



Harry Oates Soothill 1897 – 1917

Harry was born in Dewsbury in 1897. His father was Walter Soothill, a Painter born in Dewsbury in 1864 and died in 1918. His mother was Mary Agnes (nee Smithson) born in Dewsbury in 1865 and died in 1901. They were married at All Saints Church, Dewsbury on 5th December 1885.

Their other children were: Lilian, born in 1886, Mary, born in 1888, Percy Harvey, born in 1889, Edith, born in 1891 and died in 1891, Florence, born in 1893 and died in 1894, Fred, born in 1894 and served in the Royal Flying Corps in World War 1 and Ernest Clarence, born in 1899 and died in 1900.

On the 1891 and 1901 Census Records the family lived at 13, Eddison Street, Dewsbury and in 1911 at 15, Elizabeth Terrace, Leeds Road, Dewsbury.

Walter was remarried to a widow, Annie Muir, nee Crawshaw (born in Manchester in 1865 and died in 1912) at All Saints Church, Dewsbury on 20th July 1906.

Harry was a single man who attended Eastborough Council School and sang in the choir at St Philip's Church. He had also belonged to the Ebenezer Church Boys Brigade and attended the Salem United Methodist Church, Northgate, Dewsbury. He worked as an Apprentice Plumber to Mr. Frank Newsome. He was also a very good clarinet player and was a member of Dewsbury Military Band, taking part in several band contests, including one in Paris.

He enlisted in Dewsbury on 20th November 1915, initially joining the Royal Engineers. Unfortunately, he failed the trade test as a plumber and was given the choice of transferring to another regiment or being demobilised. He chose to transfer to the Royal Fusiliers, but was transferred again on 27th July 1916 as Private 45238 in the 45th Company, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry). He was killed in action in the Ypres Salient on 31st July 1917, the First Day of the Battle of Passchendaele. His remains were never identified for burial and so he is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. Harry was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

A brief report of his death appeared in the *Dewsbury Reporter* on 25th August 1917. A more detailed report appeared on 15th September 1917, after his family received a letter from the Serjeant of Harry's machine gun section who described how they had advanced on 31st July and held their ground until 2nd August, when troops were sent to relieve the section. At this point, Harry missed his company and fell in with a Highlander. As they walked along the trenches, they were caught by shell fire and buried. Another company of men ran to the rescue, and managed to pull out the Highlander, but when they got to Harry, he had died.

The Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing bears the names of 54,389 officers and men from United Kingdom and Commonwealth Forces (except New Zealand and Newfoundland) who fell in the Ypres Salient before 16th August 1917 and who have no known grave.

Harry is also commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library and on the Eastborough School Memorial to former pupils and on the War Memorial from the now demolished St. Philips Church now displayed in Dewsbury Minster and on the Memorial Plaque from the Salem United Methodist Church, now stored in the Resource Centre at Batley Central Methodist Church and on the Memorial Plaque in the Dewsbury Ebenezer Congregational Church, now known as Longcauseway Church (United Reformed and Methodist).

In Memory of

Private

Harry Oates Soothill

45238, 45th Goy., Machine Gun Corps (Infantry) who died on 31 July 1917 Age 20

Son of Walter and Mary Agnes Soothill.

Remembered with Honour

Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

SOOTHILL H. O.