



Orlando Bush Walker 1874 – 1915

Orlando was born in Headingley, Leeds in 1874. His father was Noah Walker, a Maltser born in London around 1841 and died in 1908. His mother was Sarah Ann (nee Hoke) born in Woolwich, Kent in 1847 and died in 1913. They were married in Sheffield in 1866.

Their other children were; Mary Ann, born in 1872 and Agnes, born in 1878.

In 1891 the family lived at Trelawn Terrace, Headingley, Leeds, Orlando was working as a coachman.

Orlando married Lily Staton (born in Hunslet, Leeds in 1875 and died in 1933) in Leeds in 1905. They had two children: Mary Ann, born in 1909 and George Staton, born in 1912. On the 1911 Census the family were living at 2, North View, Savile Town, Dewsbury. At the outbreak of the war he was working as a Dyer's Labourer at Messrs G.H. Hirst and Company, Victoria Mills, Savile Town. Before that he had served for 8 years in India with the 2nd West Riding Regiment. He returned to England in 1907 and became a Reservist.

In May 1914 he joined the National Reserve Corps, attesting at Wakefield. He served as Private 2254 in the 1st/4th Battalion Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and was sent to the Western Front in April 1915. He was wounded during the Battle of Festubert in France and died of wounds in a Casualty Clearing Station on 24th May 1915. He was buried in Merville Communal Cemetery, Nord, France. Orlando was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Prior to his death, he had written to his wife, as reported in the *Dewsbury Reporter* on 29th May 1915; *"We are out of the trenches for three days, and we are not sorry. It is bad in there. We have lost two men, who have been shot, and I have been lucky not to have been hit. We are 240 yards from the enemy, I think."* The newspaper also published a letter from a Chaplain, The Rev. G.E. Browne; *"I cannot tell you how sorry I am to have to send you very bad news of your husband, Pte O. Walker. He was brought into the Casualty Clearing Station two days ago severely wounded in the chest, and he passed away last night. He was only partially conscious when brought in. I do not think he suffered any real pain, and he did not speak at all. He will be buried in the little cemetery at Merville, and his grave will be marked by a cross. With very real sympathy in your great trouble"*

Merville is a town 15 kilometres north of Bethune and 20 kilometres south-west of Armentieres. It was the scene of fighting between the Germans and French and British cavalry early in October 1914 but from the 9th of that month to 11th April 1918, it remained in Allied hands. It was a railhead until May 1915, and a billeting and hospital centre from 1915-1918. On the evening of 11th April 1918, in the Battles of the Lys, the Germans forced their way into Merville and the town was not retaken until 19th August. Merville Communal Cemetery was used by French troops (chiefly cavalry) in October 1914, and for Commonwealth burials from that date until August 1916 (in the case of officers, to March 1918). It now contains 1,268 Commonwealth burials of the First World War.

Orlando 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 from the now demolished St. Mary's Church, Savile Town which was relocated to Holy Innocents Church, Thornhill Lees.

In Memory of
Private
O Walker

2254, 1st/4th Bn., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry who died on 24 May 1915 Age 41

Remembered with Honour
Merville Communal Cemetery



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Richard Houghton.