

# BEN ROY SUGDEN



30th December 1918

1897-1918 Aged 21

**Private 114187, 17th (Service) Battalion The King's Liverpool Regiment.**

Ben Roy was the younger of two sons of Herbert Edward Sugden and Ada née Scarth. Although both died as a result of serving their King and Country, neither would be named in the official lists published in 1921 entitled 'Soldiers died in the Great War'.

Herbert Sugden was the son of a corn miler and worsted spinner in Brighouse. In 1889 he opened a new spinning factory called Slead Mill, Brookfoot, near Brighouse. However he appears to have overreached himself and the company failed in 1893. In 1890 Herbert had married Ada Scarth, the daughter of a local farmer. They moved to a substantial house on Claremont in Great Horton, Bradford, and Herbert worked as a worsted yarn salesman, perhaps for W. Sugden and Co. of the nearby Aycliffe Mills. Herbert and Ada had four children, three of whom were born in Bradford. Ben Roy was born last on 29th March 1897. His brother Stanley started at the Bradford Grammar School in 1905, followed by Ben Roy in September 1906. Both went into the Classical forms when they moved into the Senior School. Ben Roy was a quite average student. He repeated Fifth Classical in 1913-14 and came near the top. He left in July 1914 with Lower Certificate first class passes in Latin, Greek and Additional Maths, and passes in French, Elementary Maths and History. This achievement was despite the death of his father in May. What he did next is not known, although it seems likely that he went into the wool trade, as Stanley had.

Whereas Stanley had joined the Old Boys Company ('H') of the Bradford Territorials (6th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment) in May 1914, there is no evidence that Ben Roy was keen to serve. He was seventeen when the war began, and if he was reticent to go the feeling may have been reinforced by Stanley's death from a strained heart in January 1915. Ben Roy joined the Army on 15th January 1916, and the date makes it likely that with conscription looming he decided to volunteer. The advantage of this would be that he had some choice in his unit. Ben Roy performed most of his service with the Territorials in the 2nd-1st Northern Cyclists Battalion. These cyclists were trained to act as mobile infantry, and for work on signals, scouting and other similar activities. As the crossed flags on



the left sleeve of Ben Roy's tunic shows, he was a signaller. His battalion spent the war in England on coastal defence duties, first at Skegness and later at Burton Constable as part of the Humber Garrison.

The 17th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment (17/ Liverpool), the first 'pals' battalion, was formed by Lord Derby. After heavy losses during the German Spring Offensive in 1918 it was reduced to a cadre and returned to Britain. However, it was decided to send it as part of 238th Brigade to join Elope Force at Archangel in north Russia, initially to safeguard coal and war materials the Allies had supplied to Russia. It not clear if Sugden volunteered for this task in September or his transfer was compulsory. The brigade sailed from Glasgow in October. The North Russia Expeditionary Force contained elements from Britain, France, Canada, U.S.A., Italy, Poland and Serbia. In December, in dense Taiga forest and sub-zero conditions some 100 miles south of Archangel, 17/Liverpool was involved in sharp skirmishes with the Red Army ('Bolos'). On 30th, 'D' Company attacked 'Bolo' trenches on the Tarasova-Kochmas road, one section advancing to within 80 yards of the objective before they fell back when the Russian Archangel Regiment refused to advance. Ben Roy was the only man of his battalion killed. His body was carried back by his comrades and was buried in the churchyard of Seletskoe. The grave is not recorded and his name is on the memorial in Archangel Allied Cemetery.

Old Bradfordians—'We will remember them'



### Acknowledgements:

Ben Roy's photo is from the School memorial book courtesy of the O.B.A. and B.G.S. I researched the family using Ancestry.co.uk and findmypast.co.uk. I have changed my interpretation of Herbert Edward Sugden's career since I composed the obituary for Stanley William Sugden in 2014. I have not been able to ascertain whether W. Sugden & Co. was originally founded by Herbert's father. For the failure of Herbert's mill, *Manchester Courier & Lancashire General Advertiser* 30.12.1893, also *An Illustrated Account of Halifax, Brighouse and District* (findmypast.co.uk).

Ben Roy's years at B.G.S. are recorded in the B.G.S. Annual Reports for 1906 to 1915 inclusive. His Lower Certificate passes were also published in *Shipley Times & Express* 4.9.1914. There is no Service Record for Ben Roy, but the entry for him in De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour (Ancestry.co.uk) supplies some evidence. The reasoning for my suggestion that he was a volunteer is (a) if he had attested under Lord Derby's Group System he would have been placed in Group 1 and mobilized on 28th March 1916; (2) his enlistment date was before the passing of the Military Service Act which introduced conscription (27th January) so he was not a conscript (for the arrangements for both systems, I am indebted to <<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/a-soldiers-life-1914-1918/enlisting-into-the-army/the-group-scheme-derby-scheme/>> and <<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/a-soldiers-life-1914-1918/enlisting-into-the-army/the-1916-military-service-act/procedure-for-call-up-under-the-military-service-act/>> both accessed 20.12.2018). For Northern Cyclist Battalion and 17th King's Liverpool I consulted <[www.longlongtrail.co.uk](http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk)> and <[www.greatwarforum.org](http://www.greatwarforum.org)>. I am extremely grateful to Carl Watts, Learning Officer at The Green Howards Museum who supplied me with information from Damien Wright, *Churchill's Secret War With Lenin*, (Helion, 2017), 162, and Appendix 1—Roll of Honour. For his burial and commemoration, see cwgc.org.

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