



## **Ernest Exley**

### **1894 – 1917**

Ernest was born in Dewsbury in 1894. His father was Luke Exley, a Dyer's Labourer born in Heckmondwike in 1851 and died in 1837. His mother was Ellen June (nee Coulton) born in Barnard Castle, County Durham in 1855 and died in 1946. They were married in St. Peter's Church, Birstall on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1875.

Their other children were; John George, born in Startforth near Barnard Castle in 1879 and served in World War 1, Elizabeth Ann, born in Dewsbury in 1883 and died in 1883, Emma Jane, born in Dewsbury in 1890 and died in 1891 and Fred, born in Dewsbury in 1886 and was killed in action on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916.

On the 1881 Census the family lived at Denton's Buildings, Dewsbury, in 1891 at 6, Back Kensington Street, Flatts, Dewsbury and in 1901 and 1911 at 23, Back Kensington Street.

Ernest was educated at Dewsbury Parish Church School and worked as a Cloth Finisher at Aldams Mills, Dewsbury. He was a member of the Trades and Friendly Club on Vulcan Road and was married to Gladys Mary Johnson (born in 1893 and died in 1938) at St. Peter's Church, Earlsheaton on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1915. They lived at 13, Back Kensington Street and had a daughter, Mary Ellen, born 4<sup>th</sup> August 1917, five days after her father's death. Gladys later moved to 24, Hill End, Wakefield Road, Dewsbury. She was remarried at St. Peter's Church, Earlsheaton on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1921 to Harry Nicholson Ward (born in 1892 and died in 1977). They had three children.

He enlisted on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1916 serving as Private 202688 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 suffered gas poisoning on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1917 when the enemy were inflicting a sustained bombardment of Mustard Gas on the Belgian coast around Nieuport, Flanders. He died in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian General Hospital at Le Treport on the French coast on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917 and was buried in Mont Huon Military Cemetery, Le Treport, Seine-Maritime, France. Ernest 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, Ernest was initially well enough to write to his wife: "*I am sorry to say that I am in hospital gassed, but I am going on well. Keep smiling! I shall be in Blighty as soon as the doctor finds me fit to travel.*"

Le Treport is a small seaport 25 kilometres north-east of Dieppe. The Cemetery is 1.5 kilometres south of the town. During the First World War, Le Treport was an important hospital centre and by July 1916, the town contained three general hospitals (the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian), No.3 Convalescent Depot and Lady Murray's B.R.C.S. Hospital. The 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian, 47<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> USA General Hospitals arrived later, but all of the hospitals had closed by March 1919. As the original military cemetery at Le Treport filled, it became necessary to use the new site at Mont Huon. There are now 2,128 Commonwealth burials of the First World War in the cemetery.

Ernest 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 Dewsbury Parish Church School War Memorial.

In Memory of  
Private  
**Ernest Exley**

202688, 1st/4th Bn., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry who died on 31 July 1917 Age 23

Son of Luke and Ellen Exley; husband of Gladys M. Exley, of 24, Hill End, Wakefield Rd., Dewsbury, Yorks.

Remembered with Honour  
**Mont Huon Military Cemetery, Le Treport**



Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

