



Frederick William Watson MC, DCM 1878-1918

Frederick was born in Leeds on 8th November 1878. His father was David John Watson, a Bricklayer born in Lumby near Castleford in 1845 and died in the USA in 1885. His mother was Jane (Jinnie) Pease, born in Aberford near Leeds in 1841 and died in 1927. They were married at the Brunswick Methodist Chapel, Bramley, Leeds on 22nd September 1877.

David was previously married on 15th December 1867 to Caroline Firth (born in 1840 and died in 1869) at All Saints Church, Wakefield; they had a daughter, Helena Adelaide born in Castleford on 1st August 1868. After her mother's death, she lived with the family of her paternal grandparents in Lumby.

On the 1881 Census the family lived at 6, Amelia Terrace, Leeds. They had a daughter, Laura Ethel Isabel, born in Leeds on 6th April 1881. In February 1882 they landed in New York via Ellis Island on the SS "Baltic" and had another daughter, Edith, born on 9th April 1882 in Cleveland, Ohio, where David died in 1885. They returned to the UK and on the 1891 Census Jane and Edith are living at 53, Milford Place, Burley, Leeds. Frederick had been admitted to an industrial school (pre-Borstal) in October 1890 until the age of 16 due to "parental neglect" and had earlier been guilty of petty theft. Laura has not been traced on this census.

In 1901 Jane and her two daughters are living at 6, Addingham Place, Wortley, Leeds; in 1911 Jane and Laura were at 10, Meeke Terrace, Tong Road, Armley, Leeds, Edith having married a Lewis Dacre in 1907.

Frederick was already a regular soldier when married to Ada Ellen Taylor (born in 1879 and died in 1965) on 9th June 1909 at St. Saviour's Church, Ravensthorpe. They had three sons, all born in Goole whilst he was serving as a Serjeant Drill Instructor; George Frederick, born in 1912, Morris, born in 1914 and Jack, born in 1915.

He enlisted in the 1st Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry on 27th February 1897 in Leeds giving his trade as a mechanic, using the surname Wilson; this was later amended in his records to show his true name. On 27th February 1899 he was awarded the Good Conduct Badge and promoted to Lance Corporal on 6th May of that year. On the fourth anniversary of his enlistment he was awarded a second Good Conduct Badge and on the 4th April 1901 was promoted to Corporal. In December 1901 he was posted to the 2nd Battalion and sent to fight in the South African Campaign (Boer War) for which he was awarded the Queen's South Africa Medal with three Clasps for Transvaal, Cape Colony and South Africa 1902. He was promoted to Serjeant and continued to serve in South Africa for another four months until October 1902 when he was posted with the rest of the battalion to Malta. In March 1904 the battalion was transferred to Crete before returning home in March 1905. In January 1908 he signed on to serve up to a full 21 years; he was seconded to the Northern Nigeria Regiment, part of the West Africa Frontier Force on the 15th February 1908, returning home in April 1909 to rejoin the 2nd Battalion and spent the next period of his service in Ireland.

On 24th May 1912 he was posted to the 5th Territorial Battalion in Goole as a Serjeant Drill Instructor, later being promoted to Company Serjeant Major and it was not until January 1917 that he was sent to the Western Front. On 6th March 1917 the Battalion were in action at Beaumont-Hamel on the Somme where he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the citation being announced in the London Gazette on 17th April 1917, the same month as he was awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. On 20th and 21st July 1918 he was wounded whilst serving in the Bois-de-Petit Champs in the Marne Sector and was awarded the Military Cross, which was announced in the London Gazette on 7th November 1918. He was killed in action near Mory, France on 27th August 1918 when he was hit in the neck by a machine-gun bullet; he was buried in Gomiecourt South Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France. In addition to the Military Cross, the Distinguished Service Order and the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, Frederick was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Gomiecourt is a village in the Department of the Pas-de-Calais, 16 kilometres south of Arras and 6 kilometres north-west of Bapaume. Gomiecourt South Cemetery contains 206 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, ten of which are unidentified.

Frederick 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 Ravensthorpe War Memorial in St. Saviour's Church.

