



John William (Willie) Gill

1898-1918

John was born in Cleckheaton on 21st October 1898. His father was Daniel Gill, a wire drawer born in Cleckheaton in 1870 and died in 1928. His mother was Cecilia (nee Stuart) born in Huddersfield in 1873 and died in 1958. No birth record has been found for her. They were married at St. Peter's Church, Birstall on 2nd January 1894.

Daniel was imprisoned on six occasions during the 1890's and 1900's for offences against the poor rate, for failure to pay his rates and for neglect of his children.

Their other children were; Mary Stuart, born in 1894, Arthur, born in 1895 and died of wounds on 21st December 1915, Daniel, born in 1897 and died in 1897, Norman, born in 1901, George Stuart, born in 1903, Horace, born in 1905 and died in 1905, Winifred, born in 1906, Marjorie Emma, born in 1909 and died in 1919.

On the 1901 Census the family lived at 7, Union Street, Cleckheaton but in 1911 Cecilia was an inmate in Staincliffe Workhouse as were John, Norman, George, Winnifred (sic) and Marjorie (name recorded as *Margaret*). Mary was living in Heckmondwike with the family of her mother's brother John William Stuart and Arthur is a boarder in Heckmondwike with a family named Smithson. They all later moved to 33, Low Mills Lane, Ravensthorpe but Cecilia and Daniel were never reconciled.

Cecilia had two more children; Clarence Sutcliffe Gill, born in 1914 and Wilfred Sutcliffe Gill, born in 1917 and served in the Royal Army Medical Corps in World War 2, he was lost at sea on 7th December 1942 when the Troopship S.S. "Ceramic" was torpedoed about 420 miles west-northwest of the Azores. Their births were registered under the surname of Gill but no father's name was given. It is stated on Wilfred's records at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission that his father was named Harry Sutcliffe Gill. The publication of the 1921 Census shows Cecilia still living at 33, Low Mills Lane with Norman, George and Winnie and her two youngest sons but also recorded as a boarder is a Harry Sutcliffe age 45, an oil extractor in the employ of Sir Mark Oldroyd, Savile Town; it is almost certain that he was the father of Clarence and Wilfred. He was born in 1875 and died in 1951. In 1939 he is living at 20, Bank Street, Dewsbury whilst Cecilia is living at 4, High Street, Dewsbury working as a cleaner at a picture house.

John was a single man who worked as a labourer in a chemical factory and enlisted in the Durham Light Infantry in October 1916 as a reservist and was mobilised in March 1917, being initially attached to the 51st Battalion, one of a Young Soldier and Graduated Battalions. Under this system conscripts aged 18 years and one month were first sent to a Young Soldier Battalion and then, after basic training, moved into a Graduated Battalion to complete their training. He was then transferred into the 22nd Battalion in January 1918 serving as Private 78658 and was killed in action in France on 26th March 1918 during 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. John 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.

John is also commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and as John Willie Gill in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library.

In Memory of

Private

John W. Gill

78658, 22nd Bn., Durham Light Infantry who died on 26 March 1918 Age 19

Son of Daniel and Cecilia Gill, of 33, Low Mills Lane, Ravensthorpe, Dewsbury

Remembered with Honour

Pozieres Memorial



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

