



## **Fred Watson**

### **1889 – 1917**

Fred was born in Earlsheaton on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1889. His father was John Watson, a Joiner's Labourer born in 1867 and died in 1947. His mother was Mary (nee Anderson) born in Dewsbury in 1867 and died in 1931. They were married at St. Peter's Church, Earlsheaton on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1888.

Their other children were; Ellen, born in 1894, Ethel Maude, born in 1897 and died in 1900 and Doris, born in 1901.

On the 1891 Census they lived at Low Side, Earlsheaton, in 1901 at Church Hill, Earlsheaton and in 1911 at Buckley's Buildings, Middle Road, Earlsheaton.

Mary was previously married to John Thackrah (born in 1867 and died in 1887).

Fred was educated at Earlsheaton Church of England School and worked as a Woollen Spinner at Messrs Abraham Preston and Sons at Little Royd Mills, Low Road, Earlsheaton; he played cricket for the Chickenley Cricket Club, where he was a promising batsman. He was married to Ethel Firth (born in 1889 and died in 1922) at St. Peter's Church, Earlsheaton on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1916. They had one daughter, Madge, who was born in 1917 and died in 1919. They lived at 22, Walker Street, Earlsheaton.

He attested in September 1916 serving as Private 202686 in the 1<sup>st</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and was sent to the Western Front on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1917. He was badly burned and gassed on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1917 when the enemy were inflicting a sustained bombardment of Mustard Gas on the Belgian coast around Nieuport, Flanders. He was taken to hospital at Abbeville in France on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1917 where he died from his wounds on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1917. He was buried in Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France. Fred was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

According to the report of his death in the *Dewsbury Reporter* on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1917, the matron of the hospital wrote to Fred's wife, Ethel: "I very much regret to tell you your husband passed away at 8.20 last evening. The new gas the Germans are using is terrible and causes much suffering. In addition to the suffocation it burns the skin badly and your husband was so unfortunate to be badly burnt by it."

The town of Abbeville is about 80 kilometres south of Boulogne. For much of the First World War, Abbeville was headquarters of the Commonwealth lines of communication and No.3 BRCS, No.5 and No.2 Stationary Hospitals were stationed there variously from October 1914 to January 1920. The communal cemetery was used for burials from November 1914 to September 1916, the earliest being made among the French military graves. The extension was begun in September 1916. Abbeville Communal Cemetery contains 774 Commonwealth burials of First World War. The Extension contains 1,754 First World War burials.

Fred 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 Oak Reredos in St. Peter's Church, Earlsheaton.

In Memory of  
Private  
**Fred Watson**

202686, 1st/4th Bn., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry who died on 26 July 1917 Age 28

Husband of Ethel Watson, of 22, Walker St., Earlsheaton, Dewsbury.

Remembered with Honour  
**Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension**



Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

