



## **John William Roberts**

### **1899-1918**

John was born in Bolton, Lancashire in 1899. His father was William Roberts, a woollen rag weaver born in Saddleworth, Yorkshire in 1869 and died in 1944. His mother was Mary (nee Pickering) born in Saddleworth in 1870 and died in 1943. They were married in Saddleworth in 1896.

Their other children were; Alice May, born in Bolton in 1903 and died in 1904, Mary (Pollie), born in Bolton in 1908 and Phyllis, born in Bolton in 1910.

On the 1901 Census the family were living as boarders at 36, Norfolk Street, Bolton, in 1911 at Field Street, Ravensthorpe and later at 26, Lee Street, Ravensthorpe. They had moved to Ravensthorpe after the birth of their youngest child in 1910.

John's occupation is unknown as he was still at school at the time of the 1911 Census.

He enlisted in 1917 serving as Private 49456 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment and was killed in action on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1918 whilst defending a British redoubt at Chapel Hill, Epehy, France during a German attack which commenced at 5.45 am the previous day, the First Day of the German Spring Offensive (*Der Kaiserschlacht*). The Battalion War Diary states that orders to retreat to the village of Heudicourt were received at 12 noon on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and it is likely during this retirement that he was killed. His remains were never identified for burial and so he is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial to the Missing. John was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The Pozieres Memorial relates to the period of crisis in March and April 1918 when the Allied Fifth Army was driven back by overwhelming numbers across the former Somme battlefields, and the months that followed before the Advance to Victory, which began on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1918. The Memorial commemorates over 14,000 casualties of the United Kingdom and 300 of the South African Forces who have no known grave and who died between 21<sup>st</sup> March to 7<sup>th</sup> August 1918.

His parents held out hope for several months that he had been taken prisoner; in January 1919 appeals were launched for information by the local newspapers in which it was stated he was "*thought by his officers to have been taken prisoner of war.*"

John is also commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library and on the Ravensthorpe War Memorial in St. Saviours Church.

In Memory of

Private

## John William Roberts

49456, 2nd Bn., Lincolnshire Regiment who died on 22 March 1918 Age 19

Son of William and Mary Roberts, of 26, Lee St., Ravensthorpe, Dewsbury, Yorks.

Remembered with Honour

Pozieres Memorial



Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

