



## Willie Hirst

### 1897 - 1917

Willie was born in Dewsbury on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1897 and baptised on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1901 at St. James with Christ Church, Denby Dale Road, Thornes, Wakefield. His father was James Hirst, a Boilermaker and later a Greengrocer born in Dewsbury in 1868 and died in 1913. His mother was Louisa (nee Etherington) born in Dewsbury in 1870 and died in 1961. They were married on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1896 in St. John the Evangelist Church, Dewsbury Moor. Willie was their only child.

On the 1901 Census the family lived at Mark Lane, Wakefield and in 1911 at 47, Providence Street, Earlsheaton where James was operating his own business from home.

Willie was a single man who was employed as a blanket fuller at Messrs David Lee and Sons, Syke Ing Mills, Earlsheaton.

He enlisted in Dewsbury serving as Private No 40012 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. He was killed in action on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1917 during the aftermath of the Battle of Passchendaele. His remains were never identified for burial and so he is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. Willie was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The Tyne Cot Memorial forms the north-eastern boundary of Tyne Cot Cemetery and commemorates nearly 35,000 servicemen from the United Kingdom and New Zealand who died in the Ypres Salient after 16<sup>th</sup> August 1917 and whose graves are not known. The memorial stands close to the farthest point in Belgium reached by Commonwealth forces in the First World War until the final advance to victory.

The following article appeared in the Dewsbury Reporter on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1919.

#### *"NEWS WANTED*

*Mrs. J. Hirst, of 47, Providence Street, Earlsheaton, would be glad to receive any information concerning the fate of her son, Pte. Willie Hirst, No. 40012 "B" Company, 5<sup>th</sup> Platoon, 2<sup>nd</sup> King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, who was posted as wounded and missing on November 25<sup>th</sup> 1917, at Passchendaele Ridge, and since presumed to have died on or about that date; before being called to the Colours he worked for Messrs David Lee and Sons, Syke Ing Mills, Earlsheaton, as a blanket fuller."*

Willie is also commemorated in the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library and on the Earlsheaton Park War Memorial and on the Oak Reredos in St. Peter's Church, Earlsheaton and on the Memorial in the now demolished Chickenley Wesleyan Methodist Chapel (current whereabouts of Memorial untraced).

In Memory of

Private

**Willie Hirst**

40012, 2nd Bn., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry who died on 25 November 1917 Age 20

Son of Louisa Hirst, of 2, Short St., Chickenley, Dewsbury, Yorks., and the late James Hirst.

Remembered with Honour

**Tyne Cot Memorial**



Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

