

LEOPOLD CHARLES NATHAN



14th September 1916

1894-1916 Age 22



Second Lieutenant 8th (Service) Battalion Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment.

Leopold was the son of a German Jewish settler in Bradford in the 1860s, Bernhard Nathan from Magdeburg in Prussia. Bernhard was a cloth merchant, who became a partner in the company of Ferdinand Heilborn of East Parade, Bradford. He clearly intended to remain in Britain, becoming naturalized in 1868. In 1874 he married Helene Seeman, also from Germany, and they settled in Manningham where they lived for the next half century. Over a period of twenty years Bernhard and Helene had five children, of whom Leopold was the youngest and their third son born in 1894. It has been said that the 'Bradford Jews were noted for their assimilation and lack of religious life'. Both Bernhard's daughters married at St. Barnabas' Church, Heaton, while he joined the Freemasons, and was a member of two Bradford lodges.

Leopold was at Bradford Grammar School for ten years, commencing when he was nine. He was a talented student in a wide range of subjects, but it was in the Classics that he excelled. In his later years he played rugby at half-back for the First XV and he was a batsman in the First XI. He spent two years in Fifth Classical and three in 6th Classical before winning an Open Classical Scholarship to Trinity Hall, Cambridge in 1913. It is doubtless this that led the author of the 'Cambridge Letter' in The Bradfordian (March 1914) to write cryptically, 'Nathan tries to pass for a B.A. in his fifth year, but his fresh and innocent countenance belies his long gown and irreproachable square.'

It is likely that Leopold joined the O.T.C. at Cambridge, and during the Michaelmas Term 1914 he gave up his studies at Cambridge to obtain a commission. On 11th January 1915 he was gazetted as Second Lieutenant and was posted to the 10th Battalion Duke of Wellington's Regiment at Halifax. In August, Nathan was sent to France and subsequently was transferred to the 8th Battalion, joining them at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, on 6th October. He served there until the evacuation in December, and he was then in Egypt, until the 11th Northern

Division were transferred to France, arriving at Marseilles on 1st July 1916.

After a fortnight holding trenches near Arras, the 8th Battalion moved to the Somme where they prepared for an attack on 14th September. At 6.30 p.m. two companies each from 8th Duke of Wellington's and 9th West Yorkshire Regiments assaulted a German strongpoint called the 'Wonder Work' and a stretch of Hohenzollern Trench, south of Thiepval. The objectives were seized within ten minutes and the British dug in forty yards beyond. Communication trenches were immediately constructed back to the previous front line. The next day, German counter-attacks were beaten off suffering heavy losses. Although this was a complete, if limited, success it was at a price—the 8th Battalion lost eight officers and 250 other ranks killed and wounded. Among the former was Leopold Nathan. His body remained on the battlefield, over which there was further heavy fighting to come, so he has no known grave and his name is recorded on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing.

Although his son fell fighting for Britain, Bernhard was debarred from attending Masonic meetings from June 1915 until 1927 as he was of enemy country birth. He did not rejoin his lodge.



Acknowledgements:

Nathan's photo is from the O.B.A. Roll of Honour, with thanks. The backbone of this biography is from documents available on Ancestry.com (accessed 7/8-9-2016). The quotation regarding religious life is from 'A History of Jewish Bradford' (<http://bradfordjewish.org.uk/a-history-of-jewish-bradford/>, accessed 9-9-2016). For Nathan's school years I used the Annual Reports published by B.G.S. at Midsummer 1904-1913, and The Bradfordian for the years 1913-1915 (passim). The quotation is from vol. XVIII, No. 118 March 1914, p.24; his commission is at vol. XX, No. 121 March 1915, p.31 (see <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/29038/page/389/data.pdf>, accessed 7-9-2016). Leopold was initially posted to the 10th Battalion, raised for Kitchener's 3rd New Army, and went to France with them in August. He was subsequently posted to the 8th Battalion which had been at Gallipoli since 6th August (War Diary, http://interactive.ancestry.co.uk/60380/42871_625537_11836-00001?pid=33459&backurl=http://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DxBB1978%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26gss%3Dangs-c%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gskw%3D8th%2520battalion%2520Duke%2520of%2520Wellington%2527s%2520Regiment%26MSAV%3D1%26uidh%3D6n6%26pcat%3DUK_WAR_DIARIES%26h%3D33459%26db%3DUKWarDiaries%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D1&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=xBB1978&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true#?imageId=42871_625537_11836-00004 accessed 8-8-2016). The War Diary for 8th Battalion's service in France, WO 95/1809/1, was downloaded from the National Archives on 8-9-2016.

<http://bradfordjewish.org.uk/bradford-jewish-fallen-of-ww1/> (accessed 7-9-2016) gives Leopold's address as 'Oatefield, Bradford'. I suspect this is an error as he is likely to have resided still at the family home of 'Oakleigh', 4 Oak Avenue, Manningham—his regiment is also inaccurately given as 'West Riding Brigade'. The Ar

Neither of Leopold's elder brother, Julius Ernest and Paul Sigismund (Siegmund) Nathan is known to have served in the war. Bernhard was Master of the Lodge of Harmony in 1879, from 1915 Bernhard Nathan was subject to the provisions of the resolution passed by Grand Lodge on 2nd June, 1915, which stated that ".all Brethren of German, Austrian, Hungarian or Turkish birth, should not during the continuance of the War, attend any meeting of a Private Lodge, or any other Masonic Meeting." Brethren of Enemy Country Birth were permitted to re-join their Lodges from 1927 (subject to a unanimous vote) but Bernhard Nathan did not resume his membership of the Lodge (information courtesy of the Archivist at United Grand Lodge of England Museum and Archives, via Trevor Smith).

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper, September 2016 v.2 (Nhooper1956@googlemail.com).