Joseph Wroe
1881 – 1917

Joseph was born in Batley in 1881 and baptised on 20th February 1881 at St. Thomas's Church, Soothill, Batley. His father was George Wroe, a cloth finisher born in Overton near Wakefield in 1856 and died in 1908. His mother was Martha Ann (nee Squires) born in Batley in 1859 and died in 1926. They were married on July 10th 1880 at St. Thomas's Church.

Their other children were: Fred, born in 1883 and served in World War 1, John William, born in 1893, Sarah Ann, born in 1895 and George, born in 1897 and was killed in action 27th September 1915. He is commemorated on the Batley War Memorial.

On the 1891 and 1901 Census Records the family lived at 9, Taylor Street, Batley and in 1911 at 28, Wellington Street, Batley.

Joseph was a cloth dyer's labourer at Messrs G.H. Hirst and Company, Savile Town, Dewsbury. He was married to Mary Howgate on 17th May 1902 at St. John the Baptist Church, Dawgreen, Dewsbury. They lived at 2, Pitt Street, Boothroyd Lane, Dewsbury. Their children were; Elsie, born in 1902, Harry, born in 1904 and died in 1906, Jack, born in 1907, Frank, born in 1909, Phyllis, born in 1911 and died in 1913, Hilda, born in 1914, Minnie, born in 1915 and died in 1918. Mary had a son; Fred Howgate, born in 1901.

He enlisted in 1915 serving as Private 43700 in the 202nd Company, Machine Gun Corps and was sent to the Western Front around August 1916. He died in No 33 Casualty Clearing Station at Bethune, France on 24th April 1917 from wounds to the head, arm and leg sustained the previous day during the Battle of Arras; he was riding a bicycle and carrying dispatches. A report stated that he was ultra trustworthy and was often entrusted with highly sensitive material, on this occasion he was blown from the bicycle when a shell burst in close proximity. He was buried in Bethune Town Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France. Joseph was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Bethune is a town 29 kilometres north of Arras. For much of the First World War, Bethune was comparatively free from bombardment and remained an important railway and hospital centre, as well as a corps and divisional headquarters. The 33rd Casualty Clearing Station was in the town until December 1917. Early in 1918, Bethune began to suffer from constant shell fire and in April 1918, German forces reached Locon, five kilometres to the north. The bombardment of 21st May did great damage to the town and it was not till October that pressure from the Germans was relaxed. Bethune Town Cemetery contains 3,004 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, 11 of which are unidentified.

Joseph 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 Batley War Memorial.

Due to some error when the above were inaugurated in 1923/24, Joseph is recorded twice. Once under his correct name but also as *"J. Rowe"* He is one of 7 men whose names appear twice on the Roll of Honour and on the Cenotaph.

| Wroe Joseph. | 2, Pit Street, Boothroyd Lane, Dewsbury. | Pte. 43700. | 202nd. M.G.C. | Killed. Bethune. |
| Rowe J. | | | | |

In Memory of

Private

Joseph Wroe

43700, 202nd Coy., Machine Gun Corps who died on 24 April 1917 Age 36

Husband of Mary Wroe, of 2, Pitt St., Dewsbury.

Remembered with Honour
Bethune Town Cemetery

Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Headstone photograph by courtesy of Richard Houghton.