

DAVID FRANCIS BICKMORE



DAVID BICKMORE was the only child of the Rev Francis Askew Bickmore and his wife Lucy (née Dundas). He was born at Leigh Rectory in Worcestershire on 11 April 1891 and was educated at Harrow School and New College, Oxford. In the 1911 Census he is described as a 'student, army candidate'. He had been in the Harrow School Officers' Training Corps and The *London Gazette* of 11 July 1911 records his commission as Second Lieutenant in the War Office Territorial Force. He went up to Oxford University in the autumn of 1911 to read for a two year degree in history, before embarking on his army career.

While he was up at Oxford he met Grace Pelham who lived with her widowed mother at 20 Bradmore Road. Her father, Professor Henry Pelham who had been Camden Professor of Ancient History and President of Trinity College, had died in 1907. David took finals in 1913 and also become engaged to Grace that summer. On leaving Oxford he was commissioned into the Indian Army, joining the 6th King Edward's Own Cavalry. He went out to India later that year.

On the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 David returned from India to France with his regiment, as part of the First Expeditionary Force. In 1915 he was attached as company commander to the Cheshire Regiment: from there he was posted as an Instructor to the 3rd Army School in France, transferring to the British Army and joining the Norfolk Regiment. Also in 1915, on 2 September, he and Grace were married in Oxford at St Giles' Church.

In 1917 he was attached to the 51st Division 7th Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders as second in command. Then, after attending the Senior Officers Course in Aldershot in early 1918, he returned to France in April to command the 1/4th Battalion Gordon Highlanders. He was reported 'wounded and missing' on 19/20 July 1918 – he was 27.

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He had been leading a reconnaissance mission at the start the counter attack by French forces, supported by British and American contingents, which forced the German retreat from the River Marne, and led up to the Armistice on 11 November 1918.

David's body was never found and his death was not officially confirmed until January 1919, six months after he had been reported missing. He had been mentioned in despatches and awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his actions on the battlefield.

A memorial service was held on 1 March 1919 at St Giles' Church in Oxford. His name is one of the almost 4000 names on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission memorial in Soissons, France.

His widow Grace continued living in Oxford with their only child (also David) who had been born in September 1917. She never remarried and died aged 91, at home at 13 Winchester Road in April 1980. The funeral service was held at St Giles' Church and her ashes are buried in the churchyard where there is a memorial stone commemorating both Grace and David.