Luke Blackburn
1892 - 1917

Luke was born in Chickenley on 15th April 1892 and baptised at St. Peter's Church, Earlsheaton on 19th January 1896. His father was Edwin Blackburn, a Publican born in Earlsheaton in 1847 and died in 1909. His mother was Annie (nee Exley) born in Batley in 1857 and died in 1929. They were married in 1886.

Their other children were; Edith, born in 1886, Joseph, born in 1888 and was accidentally killed in France on 14th March 1918 whilst on active service during World War 1, Walter, born in 1890 and was excused military service on account of having been deaf from the age of 10, Emily, born in 1895 and Edna Selina, born in 1898.

On the 1891, 1901 and 1911 Census Records the family are recorded as living at the Crown Hotel in Chickenley.

Luke was a single man who was educated at Earlsheaton Church School and was a keen athlete who was a member of the Horbury Marathon Harriers, winning two cups and a medal and running in cross country events with the Leeds Harriers. In 1911 he was a cobbler's apprentice but later had his own business as a boot and shoe maker.

He enlisted in September 1915 into the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry; he later transferred to the Royal Scots and was sent to the Western Front in August 1916. While in France he was transferred to the 10th Battalion Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) serving as Private 291633. He was wounded and returned to England for treatment in a hospital in Reading, where his family were able to visit him. He was then transferred again to the 1st/8th Battalion of the Cameronians and departed on 9th February 1917 as part of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. He was killed in action on 19th April 1917 during the Second Battle of Gaza and was buried in Gaza War Cemetery in what is today Israel and Palestine. Luke was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Gaza is 3 kilometres inland from the Mediterranean coast, 65 kilometres south-west of Tel Aviv. Gaza was bombarded by French warships in April 1915. At the end of March 1917, it was attacked and surrounded by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in the First Battle of Gaza, but the attack was broken off when Turkish reinforcements appeared. The Second Battle of Gaza, 17-19 April, left the Turks in possession and the Third Battle of Gaza, begun on 27th October, ended with the capture of the ruined and deserted city on 7th November 1917. Casualty Clearing Stations arrived later that month and General and Stationary hospitals in 1918. Some of the earliest burials were made by the troops that captured the city. About two-thirds of the total were brought into the cemetery from the battlefields after the Armistice. Gaza War Cemetery contains 3,217 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, 781 of them unidentified.

Luke 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 Earlsheaton War Memorial in Earlsheaton Park 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

L Blackburn

291633, 1st/8th Bn., Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) who died on 19 April 1917

Remembered with Honour
Gaza War Cemetery

Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Headstone photograph by courtesy of Hema Jaradah and Tony Emptage.