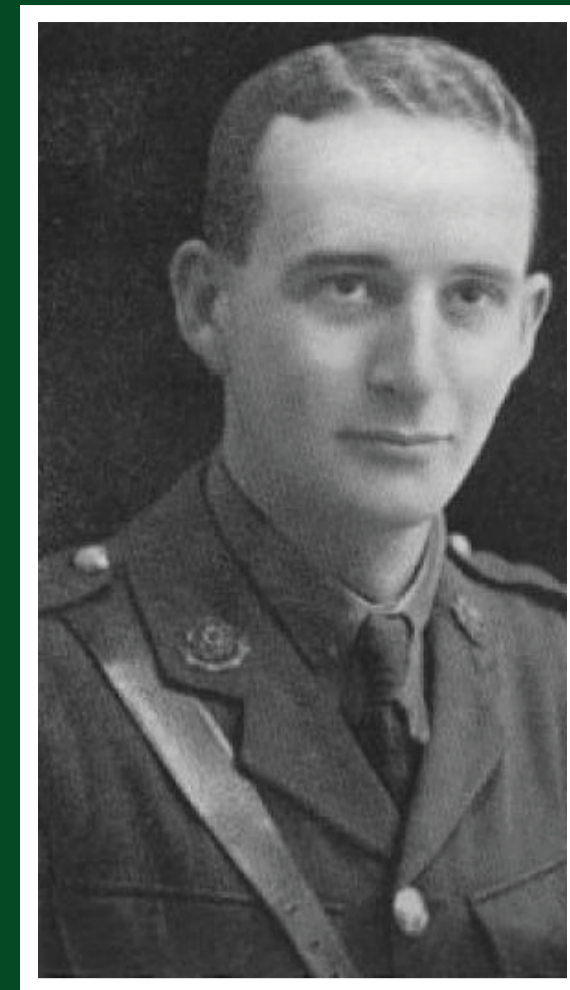


# Second Lieutenant Basil Horsfall, V.C.



Basil Horsfall, who attended Sir William Borlase's School, was the only man from Marlow to be awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War and indeed at any time in the twentieth century.

## Early days

Born in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka in 1887, Basil Horsfall attended Sir William Borlase's School for two years, from 1903. This was a family tradition, his three elder brothers having attended the school also. Basil played cricket and football for the school and was School Captain.

On leaving Borlase, Basil worked at Barclays Bank in London before returning to Ceylon where he took up rubber planting.

## Signing up

Signing up to the war effort, Basil returned to England in July 1916, aged 28, being gazetted to the 1st Battalion East Lancashire Regiment in December. He arrived in France in February 1917 and joined the company that was commanded by his brother. Both Basil and his brother were injured in an attack in May near Arras. Basil, having recovered in England, returned to France in October, and was transferred to the Accrington Battalion.

## Victoria Cross

After a period of relative calm and training behind the lines, the battalion was called up on 22 March 1918 to help stem a German breakthrough along a 50 mile front south from Arras. Enduring continual artillery bombardment from the enemy and also from British shells, the battalion fought to retain its position for four days.

Basil, being in command of the centre platoon of his company, was severely wounded in the head during the conflict. Refusing to go to the dressing station, he organised a counter attack to recover his original position. Despite the orders to retire, Basil was the last to leave his position. It was for his 'most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty' which was regarded as a 'splendid example to his men' that he was awarded the Victoria Cross. Sadly he never made it back and his body was never found.

Basil is commemorated on the Arras Memorial to the Missing together with almost 36,000 other men who also died in the Battles of Arras and who have no known grave. He is also remembered in the memorial in Sir William Borlase's School.



Staff at Barclays Bank, early 1900s. Basil Horsfall is second from the right, front row. With kind permission of Barclays Bank

