



Arthur Sowden

1894 – 1917

Arthur was born at Riley's Yard, Dewsbury on 21st February 1892 His father was George Sowden, a woollen spinner born in 1860 and died in 1918. His mother was Emily (nee Cave) also born in 1860 and died in 1940. They were married on 27th September 1884.

They also had two daughters; Lily, born in 1885 and Bertha, born in 1887.

On the 1901 Census they lived at 10, Trinity Place, Dewsbury, in 1911 at 7, Crescent Place, Ashworth Road, Dewsbury.

Arthur was a single man who was educated at the Jubilee School, Wellington Road, Dewsbury and attended Sunday school at the Ebenezer Church on Longcauseway. He worked as a Boot and Shoe Repairer for Mr. H. Sheard of Hopton, Mirfield with whom he retained a great bond of affection and wrote to him from the trenches. He was connected for many years with Dewsbury United A.F.C. both as a player and secretary.

He enlisted in February 1916 serving as Rifleman 2133 in the 11th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles and was sent to the Western Front around three months later. He was wounded in the leg and hands by the bursting of a British bomb in September 1916. He returned home in February 1917, returning to the front line in May. He was wounded on the First Day of the Battle of Messines in Belgium on 7th June 1917 and died in the 53rd Casualty Clearing Station in Bailleul, France on 8th June 1917. He is buried in a joint grave in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, France, about 14 Kilometres south west of Ypres. Arthur was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Bailleul was occupied on 14th October 1914 by the 19th Brigade and the 4th Division. It became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre, with the 2nd, 3rd, 8th, 11th, 53rd, 1st Canadian and 1st Australian Casualty Clearing Stations quartered in it for considerable periods. It was a Corps headquarters until July 1917, when it was severely bombed and shelled, and after the Battle of Bailleul (13th-15th April 1918), it fell into German hands and was not retaken until 30th August 1918. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made at the east end of the communal cemetery and in April 1915, when the space available had been filled, the extension was opened on the east side of the cemetery. The extension was used until April 1918, and again in September, and after the Armistice graves were brought in from neighbouring battlefields and burial grounds. Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension contains 4,403 Commonwealth burials of the First World War.

Arthur 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 the Dewsbury Ebenezer Congregational Church, now known as Longcauseway Church (United Reformed and Methodist).

In Memory of

Rifleman

Arthur Sowden

2133, 11th Bn., Royal Irish Rifles who died on 08 June 1917 Age 25

Son of George and Emily Sowden, of 51, Hollinroyd Rd., Dewsbury.

Remembered with Honour

Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Tony Emptage.