



William Donkersley MM

1886-1918

William was born at 7, Common Road, Batley on 10th December 1886 and baptised at Christ Church, Staincliffe on 13th February 1887. His father was Harry Donkersley, a Printer's Compositor and later a Shopkeeper/Tobacconist born in Huddersfield in 1862 and died in 1907. His mother was Sarah (nee Plows) born in Lofthouse, Wakefield in 1863 and died in 1935. They were married at West Parade Non-Conformist Chapel, Wakefield on 7th December 1884.

Their other children were; Louisa, born in 1885, Ethel, born in 1889 and died in 1889, Lena, born in 1890, Allen, born in 1893 and died in London on 31st December 1916 from injuries sustained during a training accident whilst serving in the Army Ordnance Corps and Doris Irene, born in 1898 and died in 1904.

On the 1891 Census the family lived at Claremont Road, Heckmondwike, in 1901 at 36, Upper George Street, Heckmondwike and in 1911 at 2, Marriott Street, Dewsbury.

William was a single man who was educated at Heckmondwike Grammar School and worked as a hairdresser in 1901. On the 1911 Census he was living and working for Mr. Thomas Swann, a Hairdresser and Tobacconist of 98, Newcastle Avenue, Worksop, Nottinghamshire. According to the local newspapers in 1917 he had worked for Mr. Speight in Corporation Street, Dewsbury for four years before moving to Middlesbrough and Darlington.

He enlisted in Pontefract into the 9th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps rising to the rank of Corporal R/25074. He was sent to the Western Front in August 1916 and on 18th June 1917 it was announced in the London Gazette that he had been awarded the Military Medal. He wrote many letters home telling of his experiences including being twice wounded by shrapnel and on Easter Monday 1917 he was part of an advance attempting to take some enemy trenches all their Officers were either killed or wounded and four out of five Serjeants were also casualties. He rallied the men and the objective was achieved and he later went out under shell-fire to treat a wounded man. His Captain informed him of the award which was for conspicuous gallantry. He was killed in action in France on 21st March 1918, the First Day of the German Spring Offensive (*Der Kaiserschlacht*). His remains were never identified for burial and so he is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial to the Missing. In addition to the Military Medal William was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The Pozieres Memorial relates to the period of crisis in March and April 1918 when the Allied Fifth Army was driven back by overwhelming numbers across the former Somme battlefields, and the months that followed before the Advance to Victory, which began on 8th August 1918. The Memorial commemorates over 14,000 casualties of the United Kingdom and 300 of the South African Forces who have no known grave and who died between 21st March to 7th August 1918.

William 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 Memorial Plaque in Heckmondwike Grammar School to former pupils who died in World War 1 and on the War Memorial from the now demolished St. Philip's Church, Leeds Road now displayed in Dewsbury Minster.

In Memory of

Corporal

William Donkersley

M M

R/25074, 9th Bn., King's Royal Rifle Corps who died on 21 March 1918 Age 32

Son of Harry and Sarah Donkersley, of 2, Marriott St., Dewsbury, Yorks. His brother A. Donkersley, also fell.

Remembered with Honour

Pozieres Memorial



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

