

Bury Grammar School Centenary Roll of Honour
Private Herbert Bridge, 7th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire
Light Infantry, died 21st September 1917 aged 34



Bury Times

Herbert Bridge was born in Bury on 11th August 1883, the son of James Bridge and his wife Mary Hannah (nee Sedgwick). He came from a large, musical family. His uncle Henry Sedgwick (1853-1909) was for over twenty years a violinist with the Halle Orchestra in Manchester and played in the Liverpool Philharmonic until three months before his death. Herbert's brother Jack (John Sedgwick Jackson, born 1874) followed in his uncle's footsteps. At the age of 20, he became one of the first violins of the Halle and went on to be the leader of that prestigious orchestra. Brother Harry (born 1879) was also a violinist and conductor/director of the Bury Theatre Orchestra. As a boy, Herbert was a member of Parish Church Choir and he would also go on to pursue a musical career.

At the time of the 1891 Census, Mary Bridge and her eight children were living with her bachelor brother Alfred Sedgwick, a hairdresser, at 9 Haymarket Street, Bury. It is not clear what had become of her husband, James Bridge, at this time. Herbert joined Bury Grammar School in January 1895 and the admissions' register records that he left in July 1897 to work in his uncle's barber's shop. Herbert appears to have been the only one of the four Bridge brothers to attend the school. By this time, the family had moved with Alfred Sedgwick to 2 Georgiana Street, Bury, where they were also living when the 1901 Census was conducted. Father James Bridge had re-joined the family and Herbert was still working as a hairdresser's assistant.



Young Herbert Bridge

However, he was soon to begin a career as a double bass player, with 'Richter's Band' (led by the famous conductor Hans Richter), the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and the Torquay Municipal Band, with whom he played during summer seasons at the Devon resort. After living for several years in London, Herbert moved to Newcastle upon Tyne before the outbreak of the Great War. His father James Bridge died in 1906 and his mother Mary in October 1915.



Herbert's brother, the distinguished violinist John S. Bridge (circa 1918) and his mother Mary, who died in 1915

Enlisting in Newcastle, Herbert became 40790 Private H. Bridge, 7th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. In September 1917, this battalion, part of the 20th (Light) Division, was fighting in the Ypres Salient during the Battle of Passchendaele. Herbert's last letter home, to his sister Amy, has been preserved by the family:

40790 C. Co. 7th K.O.Y.L.I
19th Sept. 1917

Dear Amy,

Thanks very much indeed for parcel which was very good of you to send. I am sorry to say that I did not get it until yesterday the 19th., so you see it was spoiled. I can't tell you how much I was hurt to see it, the reason was I have been for 8 days where they can't get us parcels up, you will know where that is, and I did not come out again until the 18th., and I got your letter just before I went up, but never mind there are a lot of things much worse indeed that that out here. You see we do not often go in for so long and if you at any time would like to send me another one, I should just like you to send a cake or a bit of parkin, and then if it happens to be held up on the way it will not spoil. I got a parcel at the same post as yours from Sam, and it was in excellent condition, you see it had only been on the way 4 days when I got it.

I had a letter from Harry the other day [His brother, serving with the Machine Gun Corps], but I have not answered him yet, he says he is fairly well. I have no idea where he is, but I hope he is not in such a hot place as this, as we have been right in the thick of it lately, but I am more than pleased to say I have been very fortunate indeed so far, and I sincerely hope it will be God's will that I will come home again, at the end, which I sometimes think will be a long time off and then other times I can hardly see it lasting long, as there is some terrific hard fighting now, even now there was a big shell just gone over my head and bursted 100

yards further on, of course I take not a bit of notice of those things now, the night before they were bursting only a very few yards from me. I should like very much to have a tomorrow's Friday's paper, as I think there will be a bit of good news in.

I hope this war will soon be over and we can have peaceful times again, but I am in the same mind as Lloyd George we shall have to smash the Germans first, (and I can tell you they get something here our artillery is absolutely wonderful and terrible) before we have a lasting peace, and it would indeed be a sin if another Generation had to undergo such terrible times as these, so you see we must beat the Huns before we talk of peace, and I think it will be another winter first but I hope I am wrong, and it will finish before, as the winter is awful here.

I suppose you have been having some awful holiday weather this August, I had a letter from Florrie and Edna the other day and they told me about you having all been away to the seaside, and I hope you will have enjoyed yourselves and the change will have done you good, so I know you all worry a lot, but please don't because it is not a little bit of good worrying and whatever happens please don't worry, because it is not a bit of use making yourselves miserable. How is our Gertrude (another sister) going on? I hope she does not worry, but I am afraid she does, so you must tell her what I have told you: Don't.

How is James and Mr. Booth going on? I hope they are all well. I often think about James and John when we go on fatigue through the night with the R.E., they have a lot of dangerous work to do here. Have you heard from John lately, and how he is going on? I suppose the weather is the worst enemy where he is, but I hope he is going along alright. Well of course you know we can't say very much and I hope you will please excuse more just now and the awful writing, as I am writing under difficulties. Well I think I have told you all this time, and I hope you are all very well, and how is Bill going on with the piano? Is he any more fond of it yet?

Please give my very best wishes and kind regards to all, and to Arnold and Gertrude and Lennie when they come to see you.

Hoping these few lines will find you all happy and well.

I am, Amy,

Your affectionate brother,

Herbert'

On 21st September, the unit's War Diary records that the battalion was in camp at Hulls Farm on the Yser Canal: 'In readiness to move. Working parties provided during morning. Warning order received that Bn. might have to go into the line that night'. 61st Brigade War Diary confirms that 'large working parties provided by Brigade' and adds that '7th KOYLI suffered some casualties from long range shelling of their camp at Hulls Farm'. It seems unlikely that Herbert, who was reported missing, became a casualty in the camp and it is more probable that he was killed while a member of one of the working parties between Hulls Camp and the village of Langemark, which had been captured by the British the previous month. The 'Bury Times' reported that: 'Official news has been received by Mr. Sam Bridge of Sunny Green, Bolton Road Bury, that his brother, Private Herbert Bridge (formerly of Bury) who was serving in France with the K.O.Y.L.I. is reported missing from September 21st'.

Herbert Bridge's body was never found and he was later presumed dead. He is one of seven old boys of Bury Grammar School commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing. His brothers Harry, who served with the Machine Gun Corps and Sam, a Gunner in the Royal Artillery, survived the war.



The Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing bears the names of nearly 35,000 soldiers who died in the Ypres Salient but have no known graves.

Sources: Bury Grammar School Archives; UK Censuses; Soldiers Died in the Great War; Family sources via the Ancestry website; 'John S. Bridge, A Manchester Musician' by Stuart Scott (MusicWeb International website); Commonwealth War Graves Commission; War Diaries of 7th Battalion KOYLI and 61st Infantry Brigade; Contributors to the Great War Forum.

Written by M.J. Hone 2017