



Donald William Stewart Watts

1885 – 1916

Donald was born at Hopton Hall, Mirfield on 1st October 1885. His father was John Harrison Watts, a Solicitor born at Hopton Hall in 1841 and died in 1898. His mother was Emily (nee Stewart) born in County Roscommon, Ireland around 1847 and died in 1924. They were married in Dover on 10th September 1874. Emily was the granddaughter of Colonel Donald Stewart who served as paymaster in the Royal Artillery and was Aide-de-camp and Assistant Adjutant General during the Crimean War. Her brother, also named Donald was a Captain the Dewsbury Volunteers.

Their other children were; Emily May Geraldine Stewart, born in 1881 and died in 1905, Francis John Stewart, born in 1883 and Winifred Agnes Ellen Stewart, born in 1889.

On the 1891 Census the family lived at Hopton Hall, Mirfield, in 1901 and 1911 at 4, Trafalgar Road, West Park Street, Dewsbury.

Donald was a single man who was educated at Wheelwright Grammar School Dewsbury where he attended from 1894 to 1902. After working as a clerk in an insurance office he became a solicitor.

He served as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 3rd Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment, although he had had previous experience with the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry as a volunteer during which time he obtained the rank of Colour Serjeant. He was commissioned in February 1915 and went to France in July of that year. He was invalided home following a bout of trench fever in January 1916 and following a further bad experience in the trenches, where he was trapped in a foot of mud with several of his company, he contracted bronchial pneumonia and was hospitalised, on the 6th of October 1916 following further home leave he returned to the Western Front. He was ordered to lead an assault on a designated enemy trench on the 12th October 1916 and led his company "over the top" only to find himself pinned down by artillery and machine gun fire. Both officers were killed, much to the dismay of the men as he was well regarded for his fighting spirit and care for those who served under him. He was believed to be buried in Bancourt British Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France and his special memorial headstone bears the above inscription. Donald was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Bancourt is a village approximately 4 Kms due east of Bapaume. The cemetery was begun by the New Zealand Division in September 1918. The remainder of the cemetery was made after the Armistice when graves were brought in from the battlefields east and south of Bancourt and from certain Allied and German cemeteries. Bancourt British Cemetery now contains 2,480 burials and commemorations of the First World War. 1,462 of the burials are unidentified but there are special memorials to 43 casualties known or believed to be buried among them.

Donald is commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library and on the Memorial Plaque in Wheelwright Grammar School to former pupils.

In Memory of
Second Lieutenant

Donald William Stewart Watts

3rd Bn., York and Lancaster Regiment who died on 12 October 1916 Age 31

Son of John Harrison Watts and Emily Watts, of 4, Trafalgar Rd., Dewsbury, Yorks.

Remembered with Honour
Bancourt British Cemetery



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Tony Emptage.