

Pte. N. T. Broadgate - The Lincolnshire Regiment

Our memorial records his name as 'N.T.Broadgate' but he is shown as 'E.T.Broadgate' in the records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and there is no doubt that he was Ernest Theodore Broadgate who was born in 1892, the son of Joseph and Lydia Broadgate in Kirton in Lindsey, Lincolnshire. His parents moved to Westcott shortly before the war and lived in Institute Road. He is also commemorated on the War Memorial at Kirton in Lindsey.

Although Ernest's parents were living in Westcott, he appears to have remained in Lincolnshire. He was working as a draughtsman when he enlisted at Lincoln on 2nd February 1915, in response to Lord Kitchener's famous 'Your Country Needs You' appeal for volunteers. There was a huge response to this appeal across the country and 'service battalions' were created in the infantry regiments to absorb the intake. In the north of England many of these were made up of men from the same town and became known as 'Pals' battalions' - Liverpool, Accrington, Bradford and Durham all had 'Pals' battalions. Ernest joined the 10th Battalion, The Lincolnshire Regiment; they were the unique exception to the 'Pals' rule and were known as 'The Grimsby Chums'

The huge flow of volunteers presented formidable problems. There were shortages of instructors, weapons and uniforms; recruits for some time had to train in their civilian clothes. Training and preparation took place through 1915 and eventually the new 'Kitchener's Army' went to France, initially for the so-called 'big push' in the Battle of the Somme which was to last from July to November 1916.

The battle started on 1st July 1916 and 'The Grimsby Chums' were in the first wave of the advance. Their objective was the village of La Boisselle. The German lines had been bombarded for a week beforehand and at 7.28 am a huge mine was detonated near the village to complete their destruction. The commanders were so confident of success that the troops were ordered to advance at walking pace across the open ground.

To avoid falling debris from the explosion of the mine, the Chums' advance was fatally delayed; this gave the Germans time to regain their positions. Their defences had not been destroyed; the Lincolns went forward into a hail of enemy fire and soon began to take heavy losses. Some reached the mine crater and beyond to the German trenches, but were too few in numbers to take them. Losses rose as further attacks failed and the

survivors, many wounded, lay in ‘no man’s land’ waiting for nightfall and the chance to crawl back to their lines.

The first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1st July 1916, was the worst day in the history of the British Army. The Army suffered 57,000 casualties; over 19000 died. Of the 10th Lincolns, only 2 officers and 100 men from the original 700 returned to answer the next roll-call. Ernest Broadgate was not among them. His name is carved on Pier and Face 1C of the Thiepval Memorial which commemorates the 72,000 men who fell in the battle and have no known grave. He is also remembered on his parents’ grave in Westcott churchyard. The mine crater, known as Lochnagar, remains preserved as a memorial to those who fell trying to capture La Boisselle.