



Joseph James Mitchell

1885 – 1917

Joseph was born in Dewsbury in 1885. His father was Charles Edward Mitchell, a professional soldier and later a mineral worker born in Woolwich, Kent in 1849 and died in 1930. His mother was Jane Eliza (nee Hesselgreaves) born in Dewsbury in 1850 and died in 1927. They were married at All Saints Church, Batley on 19th March 1871.

Their other children who could be traced were; Edward, born in 1872, Susan, born in 1874 and died in 1875, Albert, born in 1877 and Fred, born in 1881. In 1911 they declare six children of which two had died.

According to the 1881 Census, Charles was serving in the military at Shoeburyness Garrison, in 1891 the family lived at Church Hill, Earlsheaton, Dewsbury, in 1901 at 7, Kiln Lane, Dewsbury and in 1911 at Exley's Yard, Earlsheaton.

On the 1911 census, Joseph was living at the family farm of his wife-to-be in Askern, Doncaster; his occupation was given as a Waggoner. He was married to Violet Simms (born in 1888 and died in 1977) on 26th August 1912 in Askern Congregational Church. They had three children; Dorothy, born in 1912, Joseph Edward, born in 1914 and Bertha (Betty), born in 1916. Violet was remarried to Charles Watson (born in 1871 and died in 1944) at Askern Registry Office on 5th November 1918; they had six children.

He enlisted in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in Pontefract on 12th December 1915 and was transferred to the York and Lancaster Regiment on 17th June 1916. He was sent to France on 18th December 1916 and was posted to the 12th Battalion on 20th December 1916. He was posted again into the 9th Battalion as Private 40081 on 6th January 1917 and finally went to the Western Front on 10th January. He suffered gunshot wounds in his thighs and legs received in action in Northern France on 15th June 1917; on 23rd June 1917 these wounds were recorded as being severe and he died in a hospital at Wimereux on 26th July 1917. He was buried in Wimereux Communal Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France. Joseph was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Wimereux is a small town situated approximately 5 kilometres north of Boulogne. Wimereux was the headquarters of the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps during the First World War and in 1919 it became the General Headquarters of the British Army. From October 1914 onwards, Boulogne and Wimereux formed an important hospital centre and until June 1918, the medical units at Wimereux used the communal cemetery for burials, the south-eastern half having been set aside for Commonwealth graves, although a few burials were also made among the civilian graves. Because of the sandy nature of the soil, the headstones lie flat upon the graves. Wimereux Communal Cemetery contains 2,847, Commonwealth burials of the First World War, two of them unidentified. Buried among them is Lt.-Col. John McCrae, author of the poem "In Flanders Fields."

Joseph 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 Earlsheaton Park and on the War Memorial in the churchyard of St Paul's Church, Hanging Heaton and on the Oak Panel Memorial in St Paul's Church and on the Askern Roll of Honour, located in St. Peter's Church, Askern. Doncaster and on the Brass Plaque Memorial on the chancel in the same St. Peter's Church.

Joseph's daughter, Betty, visited his grave at the age of 87 in 2003. The visit was recorded in the *Dewsbury Reporter* on 2nd May 2003, with the heading '*Betty's Pilgrimage to a Foreign Field*'. Betty died on 28th September 2005.

In Memory of

Private

J J Mitchell

40081, 9th Bn., York and Lancaster Regiment who died on 26 July 1917

Remembered with Honour
Wimereux Communal Cemetery



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Tony Emptage.