



Percy Croft

1894-1918

Percy was born in Earlsheaton in 1894. His father was William Croft (his stepfather's surname), a Millwright, born *William Potter* in Earlsheaton in 1863 and died in 1929. His mother was Fanny (nee Tolson) born in Earlsheaton in 1863 and died in 1931. They were married in 1893.

On the 1901 and 1911 Census records the family lived at 27, Walker Street, Earlsheaton.

Percy was an only child and a single man who worked as a Junior Clerk in the employ of Hemingway and Bindschadler, Dyers, Church Street, Dewsbury. He was connected with the Highfield Congregational Church, he played the Harmonium in the Sunday School and was a member of the choir and secretary for the Band of Hope and Institute.

He enlisted in Dewsbury in February 1915 serving as Private 22775 in the 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards and had previously been wounded in action on two occasions. He was killed in action in France on 25th August 1918. He was buried in the field and in 1920 his remains were reburied in H.A.C. Cemetery, Ecooust-St. Mein, Pas-de-Calais, France. Percy was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

His obituary appeared in the Dewsbury Reporter and his parents received the following three letters on sympathy: Lieutenant P.A. Lloyd writes, under date August 31st: *"This is to express my very deep sympathy for you in the sad loss of your son, who was killed in action leading the attack a week ago. He showed at all times a splendid spirit while out here – brave, cheerful, hardworking, in all circumstances, and he is a great loss to me. I feel very much for you in your great loss, and I know nothing can make up for it, but it may be a consolation to you to know that he died painlessly. He was buried alongside many of his brave comrades who died with him."* A Lieutenant Colonel wrote: *"I am afraid it will prove a very severe blow to you, but I can assure you he died as he lived, a true Grenadier who always did his duty to his King and country before all thoughts of his own safety. I am sorry to say his captain and the two other officers of his company in action with him have also made the supreme sacrifice"*. A sympathetic letter from a Chaplain explained that Pte. Croft was instantly killed by machine-gun fire on August 25th, and was interred at St Leger, South of Arras. He had laid down his life for his country and for everything Englishmen hold dear. *"The company to which the deceased soldier belonged had," says the chaplain 'won considerable success,' but unfortunately few of them now remain."*

Ecooust-St.Mein is a village between Arras, Cambrai and Bapaume. H.A.C. Cemetery is about 800 metres south of the village. The cemetery was begun on the 31st March or the 1st April 1917 and the first 120 graves thus made were the original H.A.C. Cemetery. After the Armistice graves were added from the battlefields of Bullecourt and Ecooust and from a number of smaller burial grounds. There are now nearly 2,000, 1914-18 war casualties buried or commemorated in this site. Of these, over half are unidentified.

Percy 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 Earlsheaton Park War Memorial and on the Oak Reredos in St. Peter's Church, Earlsheaton and on the Memorial Plaque from the now demolished Earlsheaton Highfield Congregational Church relocated to Longcauseway Church, Dewsbury.

In Memory of
Guardsmen

Percy Croft

22775, 1st Bn., Grenadier Guards who died on 25 August 1918 Age 24

Son of William and Fanny Croft, of 27, Walker St., Earlsheaton, Yorks.

Remembered with Honour
H.A.C. Cemetery, Ecoust-St. Mein



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Richard Houghton.