

The Farnhill WW1 Volunteers who died on active service - 1914 to 1918

Seven of the 68 Farnhill WW1 Volunteers died on active service during the war. Our project has researched the circumstances of their deaths using Regimental war diaries and contemporary newspaper reports.

The information presented below will form part of the biographies of these men, to be published at the end of the project.

Joseph Smith – 2nd battalion West Riding Regiment KiA 19/9/1914

Joseph Smith was a professional soldier who first joined the West Riding Regiment on 22/2/1901, when he was 18. He signed on for a period of seven years, which he later extended to eight.

He initially served with the army in Ireland and then, from October 1905 to January 1909, in India. He returned home in the middle of January 1909 and completed his eight years' service – and left the army – on 21/2/1909. He was automatically transferred to the army reserve for a four year period.

On 21/1/1913 Joseph Smith signed-up for a further four years in the army reserve, putting his signature against the statement:

I understand that I shall be liable to be called out for permanent service, in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, in the case of imminent national danger of great emergency.

On the outbreak of war he returned to the army (5/8/1914 or 10/8/1914, the documents conflict) as a member of 2nd battalion, West Riding Regiment. He was sent out to France on 13/8/1914 and on the 16th wrote home to say that he was quite well.

Joseph Smith was killed in action on 19/9/1914. He was aged 31, married with one daughter.

During the period of Joseph's service in France, the 2nd battalion West Riding Regiment formed part of the 13th Brigade of the 5th Division of the British Army. As such, he may have seen action at Mons and the retreat that followed; the battle of the Marne; and the battle of the Aisne – all of which took place in the period between 23/8 and 21/9/1914.

Joseph Smith is commemorated on a panel forming part of the La Ferté-sous-Jouarre Memorial to the Missing. There is no grave.



Photograph by kind permission of www.cpgw.org



La Ferté-sous-Jouarre Memorial to the Missing

Photograph by kind permission of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org)

Joseph Green – Royal Engineers (Inland Water Transport section); died 13/11/1916

Joseph Green appears to have attested his willingness to serve in the armed forces just ahead of the introduction of mandatory conscription, early in 1916. He was assigned to the Inland Water Transport section of the Royal Engineers, a posting which probably suited his civilian career – he worked for the Leeds-Liverpool Canal Company.

Corporal Joseph Green died while on active service in France. However his death was not as a result of enemy action; as was revealed in a letter sent to one of his sisters in Farnhill by his commanding officer:

"Dear Miss Green, - I regret to inform you that your brother, Corporal Joseph Green, was taken ill suddenly last Sunday night and passed away in his sleep, being found dead in his bunk by his officer, Sergt.-Major Solley, when he called in the morning. The Sergeant tells me that your brother had felt some pain that night. I think he vomited twice, but turned in and appeared to be sleeping the same as usual. The doctor, on examining him, told me that his death was due to disease of the kidneys. Your brother had not complained at all of feeling ill, but the sergeant tells me he was evidently delicate. The sergeant thought much of your brother, his future being of very good promise. I sympathise with you. There is just this to be thankful for - he had not long to suffer. I am writing this unofficially. Yours truly, Captain H. Pitman, R.E."



Photograph by kind permission of www.cpgw.org

Note: Inflammation of the kidneys (nephritis) was a common consequence of trench-foot, caused by infestation of the resulting sores by nematode worms.

Joseph Green was buried in Dunkirk Town Cemetery. He was aged 27 and unmarried.



Photograph by kind permission of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org)

Harry Walmsley – 1/5th battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment; died of wounds 14/12/1916

Harry attested his willingness to serve in the armed forces on 11/12/1915, swearing his oath in front of local magistrate James Bairstow at Crosshills.

As was usual for men who attested, he was initially accepted into the general army reserve before being assigned to the 11th (Reserves) battalion of the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment on 22/1/1916.

He underwent five months of training on home soil, after which he was transferred to 1/5th battalion and, on 22/6/1916, shipped over to France.

Harry Walmsley was wounded in the shoulder, on the Somme, in July 1916 but returned to active service almost immediately.



Photograph by kind permission of www.cpgw.org

However, the wound was not fully healed and by the beginning of November 1916 he was re-admitted to hospital in France. On 11th November, he was brought back across the Channel to a hospital in Wandsworth, south-west London. His mother and father were notified that his condition was serious and they travelled to London to visit him. They returned to Farnhill hopeful that his condition was improving. However this was not the case and Harry Walmsley died on 14/12/1916.

His body was brought back to the village, by train. It arrived in the evening and the coffin was taken to Hanover Street, on a bier, accompanied by eight members of Kildwick and Farnhill Institute.

The following day the coffin, draped with the Union Jack, was carried from his home to St. Andrew's Church, Kildwick, for the funeral. In the procession were members of the local organisations of which Harry was a member. The Brass Band played appropriate music.

Following the service, interment took place in St. Andrew's churchyard during which the choir of the Methodist Church sang hymns.



Harry Walmsley was aged 23 and unmarried.

Walter Dawson – Royal Naval Brigade, Hawke battalion died of wounds 5/2/1917

Walter Dawson enlisted on 25/11/1915 and joined the Royal Naval Division. This was an infantry unit set up by the Navy at the start of WW1 from navy and marine reservists and volunteers who were not needed for service at sea.

There is very little information available on the circumstances of Walter Dawson's death other than that he was wounded in action, in France, on 3/2/1917, and died in a field ambulance two days later.

A news report printed in the Keighley News, on 26/5/1917, gave the details.

SEAMAN W. DAWSON DIES OF WOUNDS

Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Dawson, of Main Street, Kildwick, received official intimation on Wednesday evening last that their son, Royal Naval Seaman Walter Dawson, had died of wounds received in action. Seaman Dawson joined the Royal Naval Division in November, 1915, and went to France with a land section of the Naval Division in July, 1916. He took part in the "big push" being in the light mortar battery. He had his last leave eight months ago.

He was a well-known local footballer, playing with Kildwick Old Boys for a good number of years, and was also a playing member of Sutton United Football Club in the season when the United won the cup and medals. Shortly after his arrival in London he took part in a football match, and at the close one of the officers tapped him on the shoulder and said, "If you fight as well as you play football you will make a grand sailor."

He was a weaving overlooker at Messrs. J. Woodrow and Sons, Standard Shed, prior to joining up, and was twenty-four years of age, and was married whilst on his last leave.

Seaman Dawson was a member of Kildwick Conservative Club, and the club flag has been flown at half-mast in memory of him. He was a thorough sportsman and highly respected by all who came in contact with him, being of bright and cheerful disposition. He was closely connected with Kildwick Church, being a Sunday-school scholar and formerly a choir boy. His brother, Archie Dawson is with the Portsmouth Naval Yacht Patrol.

On 18/2/1918, a service in memory of Walter Dawson was held in Kildwick Church. At the close, the 'Last Post' was played on the cornet by Richard Inskip of Kildwick Brass Band (one of the Farnhill Volunteers), and the Dead March from 'Saul' was played by George Spencer, the organist (father of Leo Smith, another volunteer).



Photograph by kind permission of www.cpgw.org

Walter Dawson was buried in Avelluy Wood Cemetery, Mesnil-Martinsart, near the town of Albert. He was aged 24 and had been married on 5/7/1916.



Photograph by kind permission of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Photograph by kind permission of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Ambrose Bower – 2nd Yorkshire Regiment (Alexandra, Princess of Wales' Own); KiA 26/10/1917

Ambrose Bower appears to have been born into a military family. His mother Louisa, known as Lucy, was born in India and it seems likely that both her father, Michael Crane, and her grandfather were in the army, and stationed there.

Ambrose must have been a soldier himself prior to WW1 as he was recorded as being an “Army Pensioner – 8 years”.

As a member of the Army reserve, Ambrose was automatically recalled to his regiment, 2nd Yorkshire Regiment (Alexandra, Princess of Wales' Own) – better known as the Green Howards, at the start of the war; and by 5/10/1914 he was in France.

He seems to have been involved in most of the major battles that took place in Northern France and Flanders between 1914 and 1917, including Mons, Ypres, Armentières, and Neuve Chapelle.

Early in 1917, following an action during the battle of the Somme, he was awarded the Military Medal for gallantry.

Ambrose Bower was killed in action on 26/10/1917, the first day of the second battle of Passchendaele. He is commemorated on a panel that forms part of the Tyne Cot Cemetery, Zonnebeke, Belgium. There is no grave.



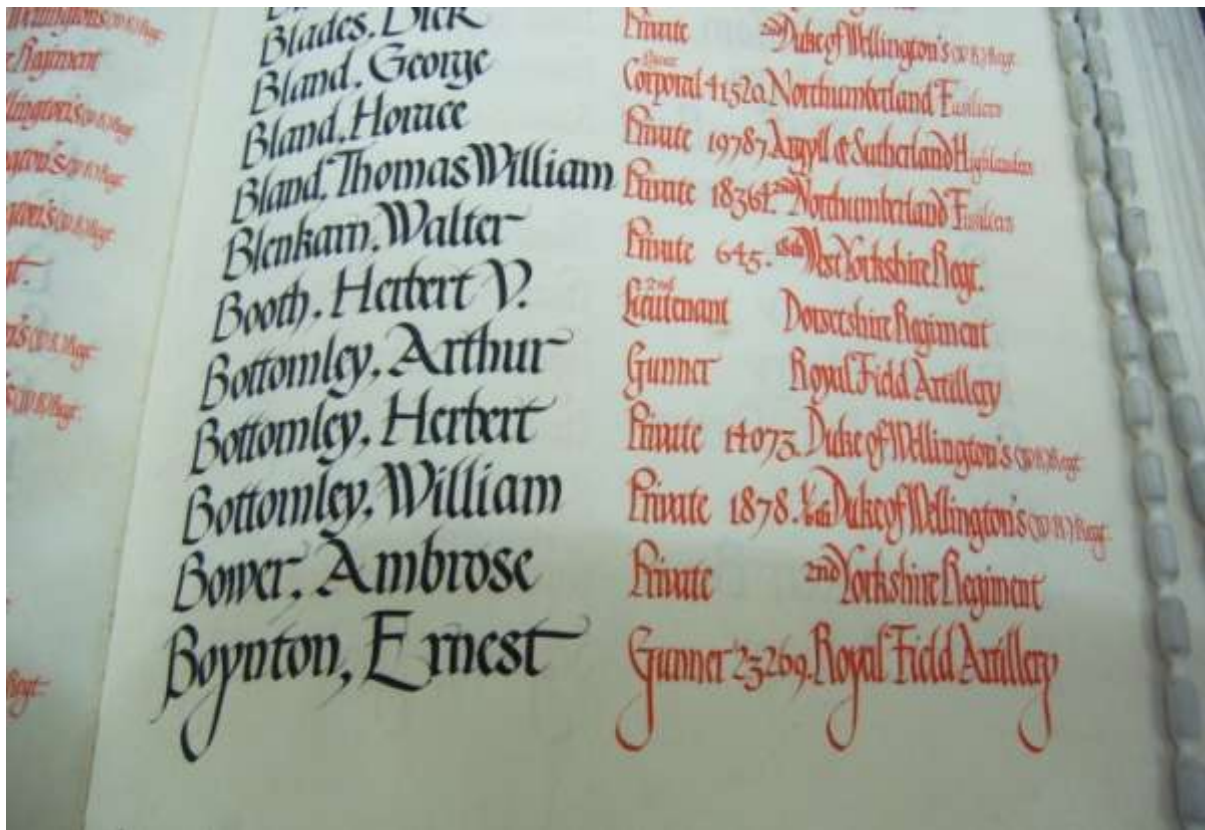
Photograph courtesy
of cpgw.org.uk



Tyne Cot Cemetery, Zonnebeke, Belgium

Photograph by kind permission of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org)

The Bower family moved out of Farnhill during the war and, consequently, Ambrose Bower's name does not appear on the Kildwick war memorial. He is commemorated on the Keighley Roll of Honour.



Photograph taken with the kind assistance of the staff of Keighley library

Ambrose Bower was aged 32; he was married and had a daughter.

George Inskip – 2/6th battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment; KiA 27/11/1917

George enlisted in September 1914 and, in due course, was assigned to 2/6th battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment.

The war diary of 2/6 battalion records that an inspection was carried out by the GOC of the Northern Army at its Bedford headquarters at 12:45pm on 3/2/1917, and later that day it received the order to embark on February 5th.

The battalion, a total of 33 officers and 953 men – including Private George Inskip, sailed from Southampton to Le Havre on three vessels: Mona's Queen, Caesarea and Huntscraft, arriving at 8am on 6/2/1917. By the 17th they were in the front line.

In November 1917, as part of the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division, 2/6 were involved in the Battle of Cambrai, an attempt by British forces to break through the German "Hindenburg Line" with infantry supported by tanks – one of the first times when tanks were used in large numbers.

By November 27th the attack was grinding to a halt.



Photograph courtesy of Freda Topham

The Regimental war diary of 2/6 battalion for 27/11/1917 reports that it attacked and took the village of Bourlon, but further progress could not be made due to a lack of support on either left or right flank, and the battalion withdrew under heavy shelling to a nearby wood.

Casualties included Officers – 4 dead and 4 wounded; Other Ranks – 28 killed, 137 wounded and missing. George Inskip was amongst the dead.

George Inskip is commemorated on a panel that forms part of the Cambrai Memorial, Louverval. There is no grave.



Cambrai Memorial, Louverval

Photograph by kind permission of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org)



George Inskip, commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial, Louverval
Photograph courtesy of Freda Topham

George Inskip was aged 24 and was unmarried.

Willie Barker – 11th battalion East Yorkshire Regiment KiA 24/9/1918

Willie Barker signed on as a Private with the West Yorkshire Regiment, but was subsequently transferred to the 11th battalion of the East Yorkshire Regiment. He was one of the youngest of the Farnhill WW1 Volunteers and the last to see active service.

He was sent to France on 11/9/1918 as part of a contingent of 141 men. The battalion was at this time resting behind the lines, and for a fortnight Willie's life appears to have been one of lectures, training, checking kit, and playing football.

The battalion returned to the front line during the afternoon and evening of September 24th and was fully in position by 7:30am on the 25th. The Regimental diary records this as being a quiet period and orderly transfer.

At some point on the 24th, during this quiet period, Willie Barker was killed. He was aged 21, and was the last of the seven Farnhill WW1 Volunteers to be killed on active service. His time on the front line can only have been a few hours at most.



Photograph by kind permission of
www.cpgw.org

Willie Barker was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery in Northern France, near to where he was killed.



Photograph by kind permission of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

His mother, who was his next of kin, refused to accept his medals and they were subsequently destroyed on the instructions of the War Office.

