

DONALD SELWYN SUNDERLAND



11th November 1919

1899-1919 Aged 20

Private 60056 12/13th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers.

Donald Sunderland's death, a consequence of the wound he received during an attack on 8th October 1918, occurred exactly one year to the day after the First World War ended. He was born in Thornton, Bradford, on 14th January, the youngest of five children of Ezra and Annie Elizabeth (née Priestley). Ezra was a textile warehouseman, and later a clerk employed by Bradford Corporation Tramways. Education clearly mattered to the family. Unusually for the era, both daughters completed their secondary education while the eldest, Julia, attended university. All three sons studied at Bradford Grammar School - it is likely they were on scholarships, as around one-third of the pupils were at the time. Reginald, the eldest, qualified as a doctor at The London Hospital, while his brother Walter became a dental surgeon. Donald was at Bradford Grammar from 1910 until 1915, passing through the Classical forms before he completed his education in the Higher Commercial Form. He joined the Foreign Section of the London Joint City & Midland Bank in Bradford as a Bill Clerk. Although he had not represented the School at rugby, he was later listed as having been a member of the School rugby club, so perhaps joined the Old Boys' club. He was conscripted in March 1916 and posted to the Army Reserve. He was called up on 5th May 1917 aged 18 years and 3 months, and received his basic training in a number of Young Soldier and Graduated battalions of the Training Reserve, the last being affiliated to the Northumberland Fusiliers. On 17th January 1918, Donald arrived in France at the Overseas Base Depot at Étaples.

Donald's first postings were short-lived. The 24th/27th Northumberland Fusiliers was disbanded a few days after his arrival and he was transferred to the 8th Battalion. In March he was sent to the Field Ambulance suffering from scabies. This developed into trench fever and resulted in him being sent home to recover. He returned to France in September and on the 13th joined the 12th/13th Northumberland Fusiliers as one of a draft of 97 reinforcements. In the Autumn of 1918 the allies' counter-attack was gathering pace. Over a period of



three weeks, Donald was in action in three attacks and the Germans were driven back several miles. He received the wound which would cause his death in an attack on the village of Walincourt, south of Cambrai. He was struck in the thigh by a high explosive shell fragment which passed through his leg, although without breaking any bones. In this attack 27 men of his battalion were killed, 89 wounded and 24 were unaccounted for.

Following his wound, Donald passed down the casualty evacuation chain rapidly, reaching a base hospital at Boulogne the next day. At the end of October he was transferred to England, to hospitals in Eastbourne, Liverpool and finally Bradford War Hospital (St. Luke's). There his wound was cleaned of gangrene, a huge adherent scar was excised and a suture inserted. He was discharged at the end of May 1919 having spent eight months in hospital. Although his wound was declared healed by a Medical Board, his degree of disablement was put at 40% and he testified that he was unable to 'walk any distance or stand for any length of time.' Possibly his discharge was related to a desire to close the War Hospital, which occurred in July. Alas, the Medical Board's finding was wrong. His death on 11th November 1919 was attributed to his wound and to 'General Septicaemia'. He was buried in Scholemoor Cemetery. Both his brothers served in the war. Reggie was a Captain in the R.A.M.C. in 1918; Walter joined the infantry in the ranks in 1915, won the Military Medal, and was commissioned in the Royal Field Artillery. Both survived and after the war they had practices in Horton.

Old Bradfordians—'We will remember them'



Acknowledgements:

The photo is taken from <<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56795922/donald-s-sunderland>> (accessed 14.10.2019) where it was posted by Jennifer Hull, but no source was stated.

I researched the family using Ancestry.com and Findmypast.com. The brothers' years at B.G.S. are recorded in the Annual Reports for 1905 to 1915. The Bradford Roll of Honour has entries for all three. The Yorkshire R.F.U. Memorial Book numbers Donald among the fallen of the School. A detailed account of Donald's war-time experiences can be assembled from his Pension Record (Ancestry.co.uk, also Findmypast.co.uk). The ever useful website <www.longlongtrail.co.uk> was used to identify the various units and hospitals he passed through (I found particularly enlightening <<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/a-soldiers-life-1914-1918/training-to-be-a-soldier/syllabus-of-infantry-training/>>, accessed 15.10.2019). For the record of 12th/13th Northumberland Fusiliers from 13th September to 8th October I used the War Diary (T.N.A. WO 95/2155/3, available through Ancestry starting at <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/interactive/60779/43849_2155_2-00560?pid=622518&backurl=https://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DBST559%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D60779%26cp%3D0%26gskw%3D2155/3%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26uidh%3D6n6%26redir%3Dfalse%26msT%3D1%26gss%3Dangs-d%26pcat%3D39%26fh%3D4%26h%3D622518%26recoff%3D%26ml_rpos%3D5&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=BST559&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.114267598.835651270.1571162823-1710886313.1558974089#?imageld=43849_2155_3-00165>).

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper in October 2019. For further information, contact Nhooper1956@googlemail.com, or see <<http://www.bradfordgrammar.com/former-pupils/bradford-grammar-school-in-ww1/>>.