John Henry Davill
1893 – 1915

John was born in York in 1893. His father was Henry Wood Davill, a Farm Labourer born in Farlington near York in 1867 and died in 1953. His mother was Mary Agnes (nee Daley) born in Ireland in 1867 and died in 1935.They were married in 1886.

Their other children were; Thomas, born in 1887 and served in World War 1, Mary Ann, born in 1889, James, born in 1891 and died in 1891, Charles, born in 1895 and served in World War 1, Henry, born in 1897 and died of wounds on 14th November 1918, Norah, born in 1899, Leonard, born in 1902, Richard, born in 1904 and Kate, born in 1906.

On the 1891 Census the family lived at Hope Street, Walmgate, York, in 1901 at Ellenthorpe Hall, Aldbrough near Boroughbridge, in 1911 at Appleton Roebuck near York; by 1914 the family had moved to live at 79, Sackville Street, Ravensthorpe.

John was a single man who in 1911 was living with his brother Charles as boarders on a farm at Shipton near York; John was a Ploughman and Charles was a Farm Lad.

He had attested pre-war into the Territorial Force of the Royal Garrison Artillery on 20th May 1912 serving as Driver 309 in the 1st/1st (West Riding) Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery. He was sent to the Western Front on 17th April 1915 and died of pneumonia on 31st July 1915, having been admitted to the 82nd Field Ambulance on the 28th, the date he was to have taken part in the Battle of Festubert. He was buried in Merville Communal Cemetery, Nord, France. John was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Merville is a town 15 kilometres north of Bethune and 20 kilometres south-west of Armentieres. It was the scene of fighting between the Germans and French and British cavalry early in October 1914 but from the 9th of that month to 11th April 1918, it remained in Allied hands. It was a railhead until May 1915, and a billeting and hospital centre from 1915-1918. On the evening of 11th April 1918, in the Battles of the Lys, the Germans forced their way into Merville and the town was not retaken until 19th August. Merville Communal Cemetery was used by French troops (chiefly cavalry) in October 1914, and for Commonwealth burials from that date until August 1916 (in the case of officers, to March 1918). It now contains 1,268 Commonwealth burials of the First World War.

John 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 Ravensthorpe War Memorial in St. Saviour's Church.

In Memory of

Driver

John Davill

309, 1st/1st (West Riding) Bty., Royal Garrison Artillery who died on 31 July 1915 Age 22

Son of Harry and Mary Davill, of Ravensthorpe, Dewsbury.

Remembered with Honour
Merville Communal Cemetery

Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Headstone photograph by courtesy of Richard Houghton.