



Gerald Kemp Coultas

1898-1918

Gerald was born in Batley Carr on 17th June 1898 and baptised at All Saints Church, Dewsbury on 20th July 1898. His father was John Crabtree Coultas, a Commercial Book-Keeper born at Gledhow near Leeds in 1865 and died in 1932. His mother was Sophia (nee Kemp) born in Savile Town, Dewsbury in 1873 and died in 1947. They were married at Holy Innocents Church, Thornhill Lees on 20th April 1897.

Their other children were; George, born in 1899, Dorothy, born in 1902 and John Kenneth, born in 1905.

On the 1901 Census the family were living at Wharfe Street, Savile Town and in 1911 at 14, Pyrah Street, Dewsbury and later at "Rock House" Quarry Hill, Batley Carr, Dewsbury.

Gerald was a single man who was educated at Carlton Road Council School and Batley Grammar School. He attended St. Marks Church and Sunday school on Halifax Road, Dewsbury and was secretary to the local branch of the St. Andrew's Society. He showed an early leaning towards chemistry and was apprenticed by Messrs Boots, Dewsbury. He then moved to Soothill Coke Ovens where he was employed in the Chemistry Department.

He enlisted in August 1916 serving as Pioneer 288985 in the 1st Special Company of the Royal Engineers. He was killed in action in France on 23rd June 1918 and was buried in the field. In March 1919 he was reburied in Bouzincourt Ridge Cemetery, Albert, Somme, France. Gerald was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Special units of the Royal Engineers were established to use chemical weapons, as prior to 1915 the British Army had no capability for using Gas. In retaliation for the use of Chlorine by the Germans at Ypres, retaliatory measures were authorised by Lord Kitchener. A Special Brigade was formed, containing 4 Battalions, each of four companies. These would handle gases discharged from cylinders. Four other special companies were also formed to fire gas shells from Stokes Mortars, and four special sections to use flamethrowers.

Bouzincourt is a village 3 kilometres north-west of Albert. It was used as a field ambulance station from early in 1916 to February 1917, when the Allied line went forward from the Ancre; it remained partly in German hands after the battles of March 1918. The cemetery now contains 709 burials and commemorations of the First World War. 313 of the burials are unidentified and there is a special memorial to an officer of the 38th Division known to be buried in one of them.

Gerald 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 Plaque to former pupils of Batley Grammar School who lost their lives in World War 1.

In Memory of

Pioneer

Gerald Kemp Coultas

288985, 1st Special Coy., Royal Engineers who died on 23 June 1918 Age 20

Son of John Crabtree Coultas and Sophia Coultas, of Rock House Quarry Hill, Batley Carr, Dewsbury, Yorks.

Remembered with Honour

Bouzincourt Ridge Cemetery, Albert



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Suzanne Make.