



Walter Speight 1898 – 1917

Walter was born in Dewsbury in 1898. His father was Benjamin Speight, a woollen spinner born in Ravensthorpe in 1860 and died in 1927. His mother was Ellen (nee Dean) born in Thornhill Lees in 1866 and died in 1937. They were married on 24th September 1881 at St. Mary and St. Michael's Church, Whitley Lower.

Their other children were; John Thomas, born in 1882, Charles, born in 1883 and was killed in action 15th November 1916, Henry born in 1885, Emma, born in 1887, Lena, born in 1889, Annie, born in 1891, Fred, born in 1900, and Lilly, born in 1903.

On the 1891 Census the family lived at Havelock Street, Ravensthorpe, in 1901 at 15, Thornleigh, Thornhill Lees and in 1911 at 14, Thornville Street off Huddersfield Road, Dewsbury.

Walter was a single man who was educated at Dewsbury Parish School and attended St. Matthew's Church and Sunday school in Westtown. He worked as a Drapery Assistant in 1911, but prior to enlistment he was a Woollen Spinner with Messrs James France and Company.

He enlisted on 18th October 1916 serving as Private 31528 in the 6th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment and was sent to the Western Front in February 1917. He was killed in action, north of Ypres, on 20th July 1917 and was buried in Essex Farm Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. Walter was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

According to the report of his death in the *Dewsbury Reporter* on 18th August 1917, Walter's best friend Private Cyril Lang wrote to Walter's parents about his death. Private Lang stated that Walter was at his post on the front line, when he was hit by a trench mortar shell. He and another soldier died instantaneously.

Boezinge (formerly Boesinghe) is a village, north of Ieper (Ypres) on the Diksmuidseweg road. The land south of Essex Farm was used as a dressing station cemetery from April 1915 to August 1917. The burials were made without definite plan and some of the divisions which occupied this sector may be traced in almost every part of the cemetery, but the 49th (West Riding) Division buried their dead of 1915 in Plot I, and the 38th (Welsh) Division used Plot III in the autumn of 1917. There are 1,200 servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in this cemetery. 103 of the burials are unidentified but special memorials commemorate 19 casualties known or believed to be buried among them. It was in Essex Farm Dressing Station that Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae of the Canadian Army Medical Corps wrote the poem '*In Flanders Fields*' in May 1915. The 49th Division Memorial is immediately behind the cemetery, on the canal bank.

Walter 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 War Memorial in the porch of the now closed St. Matthew's Church, Westtown, Dewsbury.

In Memory of
Private
W Speight

31528, 6th Bn., Lincolnshire Regiment who died on 20 July 1917 Age 19

Son of Benjamin and Ellen Speight, of 14, Thornville St., Huddersfield Rd., Dewsbury.

Remembered with Honour
Essex Farm Cemetery



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Antony Thibaut.