

NORMAN CROWTHER



14th October 1918

1891-1918 Aged 27

**Second Lieutenant 3rd (Special Reserve)
Battalion Cheshire Regiment attached 15th
(Suffolk Yeomanry) Battalion Suffolk
Regiment.**

Norman Crowther's name is not on the School War Memorial, nor did he give the Bradford Grammar School give as his place of education. Why, then, are we commemorating him today? *The Bradfordian* for April 1919 recorded the death of Lieutenant Norman Crowther, O.B. 1902-1908, and the school records illustrate his time at the school. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records only one officer of that name who died, so I am persuaded that we should commemorate him as an Old Bradfordian.

He was born in Rastrick, near Brighouse on 13th March 1891. He was the second child and only son of Arthur Crowther, a woollen mill manager, and Mary Catherine nee Aspinall, daughter of a Keighley bank manager. The family lived in Rastrick until at least 1902, and by 1910 they were at Hall Royd in Shipley. Their home between these dates has not been identified. These dates bracket the years Norman Crowther was at Bradford Grammar School. However, in his officer application Norman stated that he was educated at Pannal Ash College, near Harrogate, as at least one other O.B. was. No records from this school seems to survive, and it ceased to function by the time of the Second World War. Norman Crowther's record at Bradford Grammar School was a good one. He started in Second Modern Upper in 1902 where his impressive results saw him promoted direct into Fifth Modern. He went into Remove Science and Mathematics in 1905 and then Sixth Maths in 1907. In his final year he gained Higher Certificate passes in four subjects including Additional Maths with special mention in Trigonometry, Statics and Dynamics. If the editor of *The Bradfordian* was correct in identifying this student with the officer killed in 1918, then he left B.G.S. when he was seventeen and went to Pannal Ash College. If this is correct we can only speculate as to why his time at Bradford was ignored.

When he left Pannal Ash College Norman entered the banking profession. It is likely that his grandfather had something to do with this. At the time war



broke out in 1914 he had what was described as 'a good position' at the principal office of the National and Provincial Bank of England in Leeds. His family moved to Grassington in 1915, where his sister Gladys had married a local man. He attested for military service under Lord Derby's scheme on 25th November 1915 and stated that he wished to serve with 'The Buffs', the East Kent Regiment. In April 1916 he was mobilized and posted to 'D' Company 2nd-5th Battalion at Ashford. This unit served in the U.K., so in November Norman applied for officer training. He was finally posted to No.1 Officer Cadet Battalion at Newton Ferrers in Devon. He was commissioned into the Cheshire Regiment on 9th September 1917 and sent to Egypt at the start of November. On arrival he was posted to 15th Battalion Suffolk Regiment, a dismounted Yeomanry regiment, and took part in the Palestine expedition. However, owing to a perineal abscess he was in hospital when Allenby entered Jerusalem.

In May Norman's battalion was sent to the Western Front. After fighting near the River Lys and then the Somme, in late September he was granted a two week home leave before returning on 12th October. His battalion was south-west of Lille in front of the village of Fournes. Norman Crowther was killed in the early hours of 14th by a shell which killed him and his runner while they were sheltering in a shell-hole, burying them. They were originally buried nearby, side by side, then their remains were moved to Aubers Ridge Cemetery.

Old Bradfordians—'We will remember them'



Acknowledgements:

The possibility exists that *The Bradfordian's* editor made a mistaken identification, or equally that his identification was correct. The image of Norman Crowther is from *Craven's Part in the Great War*, compiled and edited John T. Clayton (Skipton, 1919), 73. This souvenir book presented to those who served and the families of the dead is most conveniently consulted online, for Crowther at <<http://www.cpgw.org.uk/soldier-records/norman-crowther/>> where other sources are also assembled. Further research was carried out using Ancestry.co.uk. The West Yorkshire Electoral Records record Arthur Crowther's residences. Norman's Officer Personal Record is T.N.A. WO 339-91744. Norman stated his education was at Pannal Ash College on page 24. For 'Norman Crowther's' years at B.G.S., see the Annual Reports for 1903-1908. *The Bradfordians* December 1904 record he was a debater, and April 1905 a member of the 'Societe de Discussion.' *The Bradfordian* April 1919, vol. xxiii No. 133, 9, records his death and B.G.S. years.

The History of the Suffolk Regiment 1914-1927, by Lieut.-Colonel C.C.R. Murphy. (Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers) Ltd.) and the *Craven Herald* described Norman's death (both on CPGW above). The battalion War Diary is not available and the 230th Infantry Brigade War Diary lacks relevant detail (T.N.A. WO 95/3153/3). For his exhumation and re-burial, see <<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/303301/crowther,-norman/#&gid=null&pid=1>>. The Pannal Ash College war memorial can be viewed at <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/67514>>.

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