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## Brasenose Sacrifice

(The following memoirs are reprinted, by kind permission of the Editor, from the *Oxford Magazine*.)

JOHN MARVIN PATON, Second-Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers (Signal Service) was killed on March 21, the first day of the great German offensive. He was elected to a Mathematical Scholarship at Brasenose in March 1917, and the impression given by his attractive personality and undoubted ability confirmed the high testimonials which he brought from Marlborough. He took a high place among those to whose share in the future developments of life in College we looked forward with the fullest confidence. A memoir of him written by his House Master for the *Marlburian* speaks of 'the quiet determination which brought him steadily to the front in House affairs, in which he showed the same conscientiousness and ability as House Prefect as in his own work. His charm of manner and keen sense of humour made him an ideal companion, and his influence was always for good.' The record of his School days is confirmed by letters from brother officers—one of whom describes him as 'the most lovable character I have ever met'. Marlborough and Brasenose are sharing in many sorrows, not only for others who have faithfully served them both, but specially at this moment for two whose work for Brasenose has ended before it had begun.

EDMUND HARTLEY joined the College in January 1914, and though he was here for only two Terms he looked back upon that time with great satisfaction and pleasure. More than two years afterwards he wrote: 'I shall never have happier days than my two Terms at B.N.C.', and 'I shall never forget that I am a Brasenose man'. He had, indeed, as was said of him at Harrow, 'the sense of local patriotism strongly developed'. This was to ripen

only too soon into the greater patriotism with which, when the War broke out, he at once devoted himself to the service of the country. Those who knew him well at Oxford will always think of him with sincere affection and regard. They will remember him as a man of most winning and affectionate disposition, mature for his age, and with a blitheness of spirit and a personal charm which one could not but feel in his society. Had he not come up in a bye-term he would have had more opportunity of showing what he could do in games, or in athletics, or on the river. He had a fine physique and was a keen climber, being a member of the British Fell and Rock Climbing Society and an enthusiastic lover of the Lake Mountains. After passing through Sandhurst he obtained in November 1914 a commission in the Lancashire Fusiliers. In April 1915 he went to the front, and was wounded seriously in the second battle of Ypres. On his recovery he returned to duty early in 1916, and went to France again in the following September. He was wounded a second time in the battle of the Somme in October. Returning to France in March 1917, he was wounded a third time and was laid up in London for some weeks, after which he went to a convalescent hospital at Windermere and was able after a time to enjoy his favourite sport of climbing. In September last he married. But in spite of all that he had gone through he was eager to rejoin his battalion, and at his own urgent request went out once more in February. He was killed instantaneously by a shell on May 18.

The following are testimonies of brother officers:—  
'He was a stout-hearted and most conscientious officer, and his loss will be deeply felt by all who really knew him.' 'He was very highly thought of, and his loss is also a deep blow to the battalion.' 'We all realize that the regiment has lost a very gallant soldier, and I know that he would ask no greater reward than that.'

His only brother, Christopher, who was a B.A. of Merton, was killed in action on September 1, 1917.



RONALD HENRY VENN CHESTER, Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force, was killed in July, in an accident at an aerodrome in Lincolnshire, where for nine months he had been acting as Instructor. In March 1917, just as he was on the point of entering the Air Force, he was elected from Merchant Taylors' School to the first of two Mathematical Scholarships at Brasenose, awarded to two most promising candidates, both of whom have now given their lives for their country. Chester's work in the Scholarship examination was strong and irresistible: his school record both in work and in games had been brilliant throughout. In the Air Force his character and his ability marked him out at once as a most capable instructor. He himself wished to go to the front, but his application was refused on the ground that no service to the country could be more valuable than that which he was rendering in instructing others. His death was the result of a pure accident which his skill and judgement just failed to avoid. His comrades and many friends from Merchant Taylors' gathered for his funeral with full military honours at Stamford, in ground which we may think of as no unfitting resting-place for a Scholar-elect of Brasenose.

Lieutenant ERIC ROBERT COATS, Scots Guards, came to Brasenose from Wellington in 1912. Before his time with us was finished the War came, and in the autumn of 1914 Coats took a commission in a territorial battalion of the Black Watch, with whom in July 1917 he went to France. He was, however, soon transferred to the Scots Guards, and with them he was fighting when he was killed in action on May 16 this year, in circumstances which prove his selfless gallantry. He was on patrol with six men when the party were suddenly fired upon and four men fell, one, a corporal, being badly wounded. The others returned to their own lines, but Eric refused to leave his wounded corporal. The search party sent out to find them failed, and it was not until August, when we advanced over our old ground, that his body

was found. Death, when it came, had manifestly been instantaneous.

Eric Coats was a good sportsman, a splendid shot, and a skilled fisherman, whether after salmon or trout. He played Lawn Tennis for the College, and was a really good golfer, though he never showed quite his best form at Oxford. He held the amateur record of the East Berkshire Links with a score of 71, only one stroke worse than the professional record; and he was never happier than when playing a round on the links he loved so well at Macrihanish.

But we remember him rather for himself than his games. The heir to great wealth he remained to the end quite unspoiled, and chose his friends without thought for their money or their birth. Casual and feckless, but indomitably gay, he sought for pleasure, and in seeking brought it not only to himself but to all amongst whom he moved. In Eric Coats the College has indeed lost a blithe spirit who amply played his part in making Brasenose the happy place it was before the War.

Captain ROLAND CHURCHILL LAYTON, whose death in action took place in Palestine on April 30, came to Brasenose in 1899, after being at Tonbridge School and at Felsted. He was, from the first, marked out for an active practical life rather than for academical surroundings, and the call of the South African War, after his first two years in College, afforded the first scope for this. In Africa he became senior Lieutenant of his regiment (Sherwood Rangers) and gained the King's Medal with four clasps. In 1903 he entered the Political Colonial Service, and served in Southern Nigeria for ten years, rising to be Deputy Commissioner.

The greater call in 1914, which was being answered by the men much younger than himself, found Layton's gallant and adventurous spirit unsated, and he promptly joined his old regiment in September of that year, being gazetted Captain a twelvemonth later. His first service was in Macedonia, where he commanded the first cavalry



patrol to enter Serbia. The last man to leave that country on the retreat, he was given, by the French Government, the Legion of Honour and the Croix de Guerre for his services. After a period in which he was invalided home with malarial fever, the summer of 1917 found him with his regiment in Egypt. Here he did some patrol work on the Canal, and shortly afterwards was sent to Palestine, where he took part in the capture of Beersheba and was killed in action at Es Salt.

Few men, even in these wonderful days, can show such a career of ceaseless effort and intrepid service. His energy and dash brought him the distinction of being appointed second in command of his regiment, and, as his brother officer writes, 'the regiment is poorer by the loss of one of its best officers'. Yet we at home are the richer by the memory of his dauntless record. Those who knew Layton here recognize the man when they read, in the same letter, that he died 'in front of his men, as he always was'.

JOHN ENDELL WANKLYN was educated at Christ's College, Christchurch, New Zealand, eventually becoming Prefect both in his house and in the school, in which he exerted a strong and healthy influence. A good athlete, he made his mark as a cricketer. He showed special promise in Mathematics, but he did well in other work also, and in December 1913 was elected to an Entrance Scholarship in the University of New Zealand. He came to Brasenose in October 1915, with the intention of ultimately entering the Indian Civil Service. Although he had slightly outgrown his strength and it might have been prudent to postpone military service to a later date, he was most eager to take his part in the War, and in January 1916 he obtained a commission in the R.F.A., having previously held a Sub-Lieutenant's commission in the New Zealand Territorials.

The College has no record of the date when he went to the front or of the details of his service. But he was in France at the beginning of this year, when he wrote in

answer to a Christmas greeting, saying that it was very cheering not to be forgotten and that he was looking forward to his return. Five months later he was severely wounded by a shell and died on May 29. The Military Cross had been conferred on him for his courage in removing a shell from a dump of ammunition, thereby preventing a serious explosion. The following testimonies will come home to those who knew him:—

‘He was a gallant, true, and reliable officer, in whom I had the greatest confidence, and he was very popular with his brother officers.’

‘He spread joy and gladness around him. . . . He knew what he risked, and he faced it cheerfully.’

GERALD NOLEKIN HORLICK came up to Brasenose from Eton in 1906; he only spent two years at Oxford, going down in 1908 without finishing his University course, but those two years he used to the full. He was an all-round sportsman, an excellent horseman, a keen and good man to hounds, and a first-rate motorist. Just before he came into residence he had a terrible motor accident which might have soured a less sweet-natured man; it had no effect on him; cheery, popular, with a host of friends, he found the world a pleasant place, and he did his best to make it so for others. Examinations had no place in his philosophy of life, and nothing could induce him to view them with becoming seriousness; those who remember him at College will think of him as one who drank the wine of Oxford life to the full and never abused it. When his two years were over, he turned his back on the *βίος ἀπολαυστικός*, and threw himself wholeheartedly into the family business at Slough (Horlick's Malted Milk), where he became Assistant Works Manager, being especially interested in the varied and complicated machinery.

With the same whole-heartedness he took up his work with his yeomanry, the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, and it was his devotion to duty which was one of the causes of his death. He was mobilized in August 1914,



and was away from England without home leave for three and a half years. At the outbreak of war he was a Lieutenant and machine gun officer. He was at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, and in all the Egyptian engagements and the Palestine Campaign, being twice mentioned in dispatches. After Gallipoli he was seconded to the Cavalry Machine Gun Corps, when he became O.C. of a squadron, with the rank of Major. His death was due to malaria. On Sunday, June 23, he was with his section in Palestine and had an exceptionally heavy day in that trying climate, rising at 4 o'clock and working continuously (mostly on horseback) until 5 p.m., when he rested for an hour. That night, his section being relieved from the front line, he was unable to get any rest, being on the march until 5 o'clock the next morning, when he slept until 9 o'clock (using his valise as a pillow) and woke feeling very queer. The next day, being very unwell, he left for Alexandria on leave; there he was transferred at once to hospital, where he passed away on Friday, July 5. 'It seems hard', as a brother officer writes, 'that he should die in this way after having gone through so many battles unhurt. It was devotion to duty that made him remain with his squadron in the Jordan Valley when he was not really fit to do so.' He proved himself, as one would expect, a most efficient officer and most popular with all ranks. Many testimonies have come of the esteem and affection in which he was held. 'Notwithstanding the trying climate and conditions which his section of our Army had to encounter in the various sectors he visited, he was always cheerful and at the same time thorough, true, straight, and fearless.' 'He was not only respected of all as a commanding officer, but also loved as a friend of everybody.' 'The memory of his personality and work during and before the War will long live in the hearts of those who are left behind to "carry on".'

The memory of his personality will long live too with those who knew and loved him at Brasenose.

Captain JAMES HILARY SPENCER, son of the Rev. Abraham Spencer, M.A., of Brasenose, late Vicar of St. James's, Accrington, matriculated as a Colquitt Exhibitioner in October 1913, from the King's School, Worcester. In the following Term he rowed in the First Torpid. When the War broke out he at once volunteered, and was gazetted to a commission in the Lancashire Fusiliers on August 15, 1914.

In August 1915 he sailed for the Dardanelles. From there he at first wrote most cheerfully, but subsequently suffered from illness so serious that his life was despaired of. In January 1916 he was in hospital at Malta, and he did not reach home till the following May. On recovery he returned to duty with his Reserve Battalion.

In December 1917 he went out to France, and on April 11 was wounded whilst leading his men to an attack, with the result that he was taken prisoner and was sent to Limburg an der Lahn, where he died on July 15. It is some slight comfort to be assured that he was well treated, and that the necessary operations on his fractured knee were skilfully performed.

His friends will remember him as a man beneath whose quiet demeanour lay a strength of character which must have shown itself in his military service, and would, they believe, have been manifested more and more in after life.

It is sad to record that his father had died on May 24, 1917, that one of his brothers was mortally wounded at Zeebrugge, and that his eldest brother is a prisoner of war in Germany.

Captain RICHARD JOCELYN HUNTER came up in October 1906. Like his father, Robert Lewin Hunter (at Brasenose 1870-3), and three of his brothers, he was educated at Winchester, where he was in Mr. A. K. Cook's house from 1899 to 1905. In the year's interval between school and College he had studied Law at Harvard. At Oxford he took a full share in the social and athletic side of



College life, rowing in the first Torpid and playing in the Cricket Eleven in each of his three years, and for the last two in the Association team also. He was a member of the Octagon, the Phoenix, and of Vincent's. But he did not allow any distraction to interfere with steady work, and at the end of his third year he obtained a Second Class in the Law School. In 1914 he became a partner in his father's firm (Messrs. Hunter & Haynes), for which his previous studies, his sound judgement, and his conscientious industry seemed to mark him out as especially well qualified. Soon after the outbreak of the War he rejoined the London Rifle Brigade in which he had previously served, and in April 1917 he went out to France. He was at first attached to the staff of the 52nd Division, but subsequently joined a battalion of the London Regiment attached to the 47th Division, of which Sir Douglas Haig wrote: 'It fought its way forward from Morlandcourt to St. Pierre Vaast Wood, which it cleared of the enemy, overcoming fierce hostile resistance.'

He was wounded on August 24 while gallantly leading his men into action, and died the next day. A brother officer writes: 'His death is very deeply regretted by all of his men who came through the battle, for he had set such a magnificent example which most certainly went a very long way towards ensuring the success which we achieved. Both in the trenches and when resting and training he always had the welfare of his men very much at heart. Nothing that he could do to help them or make their lot more comfortable in any way was ever too much trouble, and he was very much loved by all who served under him.'

Jock Hunter's death will be deeply felt also by very many, both schoolfellows and College friends. Reserved as he was perhaps at first acquaintance, he inspired absolute confidence and respect in all who were brought into contact with him, and warm affection in those who came to know him more intimately.

Captain ARTHUR LAURIE THOMAS, London Regiment, came up to Brasenose in October 1913 from St. Dunstan's College, Catford, as an Open Scholar. On August 5, 1914, he joined the Army, and was granted a commission at the end of that month. He went out with his battalion at the end of February in the following year, and after some experience of trench work he was invalided home with what turned out to be bad rheumatism. He was afterwards found to have spinal curvature, and left the Army. At the request of the O.C., however, he was subsequently allowed to rejoin for home service, and in this employment he spent nearly three years and was given command of a company. He edited the battalion magazine and was in charge of the social side of battalion life. In May of this year he was, to the general surprise, passed as fit for active service, and after a six weeks' course at Stafford, in which he earned great credit, he joined his first line battalion in France. He was killed on August 30 of this year in his first action. At College he played both in the football and cricket teams, and represented the University in Lacrosse. He was a man of considerable ability and wide interests, and seemed predestined to a distinguished career. He was deservedly popular for his goodness of heart and his winning manners, and would undoubtedly have taken an increasingly large and influential part in College life if he had been able to finish his University career.

Captain DONALD CLARK JOHNSTON came to Brasenose from Malvern, where he had been in the School O.T.C., in Michaelmas 1913. Immediately war broke out he applied for a commission, but as the War Office lost his application papers he did not receive it until October. With characteristic determination he had made the best use of the time given him by this delay, for he had joined the Inns of Court O.T.C., and we may perhaps attribute in some part to the valuable training which he got with that corps the rapidity with which he was promoted on joining his first regiment, the Bedfordshires. After six



weeks with them he was given his second star, three months later his captaincy, almost, if not quite, the first Brasenose man amongst the First Hundred Thousand to reach that rank. His Brasenose friends were almost as amused as they were delighted at his success, for 'Johnnie' looked very young even for his years, and it was difficult in those days to think of the gentle, placid boy they knew in command of hundreds of grown men. Finding his prospects of getting to the front with the Bedfords were not bright, Johnston applied for an exchange to the Queen's. He exchanged to them in Christmas 1915, and his heart's desire was gratified when with them he went to France on May 5, 1916. On September 15, he was wounded in the leg at the taking of Flers, where his battalion lost all its officers and three-quarters of its men. He had an operation, and there seemed but little prospect of his taking further active part in the War. But he would not be denied. He had already accepted a permanent commission in his Colonel's regiment, the Cameronians, and as soon as he was convalescent he was appointed as instructor of the 19th Officer Cadet Battalion at Pirbright. There he remained and won golden opinions, but he fretted at his comparative inaction, and in July last he asked once more to go into the fighting line. He had married in the preceding June. On August 2 he was severely wounded; after four operations his leg was amputated, but his life could not be saved, and after six weeks of dreadful pain, borne with heroic courage, he passed away in the presence of his mother and his wife on September 13. His Colonel in the Queen's wrote, on hearing of his death: 'I had the greatest admiration for him, and knew his worth and what a gallant hard-working officer he was—wise and able to take responsibility beyond his years—and I knew if he was spared he would have gone far. The Cameronians have lost a rare good officer.'

At the end of his one happy year at Brasenose, Johnston played cricket for the University in more than one match in 1914. Although as a freshman he did not

play against Cambridge, there can be little doubt that he would have won his 'blue' when he had gained experience; for it is many years since we have seen at Oxford a left-hander with so beautiful an action. There was, indeed, a certain inborn grace in all he did. Short though his time with us was, in that year he had endeared himself to every one who knew him. A sunny smile told of an equable and happy temperament which made friendship natural to him. A charming modesty of demeanour hid real strength of character, and, though he was the least self-assertive of men, he was full of determination. His was a life rich in promise; that promise has received its fulfilment in the heroic death which to our great grief has taken him from us before he had reached his twenty-fourth year.

ERIC HOWARD HARVEY came up in Michaelmas Term, 1913, at the age of twenty-three, with the object of taking Holy Orders, having left his school, Abingdon, five years before.

In August 1914 he enlisted in the Gloucestershire Regiment, but being wanted at home in consequence of a brother's death he left the Army in the following October. As soon as it was possible for him he rejoined, and was gazetted Second Lieutenant in his former regiment on October 14, 1915. Two days later he married. In July 1916 he went to France, and in the next month was awarded the Military Cross for his gallantry in leading a bombing attack against a trench held by forty of the enemy, driving them out and consolidating the captured trench. In the following November he was invalided with shell-shock and trench fever, and was not passed for general service till the end of September 1917. At the beginning of the present year he was with the Reserve Battalion in charge of the instruction in bombing.

Going out again in April he was wounded shortly after. He remained, however, in France, and on May 14 was gazetted Captain. He was killed in action on September 30.



His dauntless courage and the influence of his sterling goodness had made a deep impression on officers and men alike. It has been said of him that he was an ideal Company Commander.

But his heart was with the work to which he was looking forward. He was longing to return home and to prepare for Ordination. Whether he could come back here for a while he was uncertain, but anyhow, 'my short time at Oxford', he wrote, 'was full of happiness and the vision of it will always remain.'

PHILIP SYDNEY SLICER was elected from Bradford Grammar School to a Mathematical Scholarship at Brasenose in March 1916. He obtained a commission in the Royal Garrison Artillery and held the rank of Lieutenant at the time of his death from wounds received in action on September 30 of this year. At the time of the Scholarship Examination he showed great ability both in Mathematics and in other subjects. His career at school had been marked by strong character and exceptional public spirit and devotion to the welfare of all around him. He had wide intellectual interests and a keen appreciation of art and music. His career in the Army fulfilled the promise of his school days. His Commanding Officer writes: 'He was one of my best subalterns, and I have recommended him for the Military Cross. He was as brave as a lion and was much loved by his brother officers.' We had hoped that in the coming days we might have added something to these earlier records. We can only give them now their place of honour in the long roll of Oxford's sacrifice.

Captain WALLACE MORTIMER ROOKE, who died of pneumonia contracted whilst on active service, on October 8, came to Brasenose in 1908, having been previously at Marlborough. He left in 1911 after taking Honours in the Law School. Articled during the next three years to a solicitor in Bath, he had just completed his articles when

the War broke out. Having received a commission in the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry in 1911, he was at once called up and volunteered for foreign service, but was unable to go to the front until about two years ago, when he was attached to the 2nd Battalion of the Wiltshire Regiment in France, at first as signalling officer. He had been gazetted captain in June 1916, and, being a very good rider and horseman, was asked to undertake the regimental transport.

In this he proved to be so efficient that he never failed in bringing up rations and supplies to the battalion, however great the difficulties might be, always leading the column and showing great coolness and bravery. He was mentioned in dispatches, and was spoken of as 'the best transport officer in the whole of France'. He was with the regiment in all their actions from the time when he joined them, and was beloved both by officers and men, the latter saying that they would follow him anywhere, and bearing testimony to his exceptional efficiency and splendid courage. Captain Rooke was one of those quiet men, whose force of character and devotion to duty on the highest grounds has been fully revealed by the stress of war.

Lieutenant WILLIAM BANNISTER AUGUSTUS PICKOP, second son of the Rev. Canon Pickop, Winter Hall, Blackburn, was accepted for matriculation at Brasenose in 1915; but on leaving Bradfield College in that year he went to Sandhurst and obtained a commission in the Royal Fusiliers. Last summer he was wounded in the foot, but not severely, and he was looking forward to the time when he would be able to leave the Army and come up to the University. On October 24, as he was leading his men in an engagement near Valenciennes, he was mortally wounded, and died on the same day.

He was regarded by his men as a brave and efficient officer and they deeply mourned his loss.

It is very sad that his brother, Lieutenant James Pickop, also died of wounds in June 1917.



Lieutenant HENRY BERESFORD SPENCER came to Brasenose from Charterhouse in 1899. He was a member of the Phoenix and a keen oarsman, rowing for the College every year; in the Torpids from 1900 to 1903, in the Eight in 1903, and again in 1906, when he returned to Oxford and took his Degree.

He served in South Africa in the 2nd Volunteer Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment, going out in command of the 3rd Service Company. Subsequently he was appointed to Sir W. Pearson's Staff on Oilfields in Mexico.

In August 1914, being then engaged in farming, he sold his farm, and at once volunteered for the Army. Tired of being kept on the waiting list, he enlisted as a Trooper in the Devon Yeomanry, and after six months obtained a Commission in the West Somersets.

Before going out to France he was employed as an Instructor in a Machine Gun School, with the rank of Captain. Later on he was attached to the Tank Corps.

On September 2 he was killed in action, 'shot through the head', as an officer wrote, 'but not before putting up a splendid fight against crowds of German machine gunners. . . . We mourn the loss of a very gallant gentleman'. Others wrote: 'He was only with us six or seven days, and we all got to love him. He "bucked us up" by his cheerfulness and pluck.' 'He was all a brave English officer could possibly be.'

Brasenose men especially will be touched by the characteristic words, referring to his son, six years old, in his last letter home: 'Bring him up as a *man*, a *gentleman*, and a *sportsman*; get him keen on boating, and of course, if you can, send him to B.N.C. I always told them I'd send my son to make them Head of the River.'

The College Servants have borne their full share of military service both at home and abroad, and we have to lament the loss of six among them. So little news has at present been received about their service and the

circumstances of their death that it is not possible to give more than a few notes which it is hoped may be supplemented later on.

R. BURDEN, Oxford and Bucks L.I., formerly assistant to F. Setchell and afterwards to F. C. Bunce, who died of wounds on August 16, 1917, had been engaged in the second battle of Ypres, and in the battles of Loos and of the Somme. An officer under whom he served speaks of his being highly regarded by his company, and having set a magnificent example of devotion and self-sacrifice.

W. FINCH, also in the Oxford and Bucks L.I., in which he had served as a territorial before the war, formerly in the College stores, was killed in action on June 4, 1917. A letter, which we have not been able to see, from his commanding officer praised his devotion to duty.

A. E. LAMBERT was employed in the College stores, and subsequently as assistant to John Beesley. He joined the R.H.A., and was killed in action on June 9, 1917. An officer writes: 'I found him one of the best men in the battery. He could not have died in a more glorious way; he fell beside the gun he was working while repelling an attack'.

J. LOWE, formerly assistant to H. E. Timms, joined the Oxford and Bucks L.I. in September 1914, being among the first 100 to volunteer for active service from Oxford. He was killed in August 1916 in the battle of the Somme. He was last seen helping with the Lewis gun 'doing his duty bravely and steadily as every one who knew him would expect him to do'. The officer who sends this account adds: 'Very few losses have grieved me so much as his. He was a lad that one naturally admired and respected.'

Sergeant H. SMITH, R.A.M.C., who had been assistant to C. Weedon, was killed in action on April 17, 1918. Of him his commanding officer wrote: 'I cannot tell you



how much I deplore his loss. I had marked him out for promotion, and had he lived he would have been decorated for his splendid work and gallant example of devotion to duty during the recent heavy fighting.'

Of G. TOLLEY, Oxford and Bucks L.I., formerly employed in the College kitchen, the only information at hand as yet is that he was killed in action on July 19, 1916.

