



7th October 1916

FRANK ROBERTSHAW

1892-1916 Aged 25

Corporal 29328 11th (Service) Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment.

Frank was the youngest son of Hillas and Catherine Robertshaw. Both were born in Bradford. Hillas served an apprenticeship as a letterpress printer and then worked for the rest of his life as a type-setter (compositor) for a printer. He married Catherine Elizabeth King, a dressmaker, in 1883. They had three sons, but Catherine died prematurely in 1895 aged only thirty-eight. Thereafter Hillas remained a widower and brought up his three sons. Frank was only four when his mother died. He attended Belle Vue School before he went to Bradford Grammar School in 1903 for three years, probably on a scholarship. His elder brothers had left the school by this time, although Walter was student-assistant in the Art Department for some of the time Frank was there. Like his brothers, Frank did well at Art and he was a competent student on the Modern side.

After he left school aged fifteen Frank became a clerk for James Drummond and Sons, worsted spinners and manufacturers. Their mill on Lumb Lane was only a short walk from Springfield Terrace where Frank lived with his father and their house-keeper, the elder sons having moved to London. Frank remained with Drummonds for ten years, until he enlisted on 8th May 1916. No service record survives for Frank, but the date makes it likely that he was a conscript who had resisted the recruiting campaigns for volunteers for the best part of two years. He was sent to France on 31st August, by which time he had received little more than his basic training. He was posted to the 11th Battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment. He was an Acting Corporal, in charge of a section of some ten men.



The 11th West Yorkshire was a Kitchener battalion which had originally been raised at York in October 1914. Although it was not in action on the 1st July 1916, on 4/5th and 10th July it lost sixteen officers and 350 other ranks in fighting south of La Boisselle. During August and September the battalion was moved north to a quiet sector to reorganize. Frank Robertshaw must have joined 11th West Yorkshire in September with a reinforcement draft, shortly before the battalion was moved back to the Somme. On 1st October it moved into trenches near Martinpuich, then moved up towards the front near Le Sars. It attacked the German trenches west of the village at 2.10 p.m. The battalion's War Diary reported 'objective gained and held. Losses heavy. 8 Officers and 217 O[ther] R[anks].'

Fifty-six of these casualties were killed, Frank among them. He was one of forty who have no known grave and whose names are recorded on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing. The loss of his youngest son may have been too much for Hillas to bear. He died in July 1917 at the relatively early age of 61.



Acknowledgements:

Frank's photo is from the School memorial book courtesy of the O.B.A. and B.G.S. It looks as if it was taken at the family home. The family was researched using Ancestry.com. His years at B.G.S. are recorded in the Annual Reports for 1904-1906. Evidence for his first school and employment comes from his death notice in the *Bradford Weekly Telegraph* 10.11.1916 (my thanks go to Bradford Local Studies Library for providing me with this). The same gives his enlistment date as '8th May last'. I take this to refer to 1916—the War Gratuity paid to his surviving brother, £4, shows he had not served many months when he was killed and certainly not since May 1915 (see <<https://wargratiuity.uk/war-gratiuity-calculator/>>). The War Diary for 11/West Yorks is T.N.A. WO 95/2184/4, read through <Ancestry.co.uk>. The figures for the battalion's dead were calculated using <cwgc.org/find-war-dead.aspx>.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper in October 1918. For further information, contact Nhooper1956@googlemail.com, or see <<http://www.bradfordgrammar.com/former-pupils/bradford-grammar-school-in-ww1/>>.