



John William Burton

1897– 1917

John was born in West Ardsley in 1897 and baptised on 26th December 1897 at St. Mary the Virgin Church, Woodkirk near Dewsbury. His father was Walter Burton, a Miner born in West Ardsley in 1868 and died in 1921. His mother was Harriet Hannah (nee Ellis) born in Ossett in 1873 and died in 1920. They were married in St. Mary the Virgin Church on 24th March 1894.

Their other children were; Annie Elizabeth, born in 1894 and died in 1894, Edward, born in 1895 and was killed in action 19th July 1917, Robert, born in 1900 and died in 1919, Polly, born in 1902 and died in 1921, Hannah Elizabeth, born in 1907, David, born in 1910 and Arnold, born in 1913.

Harriet had a son; Henry Ellis born in 1891 and was killed in action 17th August 1915.

On the 1901 census the family lived at Westerton Road, West Ardsley and in 1911 at Farrah's Buildings, Albion Street, Ravensthorpe when John was working as a Mill Hand Piecer. They later moved to 20, Queen Street, Thornhill Lees.

He enlisted on 10th January 1916 according to what few of his service records exist; both his death certificate and the Dewsbury Roll of Honour state that he was in the Bedfordshire Regiment but the aforementioned records show him in 123 Company Royal Defence Corps serving as Private 40406. There are service records of three men serving in the 2nd/5th Bedfordshire Regiment who were transferred to the Royal Defence Corps in October 1916 with service numbers very close to that of John Burton; it is therefore very likely that he did initially enlist and serve for a period of time in the Bedfordshire Regiment. He was discharged on 9th January 1917 after being certified as insane on 26th December 1916 and after initially being confined to the Lord Derby War Hospital in Warrington; he was transferred to Wakefield Asylum where his record states the cause of his insanity was mental stress. On 31st August 1917 he was diagnosed to be suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis which spread throughout his system (disseminated) and he died on 8th November 1917. He was buried in Holy Innocents Churchyard, Thornhill Lees. John did not receive any medal awards as he did not serve overseas.

The Royal Defence Corps was a corps of the British Army formed in March 1916 and disbanded in 1936. It was initially formed by converting the (Home Service) Garrison battalions of line infantry regiments. Garrison battalions were composed of soldiers either too old or medically unfit for active front-line service; the Home Service status indicated they were unable to be transferred overseas. Eighteen battalions were converted in this way. The role of the corps was to provide troops for security and guard duties inside the United Kingdom; guarding important locations such as ports or bridges. It also provided independent companies for guarding prisoner-of-war camps. The corps was never intended to be employed on overseas service.

John 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 Parish Church, Thornhill Lees.

He is one of twenty men named on the above but who are not recorded as official war casualties, due to their cause of death not being officially attributed to war service.