2 Battalion Worcestershire Regiment). The places named in the narrative of the attack can be located on the trench map for 22.9.1918 available at:

<<http://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=14&lat=50.0707&lon=3.0246&layers=101465197>> squares X.19, 25, 20, 26, 21, 27.

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