



## Thomas Arthur Brunton

### 1894 - 1916

Thomas was born in Dewsbury in 1894. His father was Walter Brunton, a Journeyman Tailor born in Edinburgh in 1849 and died in Sunderland in 1898. His mother was Mary Jane (née Smith) born in Sunderland in 1852 and died in 1918. They were married in Leeds in 1891.

On the census for 1891 which was taken on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April, the family are living at 8, Potter Row, Hunslet, Leeds; all their surnames including Walter's are recorded as Smith. They already had three children; Isabella Smith, born in Wakefield in 1882, Alfred Smith, born in Buslingthorpe, Leeds in 1886 and Eva Mary Brunton, born in Bishopwearmouth, Sunderland in 1888. The Dewsbury birth records of James, born in 1892 and Thomas give their surname as Brunton.

On the 1901 Census, Isabella is employed as a Cook, working for a Solicitor in West Hartlepool, County Durham. Alfred is the adopted son of a Joseph Pearson, a sugar boiler in Dewsbury. Eva is a visitor in the Granby Hotel in Dewsbury. In 1911 she is recorded as the adopted daughter of a Mr. and Mrs. Oldroyd living at Back Ridgeway Street, Eastborough.

Mary Jane was remarried in 1899 to Dan Earnshaw (born in 1849 and died in 1925); on the 1901 Census they are living at East Parade, Dewsbury with James and Thomas whose surnames are recorded as Earnshaw. On the 1911 Census, Mary Jane and Dan are living alone at 24, Lawson Street, Eastborough.

Thomas later lived with his brother Alfred who at one time worked as a confectioner on Dewsbury market but later moved to Coventry and opened his own business as a sugar confectionary manufacturer.

When only 17 Thomas was awarded a gold watch, guard, medal and stamp case for rescuing a young girl from drowning in the river at Castleford. The accompanying note indicated it was a present from Louie Scholes of Wakefield, the name of the girl whose life he saved.

He enlisted in Coventry, serving as Private 4434 in the 2<sup>nd</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was killed in action in France on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1916 and was buried in Rue-du-Bacquerot No. 1 Military Cemetery, Laventie, Pas-de-Calais, France. Thomas was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

His mother Mary Jane received the news of his death in letters from a chaplain and his platoon commander. The latter wrote: *"I always found him very cheerful in difficulties, and his loss will be very keenly felt by myself and his comrades in the platoon, with whom he was deservedly a great favourite. The only thing to detract from his sad loss is the fact that he died doing his duty for his people and country."*

Laventie is a village in the Department of the Pas-de-Calais, 6 kilometres south-west of Armentieres and 11 kilometres north of La Bassee. Rue-du-Bacquerot No.1 Military Cemetery is 3 kilometres south of Laventie on the north side of the road to La Couture. The Rue-du-Bacquerot runs south-east of the village, from the Estaires-La Bassee road towards Fleurbaix, and the position of this road close behind the Allied front trenches during the greater part of the First World War made it the natural line of a number of small Commonwealth cemeteries. The cemetery contains 637 Commonwealth burials and commemorations of the First World War. 61 of the burials are unidentified and special memorials commemorate 12 casualties.

Thomas is commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library.

In Memory of

Private

## Thomas Arthur Brunton

4434, 2nd/7th Bn., Royal Warwickshire Regiment who died on 25 June 1916 Age 22

Son of Walter and Mary Jane Brunton, of Dewsbury, Yorks.

Remembered with Honour

Rue-Du-Bacquerot No.1 Military Cemetery, Laventie



Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Richard Houghton.