



Spedding Hirst 1885-1922

Spedding was born in Staincliffe, Dewsbury on 6th July 1885 and baptised on 21st October 1885 at Christ Church, Staincliffe. His father was George Henry Hirst, a blanket raiser born in Batley in 1853 and died in 1903. His mother was Annie Elizabeth (nee Popplewell) born in Thorner, near Leeds in 1852 and died in 1937. They were married at All Saints Church, Dewsbury on 21st September 1871.

Their other children who could be traced were; Fred, born in 1872 and died in 1873, Herbert, born in 1874 and died in 1918, William, born in 1877 and died in 1920, Percy, born in 1879, Harry Gladstone, born in 1882, Ethel Maud, born in 1887, Harold, born in 1893 and served in World War 1 and Ernest, born in 1898 and served in World War 1.

On the 1891 Census the family lived at Staincliffe Road, Dewsbury, in 1901 at 164, Heckmondwike Road, Dewsbury, in 1911 at 114, Heckmondwike Road and in 1922 at 178, Heckmondwike Road.

Spedding was a single man who worked as a Mill Hand and a Willeyer.

He enlisted in Heckmondwike on 9th December 1915 and was called up from the reserve list in March 1916 serving as Private 5299 in the 2nd/4th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, with the later Service Number 202391. He was taken prisoner by the enemy on 15th March 1917 near Puisieux, France, close to the borders of the Somme/Pas-de-Calais Regions. His German POW Records held by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva state this location is "*aus (near) Cambrai*", but there is a distance of 26 miles between the two places. The first record of 1st May 1917 and the last one of 25th February 1918 show that he was imprisoned at Limburg an der Lahn, Hesse, Germany. An article appeared in the Dewsbury Reporter on 28th April 1917 stating that his mother had received a letter from his platoon officer Lieutenant Thosley informing her that her son was missing and that he hoped that he was a prisoner of war. A further article was published in the same newspaper on 9th June under the headline "*A Mother's Joy*" which told that she had received a postcard from her son from Germany. After his release, according to his medical records Spedding had been deaf and dumb for 16 months while in captivity; he had scars on the head, the right chest below the clavicle and the right knee from rifle blows and must have been subjected to constant brutality and trauma. He was discharged on 11th March 1919 with a war pension and Silver War Badge number B215713 awarded on 31st July and returned to his work as a Willeyer, although still suffering from occasional fits. He died at his home from mucous colitis and heart failure on 4th February 1922 and was buried in Dewsbury Cemetery. Spedding was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Spedding is commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library.

He is one of six men named on the above who are not recorded as official war casualties due to their date of death being after the official Commonwealth War Graves Commission cut-off date of 31st August 1921.