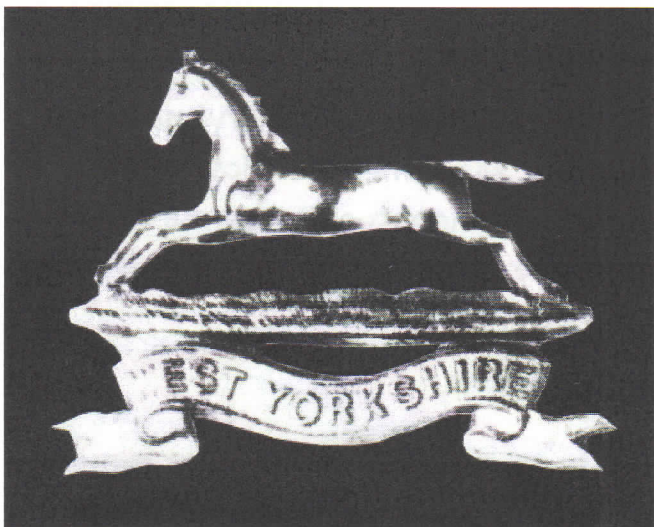


**Second Lieutenant**  
**Harold Colley**  
**18<sup>th</sup> Battalion West**  
**Yorkshire Regiment**  
**(Prince of Wales's Own)**  
**Died 1 July 1916**  
**Remembered with**  
**Honour on the Thiepval**  
**Memorial**



**Pre-war**

Harold Colley was born 3 March 1891. He lived at 879 Moor Park Terrace, Bradford. He was educated at Hanson School before achieving a BA Degree at Liverpool University.



According to a letter sent after the war by his father, Colley graduated in 1913 and was appointed as an English Lecturer to the University of Posen in Prussia (now the Polish city of Poznan).



University of Posen (Poznan)



His father explains that in June of 1914 he came home on vacation, intending to return for the new term in September. He apparently left all of his possessions in the care of "friendly Germans" but when war was declared he was unable to return; he was in fact dismissed by his Prussian employers.

Although keen to join the army circumstances led to a temporary appointment as Foreign Languages Master at Skipton Grammar School, where he replaced the French Master who had been called back to the French Army. Whilst there Colley was delegated by the West Riding County Council to teach the British Officers in camp there French and German.



Skipton Grammar School

### Second Lieutenant Colley

Colley was promised a commission himself and trained at the Inns of Court OTC in London before joining the 18<sup>th</sup> West Yorkshires (Bradford Pals) as Second Lieutenant. They were initially sent to Egypt but returned to France in 1916. His father believed that at this time he was promoted to Lieutenant and placed on the staff.

We also have evidence that Colley, in addition to being a Platoon commander, was also an Intelligence Officer. There is a

suggestion that in the build up to the Battle of the Somme, as a fluent German speaker he had been on night patrols, checking German lines and barbed wire. Harold Colley carried great responsibility in this role of Intelligence Officer and was expected to know the disposition of the enemy as well as his own men.

### Battle of the Somme

On the 1 July the advance made by the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> West Yorkshires was a difficult one. Initially they came under heavy machine gun fire but were then bombarded by heavy artillery and shrapnel. Many men were lost and casualties amongst officers were described as severe. It was at this point that Harold Colley went missing.

Horton, has been wounded in the neck and shoulder, and is in hospital at Birmingham. He was formerly employed as a conductor by the Bradford City Tramways.

COLLEY, Second-Lieutenant H., of the West Yorkshire Regiment, has been officially reported missing since July 1st. He is the son of Mr. W. H. Colley, the manager and secretary of J. M. Varey and Co., Ltd., wool comb manufacturers, Bradford. Lieutenant Colley was educated at Hanson School, Bradford, and at Liverpool University, where he took his B.A. degree. A fortnight before the war began he came to England for an extended holiday, and at the commencement of hostilities the Prussian Government promptly dismissed him from his post. Lieutenant Colley was then for a time at the Skipton Grammar School, whence he joined the Inns of Court Officers' Training Corps. His commission in one of the Bradford battalions is dated April, 1915. He is 25 years of age, and has acted as intelligence officer.

COCKITT, Private G., of 73, Copthorne Road, Great Horton, and of the 2nd "Pals" Battalion, has been wounded and is now in hospital.

COPLBY, Private A., 23, Tudor Street, of the

Bradford Telegraph: Notice of Harold Colley being missing.



In a letter from the West Yorkshire Regiment to his father dated 22 March 1917 he is informed that "In view of the lapse of time since anything has been heard of this Officer, his name is put forward for presumption of death."

### **Pals evidence**

According to information from other Bradford Pals there is no doubt that Colley was killed on 1 July. Private A Murphy of Lansdowne Place, Bradford stated that he saw Second Lieutenant Colley hit as they advanced and last saw him lying wounded in a shell hole. Whilst Private J Harrison describes how he and Corporal Amos found Harold Colley "lying on the top of a shell hole, bleeding badly in the back. He asked us for a drink of water, and asked us to carry him into our front line trench. We did and laid him against the side." When the two men later returned to the same place there was no sign of Harold Colley, causing them to conclude that he was either "blown to pieces or buried. They were bombing every inch of the trench, and I don't know how we got back ourselves."



The Battle of the Somme 1/7/16

### **Grieving family**

This information had clearly reached Colley's grieving parents. In a very moving letter dated 11 September 1916 Mr W H Colley wrote to the War Office;

*"Rt Hon Sir,*

*My son Sec-Lieutenant Harold Colley 18<sup>th</sup> West Yorks Regiment has been missing since July 1<sup>st</sup> and all I can ascertain is that he was apparently buried by a sheet in the then front line trench opposite Serre, where he was placed wounded for safety, the said trench being shortly afterwards flattened out.*

*Both his mother and myself are very anxious to know where he is approximately laid."*

The letter goes on to ask that a map be supplied which can show the spot where Harold Colley was buried. The parents were clearly anxious to honour the loss and memory of their son. His estate, according to an Extract from Probate of Will was worth £195 18s 9d to his father on 12 May 1917. His father attempted to retrieve Colley's pre-war possessions from the "friendly Germans" through the military authorities but was told that "there is no regulation under which the effects of your son, which were privately stored previous to the late war could be despatched home by the Military Authorities."

Harold Colley is honoured on the Thiepval Memorial (Pier 2 Face 2a) shown below:

BR ANNIGAN E. E.  
BURKE M.  
CAMPBELL R. A. R.  
\* COLLEY H.  
COY A. R.  
CROSLAND W. P.  
DAVISON C. W. J.



The Thiepval Memorial