

PHILIP SYDNEY SLICER



30th September 1918

1897-1918 Aged 21

**Lieutenant (Special Reserve), 319th Siege
Battery Royal Garrison Artillery.**

Philip was born in 1897 to Walter Slicer and his second wife Kate Gelder. Walter's father George kept the Queen's Head on Main Street in Bingley and also started a Wine and Spirit Merchant (in 1846). When he died Walter became the senior partner and it was said he was considered one of the best judges of wine in the north of England. In partnership with his brother William, Walter also produced mineral waters. In 1894 he took Kate, a dressmaker and the daughter of a Saltaire decorator, as his second wife. They had two sons, Walter and Philip, in addition to Walter's son George by his first marriage. When Walter died in 1901 after a short illness—according to his obituary he was in the prime of health—the wine and spirit branch of the family firm was closed and the stock auctioned off. It seems his widow Kate was not well provided for. In 1911 she lived with her two sisters, one of whom was head mistress of a church school, while she owned a laundry business with the other in Shipley. Her two boys were boarders at the Royal Masonic School in Hertfordshire, set up to care for the sons of needy masons.

Philip left the Masonic School at Easter 1914 and joined the Matriculation Form at Bradford Grammar School. In September of the same year he entered Form Sixth Mathematical. In the 1915-16 season he played rugby for the First XV, and he joined the O.T.C. when it was formed in November 1914. He showed 'much promise of capacity as a leader' according to the O.C. Lieutenant Wykes, and was promoted to Corporal and acting platoon Sergeant. He had the promise of a 'brilliant future', in the words of the *Yorkshire Post*, as he gained an open mathematical scholarship to Brasenose College, Oxford. He never took up this place as he joined the Royal Garrison Artillery as an officer cadet at the start of September 1916. Of the nine boys in his form in 1915-16, eight won places at Oxford or Cambridge. Of these seven served during the war, five in the R.G.A. (known as the 'slide-rule gunners' because of the need to apply mathematical knowledge to calculate ranges and bearings accurately), one in the field artillery, and one in the



infantry. Two were killed while a third died in 1923 as a consequence of being gassed in March 1918.

Philip was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on 20th December 1916. He was posted to 319th Siege Battery which was equipped with four 6" howitzers pulled by lorries. It went to France on 22nd May 1917 and saw action in the Kemmel area during the 3rd Battle of Ypres in later 1917 and again during the German Spring Offensive in April 1918. In June Philip was promoted to Lieutenant, but he was hospitalized by a bout of influenza. He rejoined his battery in time for its move south to support the Canadians during the Battle of Amiens in August. He enjoyed a week's leave in Paris before he returned to action on 23rd September. By this time 319th Siege Battery had moved to the north-west of St. Quentin. In late September the battery was heavily engaged in the preparation for the assault on the Hindenburg Line along the St. Quentin Canal. The assault was launched on 29th September. On the same day Slicer was hit in the neck by a shell fragment and was taken to 48th Casualty Clearing Station where he died of his wounds the following day. His battery commander wrote to Kate Slicer that 'He was one of my best subalterns ... as brave as a lion, and always quiet and unassuming, and was much loved by his brother officers.' She had already lost her other son, a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Warwickshires on 13th April.

Old Bradfordians—'We will remember them'



Acknowledgements:

Slicer'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 1914-1916, and *The Bradfordian* October 1915 and March 1916. The family history is filled out by articles in *Yorkshire Evening Post* (13.3.1901), *Bradford Observer* (16.3.1901), and *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* (21.9.1901). His Officer Personal Record is T.N.A. Wo-339-74708. For 319th Siege Battery, see <<https://www.greatwarforum.org/topic/236526-319th-siege-bty-rga/>>. The War Diary only covers the period May 1917-January 1918, so for 1918 I obtained the War Diary for 12th Brigade R.G.A. (of which it was part), T.N.A. WO-95-467-1. Slicer's wound is noted under 29th September. The Slicer family grave is at Bingley, see <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/46691>>. There are biographies for Walter Gordon and Philip Sydney Slicer at <<http://www.shipleyyw1.org.uk/mws%20slicer>>. All newspapers were accessed through findmypast.co.uk. All websites were accessed on 27.9.2018. Philip was buried at BRIE BRITISH CEM, FRANCE IV.C.5.

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