



## **Walter Whitehead**

### **1882 – 1917**

Walter was born in Dewsbury in 1882. His father was George Whitehead, a Building Contractor born in Ossett in 1856 and died in 1910. His mother was Mary (nee Steel) born in Burton Salmon near Selby in 1856 and died in 1942. They were married on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1878 at Dewsbury Wesleyan Methodist Chapel.

They had two more children: Herbert, born in 1878 and emigrated to Canada in 1901 and George William, born in 1885, he also emigrated to Canada and served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War 1.

On the 1891 Census the family lived at 11, Anroyd Street, Dewsbury Moor, in 1901 and 1911 at 1, Reservoir Place, North Park Street, Dewsbury. In 1911 Walter was living in Everton Road, Broomhall, Sheffield.

Walter was a single man who was educated at Wheelwright Grammar School and was first employed in his father's business. From there he obtained a post as an inspector of roads and bridges in North-West Nigeria but he was affected by the intense heat and had to return home after 15 months. After the death of his father the family business was disposed of and he went to work for the West Riding County Council Surveyor's Department as a Clerk of Works, being responsible for schools in the Selby area and also a considerable amount of work in the Doncaster district. He was a Rugby Union player who played for Old Dewsburians, gaining Yorkshire County Caps and represented the North of England. Later, with his brother George, he turned to the Northern Union version (Rugby League) at Crown Flatt.

He enlisted in April 1915 into the 223<sup>rd</sup> Field Company Royal Engineers with the Service Number 98526 rising to the rank of Serjeant and was subsequently posted for four months to Egypt. He was sent to the Western Front around March 1916 and was wounded in the back and legs during the Battle of Arras; he was taken to the 8<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Duisans where he died on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1917. He was buried in Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun, Pas-de-Calais, France. Walter was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The area around Duisans was occupied by Commonwealth forces from March 1916, but it was not until February 1917 that the site of this cemetery was selected for the 8<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station from where burials were made (until April 1918), the 19<sup>th</sup> (until March 1918), and the 41<sup>st</sup> (until July 1917). In the Autumn of 1918 the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Clearing Stations remained at Duisans for two months, and the 7<sup>th</sup> was there from November 1918 to November 1920. There are now 3,207 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated at Duisans British Cemetery.

Walter 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 to former pupils of Wheelwright Grammar School, Birkdale Road, Dewsbury and as *W. Whitehead* on the War Memorial in St. John the Evangelist Church, Dewsbury Moor

In Memory of  
Serjeant  
**Walter Whitehead**

98526, 223rd Field Coy., Royal Engineers who died on 05 May 1917 Age 34

Son of George and Mary Whitehead, of 1, Reservoir Place, Dewsbury, Yorks.

Remembered with Honour  
**Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun**



Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Tony Emptage.