



## **Charles Edmund Blakeley**

### **1893 – 1915**

Charles was born in Mirfield on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1893 and was baptised at Christ the King Church, Battysford, Mirfield on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1893. His father was George Blakeley, a Labourer in an iron foundry born in Thornhill in 1864 and died in 1910. His mother was Lily (nee Holroyd) born in Halifax in 1866 and died in 1943. They married at Christ Church, Staincliffe, Dewsbury on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1890.

Their other children were; Percy Ingham, born in 1891 and served in World War 1, Mark, born in 1898 and Dorothy, born in 1901.

On the 1901 Census the family lived at 2, Moorlands Cottages, Moorlands Road, Dewsbury, in 1911 at 107, Back Whitley Street, Boothroyd Lane, Dewsbury and later at 8, Fox's Buildings, Chapel Fold, Staincliffe, Dewsbury.

Charles was a single man but had a fiancée, Miss Margaret Phillips; he worked as a Rag Grinder for Messrs Machell Brothers, Shoddy and Mungo Manufacturers, Cloth Hall Mills, Dewsbury. The family attended Moorlands Wesleyan Church.

He served in the Territorials for 6 years and enlisted on the outbreak of war into the 1<sup>st</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry with the Service Number 2386 rising to the rank of Lance Corporal and was sent to France and Flanders on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1915. He was in the machine gun section when he was gassed in an enemy attack at Boesinghe near Ypres on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1915 and died of wounds and gas poisoning in the 14<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Wimereux in France on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1915. He was buried in Wimereux Communal Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France. Charles was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He had been on leave only six weeks earlier and had described to his family some '*narrow squeaks*', including having had his watch shot off. His mother received a letter from a Wesleyan chaplain, the Rev Cecil M. Weeks who wrote; "*Our brother died a hero's death. His life was given for others and in that there is real comfort.*"

Wimereux is a small town situated approximately 5 kilometres north of Boulogne. Wimereux was the headquarters of the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps during the First World War and in 1919 it became the General Headquarters of the British Army. From October 1914 onwards, Boulogne and Wimereux formed an important hospital centre and until June 1918, the medical units at Wimereux used the communal cemetery for burials, the south-eastern half having been set aside for Commonwealth graves, although a few burials were also made among the civilian graves. Because of the sandy nature of the soil, the headstones lie flat upon the graves. Wimereux Communal Cemetery contains 2,847, Commonwealth burials of the First World War, two of them unidentified. Buried among them is Lt.-Col. John McCrae, author of the poem "In Flanders Fields."

Charles 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 Memorial Plaque from Moorlands Wesleyan Methodist Church, now stored in the Resource Centre at Batley Central Methodist Church.

In Memory of  
Lance Corporal  
**Charles Edmund Blakeley**

2386, 4th Bn., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry who died on 21 December 1915 Age 22

Son of George and Lily Blakeley, of Dewsbury, Yorks.

Remembered with Honour  
**Wimereux Communal Cemetery**



Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Tony Emptage.