

WILLIAM TITUS HALL



27th September 1918

1896-1918 Aged 21

Lieutenant, 75th Battalion (Mississauga Horse) Canadian Infantry.

William Hall was born in Guiseley on 5th December 1896. His father Fred Mitchell Hall was originally from Manningham, Bradford, where his father Titus worked for a cloth dyer. Fred and his brothers went into the same business. By 1901 he had moved to Guiseley, and a decade later he had his own cloth dyeing and finishing business in nearby Yeadon. In 1894 he married Mary Emily Lacey, who was originally from Peterborough, in Bradford. They had five children, twins Florence and Harry, William, Alice and Gordon. Harry and William both went to the Bradford Grammar School, the latter from 1908 to 1913. He was a clever boy, especially in Maths and Physics, and he completed his school career in Sixth Mathematical. In his final year William was described as a 'promising forward' in the Second Rugby XV and at 6 feet he would have towered over most of his contemporaries. He could doubtless have gone on to University—many of his classmates went to Oxford colleges—however, his father had already emigrated to Toronto, Ontario, Canada where he continued in the dye trade. His family followed him in 1913. Harry worked as a 'Textile Chemist' and William as a clerk, very likely for their father.

In Toronto both brothers served in the Active Militia but they only enlisted in the Canadian Army a year into the war. Harry joined first in July 1915, and William followed on 5th August. He was eighteen years and nine months old. He initially joined 84th Infantry Battalion, but soon he transferred to his brother's unit, 75th Battalion (nick-named the 'Jolly 75th'). They sailed for England at the end of March 1916 and disembarked in France in August. The battalion fought at the Somme in the same year, and at Vimy Ridge in April 1917. The brothers both served as signallers, a dangerous task which required men to brave shellfire in order to fix breaks



in the cables. Harry was awarded the Military Medal for his bravery and devotion to duty in November 1917 in the last stage of the battle for Passchendaele. William, promoted to Corporal in March 1917, avoided this ordeal as he was granted 14 days' leave in November. Then in May 1918 he was sent to England to train for a commission, which he received on 6th August.

Lieutenant William Hall rejoined 75th Canadian Infantry on 20th September 1918 as Signalling Officer. During that month the battalion had suffered heavily in the assault on the Drocourt-Queant Line east of Arras. Now they were poised to cross the Canal du Nord and to advance on Cambrai. This operation commenced at 5.20 a.m. on 27th September, and by evening the 75th had cleared Bourlon Wood and repulsed a German counter-attack. Hall's duties required him to be at Battalion H.Q. all day. He met his death when a piece of shell hit him in the back and killed him instantly. He was buried in Bourlon Wood Cemetery (Plot 1, Row A, Grave 14). Harry survived the war and returned home in 1919.



Acknowledgements:

Hall'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 1909-10 to 1913. The Rugby reference is in *The Bradfordian*, March 1913. Harry was at B.G.S. 1908-1911.

1921 Canadian Census gives the dates for the family's arrival in Canada. The brothers' occupations are from their Attestation forms. These and the full service records are available online: for William's service record, <<http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?op=pdf&app=CEF&id=B3954-S057>>; his circumstances of death <<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/mass-digitized-archives/circumstances-death-registers/Pages/item.aspx?PageID=911>>; newspaper cuttings relating to his service, <<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/596390?William%20Titus%20Hall>>. The 75th Battalion War Diary is available at <[http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/lac-bac/results/images?](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/lac-bac/results/images?mod-)

[ule=images&SortSpec=score+desc&Language=eng&ShowForm=hide&SearchIn_1=mikanNumber&SearchInText_1=2006069&Operator_1=AND&SearchIn_2=&SearchInText_2=&Operator_2=AND&SearchIn_3=&SearchInText_3=&Level=&MaterialDateOperator=after&MaterialDate=&DigitalImages=1&Source=&ResultCount=10](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/lac-bac/results/images?mod-ule=images&SortSpec=score+desc&Language=eng&ShowForm=hide&SearchIn_1=mikanNumber&SearchInText_1=2006069&Operator_1=AND&SearchIn_2=&SearchInText_2=&Operator_2=AND&SearchIn_3=&SearchInText_3=&Level=&MaterialDateOperator=after&MaterialDate=&DigitalImages=1&Source=&ResultCount=10)>. For the history of the battalion, I used <[https://ipfs.io/ipfs/QmXoypizjW3WknFiJnKLwHCnL72vedxjQkDDP1mXWo6uco/wiki/75th_Battalion_\(Mississauga\)%2C_CEF.html](https://ipfs.io/ipfs/QmXoypizjW3WknFiJnKLwHCnL72vedxjQkDDP1mXWo6uco/wiki/75th_Battalion_(Mississauga)%2C_CEF.html)> (accessed 5-6-2018); for its involvement at Vimy Ridge see P. Berton, *Vimy* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1987), 263; for the Crocourt-Queant Line attack, N. Christie, *For King and Empire. The Canadians at Arras and Drocourt-Queant Line August-September 1918* (CEF Books, Ontario, 1997), 20.

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/>>.

This photo (taken by the author) looking west from Bourlon Wood gives an idea of the dominant position it occupied—Canadian 4th Division advanced over this open country.

