



Leonard Crane

1879 – 1916

Leonard was born at Overton near Wakefield in 1879. His father was John Crane, a coal miner born in Ovington, Norfolk in 1838 and died in 1890. His mother was Martha (née Johnson) born in Ovington in 1838 and died in 1887. They were married on 7th November 1858. The family moved to Yorkshire between 1871 and 1874.

Their other children were; John, born in 1861, Albert, born in 1862, Elijah, born in 1865, Martha, born in 1867, Herbert, born in 1870, Lister, born in 1874 and Walter, born in 1876.

John was remarried in 1887 to a twice widowed mother of seven, Jane Munro née Lockwood, formerly Gamble (born in 1830 and died in 1903).

Leonard was married at St. Paul's Church, Easthorpe, Mirfield on 22nd July 1905 to Martha Dyson (born in 1880 and died in 1966). They had two children; Doris, born in 1908, and Jack, born in 1912. On the 1911 Census the family lived at 15, George Street, Ravensthorpe. Martha was remarried in 1919 to Wilfred Hepworth Smithson (born in 1879 and died in 1938).

Leonard enlisted on 15th February 1901 at Pontefract into the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry serving as Private 7691 and was posted to the South African Campaign exactly one month later. He fought in the Boer War and was discharged on 23rd June 1902. On his return he found he could not follow his previous occupation at Haigh's Pit as there was a strike at the mine. Consequently, he was found employment in the blanket mill of Wormald and Walker in Dewsbury by Major P.B. Walker. Over the next nine years he was Major Walker's orderly at the annual Territorial camps. Around 1910 he was awarded the Territorial Force Efficiency Medal in recognition of his 12 years service. He later left the mill and worked as a stoker at Mr. B.T. Ingham's Coke Ovens in Thornhill until the outbreak of war.

He was called up as a reservist in September 1914 and served for the first twelve months of the war in Officer's Training Schools in Harrogate and Scarborough, where he was later hospitalised with illness from late 1915 to early 1916. He was sent to the Western Front in June 1916 serving as Private 3/2979 in the 7th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and was killed in action by a shell on 7th October 1916 during the attack on Rainbow and Cloudy Trenches during what was to be the start of a phase of the Battle of the Somme referred to as the Battle of the Transloy Ridges from 1st to 20th October. His remains were never identified for burial and so he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the missing of the Somme. Leonard was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal in addition to the Queen's South Africa Medal with Clasps for Wittebergen, Cape Colony and Transvaal, and the King's South Africa Medal with Clasps for 1901 and 1902.

The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20th March 1918 and have no known grave. Over 90% of those commemorated died between July and November 1916.

Leonard 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 Ravensthorpe Memorial in St. Saviour's Church.

He is further commemorated in a unique way. He was the soldier who modelled for the Monument in Crow Nest Park, Dewsbury to all the men who had served and those who fell during the South African War 1899-1902. It was unveiled by Lord Robert Baden-Powell who played a significant part in the South African War, particularly at the Siege of Mafeking.

