

ARTHUR BARKER



20th December 1918

1891-1918 Aged 27

**Second Lieutenant, 150th (Rotherham)
Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery.**

Arthur Barker was a talented student of Classics who had a successful career as a teacher before him when he died. He was born on 12th July 1891, the only child of Abraham Barker, an elementary schoolteacher from Todmorden, and Mary Hannah Howe of Rochdale. They met and married in Rochdale in 1889, and shortly after they moved to the Bowling area of Bradford. Over the next twenty years Abraham gained promotion to Assistant Superintendent of the City's Board schools and then Superintendent of the evening schools. They lived at 19 Burnett Avenue, in Marshfield. Arthur went to the Bradford Grammar School in September 1903 when he was twelve. At the end of his first year he won the form prize for Second Classical and was promoted direct to Fifth Classical. In Sixth Classical for four years he generally came top in Latin, Greek, French and different areas of history. He passed Higher Certificates with distinctions in four subjects and won a clutch of prizes including the Forster History Prize. He was awarded an Open Classical Scholarship to Corpus Christi College, Oxford and went up in 1910. There he achieved a 1st in Mods in 1912, and a 2nd in Literae Humaniores in 1914. He was also in the University Officer Training Corps.

Arthur had decided he would teach and he passed the Oxford Diploma in Education with a distinction. His college record described him as 'a firm believer in the educational value of the Classics and a good representative of the modern school in his method of teaching.' After a brief spell at Whitgift Grammar School, Croydon, in September 1915 he was appointed Sixth Form Master at Llandoverly College. Although he was of slight build, standing less than five feet three inches and weighing below nine stones, he played as a forward in a match against the 1st XV in 1916, making a try-saving tackle. He revived the Debating Society which had been in decline, and he helped the Dramatic Society mount the first production in six years. His performance as the Judge in the trial scene from *Pickwick Papers* was reckoned 'very amusing.' Arthur attested for military service in December 1915 but he was not called up until June 1917 and was posted as an artillery driver to Woolwich. Almost at once he applied for officer training and at the end of



November 1917 he went to the Royal Artillery Cadet School at Exeter. He was commissioned Second Lieutenant in the Royal Garrison Artillery in May 1918 and in September was posted to 150th Heavy Battery, which operated 60-pounder guns. He arrived in time to take part in Second Army's advance from Ypres which commenced on 28th September. When the armistice was signed on 11th November his battery formed part of the Army of Occupation which held bridgeheads over the River Rhine to ensure that Germany observed whatever peace terms ensued.

On the night of 18th December, Barker was Orderly Officer at Schlebusch Camp, north-east of Cologne. At about 10 p.m. he was talking to some gunners by the Guard Room. The Lance-Bombardier in command of the guard was drying a borrowed rifle when it went off, shooting Arthur in the leg. He exclaimed, 'My revolver', thinking it had discharged. He was taken to 64th Casualty Clearing Station suffering from a compound fracture to the right thigh. A telegram his parents received on 21st announced he was in a dangerous condition, followed by another announcing he had died on 20th December. A soldier who witnessed the incident testified that the rifle's safety catch was not on, but the culprit's word that he did not know the safety catch was defective was accepted. Barker's death was recorded as 'accidental' and no court of inquiry was held. He was buried in Cologne Southern Cemetery.

Old Bradfordians—'We will remember them'



Acknowledgements:

Barker's photo is from the School memorial book courtesy of the O.B.A. and B.G.S. The family was researched using Ancestry.co.uk. His years at B.G.S. are recorded in the Annual Reports for 1904-1910

Barker's family history was traced through census records on Ancestry. There are references to his school career in *The Bradfordian* 1908-10. For his time as a 'Corpuscle', see <<http://www.ccc.ox.ac.uk/Roll-of-Honour-1914-1918/>> and Harriet Fisher, 'Corpuscle Casualties from the First World War', *The Pelican Record*, L (December 2014), p. 36 (<<https://www.ccc.ox.ac.uk/data/uploads/pelicanrecord/CCC%20Pelican%202014.pdf>>). Mike Powell, Llandoverly College Librarian, kindly supplied me with information about Barker's time there. Barker's Officer's file (T.N.A. WO339/115502) contains the witness statements concerning the circumstances of his death. On the strength of a letter from a fellow officer, Abraham Barker briefly held hopes that Arthur was still alive in Cologne. I am very grateful to Keith Roberts, O.B., for copying the file for me.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper in March 2015, revised November 2018. For further information, contact Nhooper1956@googlemail.com, or see <<http://www.bradfordgrammar.com/former-pupils/bradford-grammar-school-in-ww1/>>.