



## Vyner Woffenden Sykes 1893 – 1915

Vyner was born in Thornhill Lees on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1893 and baptised at Holy Innocents Church, Thornhill Lees on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1893. His father was Franklin Sykes, a Bottle Maker born in Thornhill Lees in 1860 and died 1921. His mother was Eleanor /Ellen (nee Wilcock) born in Thornhill in 1853 and died in 1900. They were married on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1883 at Holy Innocents Church.

Their other children were; George, born in 1883 and Edward, born in 1885.

On the 1891 Census the family lived at 27, Dale Street, Thornhill Lees, in 1901 they are living at the home of his late wife's father Edward Wilcock at 42, Walker Street, Thornhill.

Franklin was remarried to Christiana Cope (born in 1866 and died in 1960) on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1904 at St. Philips Church, Leeds Road, Dewsbury. They had three children; Frank Cope, born in 1905, Nellie Cope, born in 1906 and Clifford Oates, born in 1908. On the 1911 Census the family lived at 20, Thornton Road, Thornhill Lees.

Vyner was a single man who was educated at Holy Innocents School and was connected to the Church; his occupation was an Iron Straightener in a local forge.

He enlisted in the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry serving as Private 2220 and was killed in action by shrapnel near Ypres on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915. He was buried in Bard Cottage Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen Belgium. Vyner was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

A report of his death appeared in the *Dewsbury Reporter* on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1915. Private Ernest Smith of Providence Street, Thornhill Lees, who was a friend of Vyner's, wrote to his step-mother, saying, "*He was picked out to go throwing bombs with a lot more, and they tell me that he was just going to throw one when he got it.*"

For much of the First World War, the village of Boesinghe (now Boezinge) directly faced the German line across the Yser canal. Bard Cottage was a house a little set back from the line, close to a bridge called Bard's Causeway, and the cemetery was made nearby in a sheltered position under a high bank. Burials were made between June 1915 and October 1918 and they reflect the presence of the 49<sup>th</sup> (West Riding), the 38<sup>th</sup> (Welsh) and other infantry divisions in the northern sectors of the Ypres Salient, as well as the advance of artillery to the area in the autumn of 1917. There are now 1,639 Commonwealth casualties of the First World War buried or commemorated in this cemetery. 39 of the burials are unidentified but special memorials commemorate three casualties known to be buried among them.

Vyner 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 Holy Innocents Church, Thornhill Lees.

In Memory of  
Private  
**V Sykes**

2220, 4th Bn., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry who died on 25 September 1915 Age 22

Son of Christiana Sykes, of 20, Thornton Rd., Thornhill Lees, Dewsbury, and the late Franklin Sykes.

Remembered with Honour  
**Bard Cottage Cemetery**



Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

