



Harold Hirst 1891 – 1915

Harold was born in Batley in 1891. His father was Joseph Hirst, a Company Director of a Woollen Manufacturers born in Batley in 1857 and died in 1918. His mother was Ann (nee Hirst) born in Brighouse in 1862 and died in 1931. They were married in 1885.

Their other children were; Edith, born in 1886 and died in 1887, Jessie Royce, born in 1888 and Edith Mary, born in 1897.

In 1891 the family lived at Carlton Terrace, Chapel Fold, Batley, in 1901 and 1911 at “Ravensleigh”, Oxford Road, Dewsbury.

Harold attended Wheelwright Grammar School and Rugby School from 1905 to 1909. He was employed at his father's company G.H. Hirst and Company, woollen manufacturers based at Alexandra and Bright's Mills in Batley and at Victoria Mills in Dewsbury. On 30th June 1914 he married Gladys Lilian Crawshaw (born in 1887 and died in 1972) they lived at Rufford Lodge, Dewsbury and had a daughter, Leila, born 24th April 1915 of whom he never saw. Gladys was remarried in All Souls Church, St. Marylebone, London on 12th June 1930 to Leonard Herbert Bennett (born in 1881 and died in 1959).

He served as a Captain in the 1st/4th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. He first joined the regiment in 1910 as a Territorial Lieutenant and regularly went to the Dewsbury Drill Shed. He was promoted to Captain soon after the outbreak of war and was sent to the Western Front on 13th April 1915. He was killed in action near Bois-Grenier, France on 24th June 1915 when he was shot in the head whilst trying to locate enemy snipers shooting at the British trenches. He was buried in Bois-Grenier Communal Cemetery, Nord, France which at the time was only about six hundred yards behind the trench where he was killed. Harold was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

A local newspaper report at the time of his death stated that: *“He was one of the first to offer to go to the Front when the officers of his battalion were asked to volunteer. Capt. Hirst, who was a good shot, had killed two or three German snipers, and his achievements have been mentioned in bulletins recording the work done by his regiment.”* Many of his fellow officers wrote to his wife in tribute to their comrade. It was clear that Harold was highly rated as an officer. His superior officer, Colonel H.J. Haslegrave wrote: *“He was one of the pluckiest fellows I have ever had to do with, and seemed not to know the meaning of the word fear. We have lost a good comrade ... He was an ideal soldier, and we know only too well what a loss he will be to the battalion.”*

Harold 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 in St. John the Evangelist Church, Dewsbury Moor where a window is also dedicated to him. He is also commemorated on the Memorial Plaque to former pupils of Wheelwright Grammar School and on the War Memorial on the outside wall of Dewsbury Centenary Wesleyan Church at the top of Daisy Hill and on the Memorial Plaque in the Dewsbury Ebenezer Congregational Church, now known as Longcauseway Church (United Reformed and Methodist) where there is also an individual plaque in his memory and on the memorial at Rugby School to Rugbeians who fell in the Great War.

In Memory of

Captain

Harold Hirst

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

Son of Joseph and Ann Hirst, of Dewsbury; husband of Gladys L. Hirst, of Rufford Lodge, Dewsbury, Yorks.

Remembered with Honour

Bois-Grenier Communal Cemetery



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

