

Leo Spencer (1896 – 1985)

Leo Spencer was born in 1896, in Farnhill. After living in Glusburn for a time the family may have had to separate for a while. Leo and his mother lived in Leigh in Lancashire, while his father lived in Ravensthorpe near Dewsbury.

However the family must have reunited at some point as Leo's mother died in the Dewsbury area and Leo himself was educated at Mirfield Grammar School before becoming an accountant.



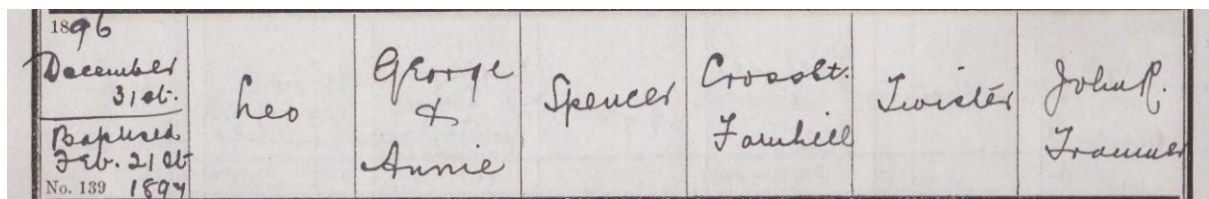
Photograph by kind permission of
Keighley News

Serving with the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, Leo Spencer was promoted to Sergeant. He suffered from trench foot and blood poisoning and, after being wounded by a shell burst, he was discharged from the army as medically unfit in 1918.

On return to Farnhill he resumed his roles, in various capacities, in the musical life of the village. Marrying at Kildwick, Leo moved his family to Riddlesden and eventually to Embsay where both he and his wife died. They were survived by a daughter.

Pre-war life

Leo Spencer was born on the 31st December 1896, in Farnhill, and baptised at the Methodist Chapel a few months later.



Scan of the baptismal register of Farnhill Primitive Methodist Chapel
From the archive of the Farnhill and Kildwick Local History Group

His father, George, was from a Farnhill family, and he worked in one of the local mills; his mother, Annie (nee Cryer) was from Junction. Leo was their only child.

Although Leo's baptismal record, shown above, recorded the family living in Cross Street, Farnhill, (in the vicinity of Mary Street / Hanover Street, and since demolished) the family later moved to Mary Street and by the time of the 1901 census were living at 15 Ash Street, Glusburn.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	Is inhabited	Is uninhabited	Is in process of erection	Is in process of demolition	Is in process of repair	Is in process of alteration	Name and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Condition as to Marital State	Age last Birthday of	Sex	PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	If Working at Home	WHERE BORN
15 Ash Street	1						George Spencer	Head	M	29	M	Warp Weaver (Washedman) Worker			York - Kildwick
							Annie do	Wife	M	28	F				Do Do
							Leo do	Son	M	4	M				Do Do

Extract from the 1901 census for Glusburn
Used under licence from the National Archive

At the time of the 1911 census the family were living apart. Annie and Leo were together, at 135 Hope Street, Leigh, in Lancashire, where George signed the form as head of the household but was not included in the list of those resident on the 5th April. He was living as a boarder in Ravensthorpe, near Dewsbury. The reason for this separation is not known, but perhaps George's work – he was recorded as being the Manager of a Silk Factory – took him away from home ?

It was, perhaps, while he and his mother were living in Leigh that Leo took up the violin.



Leo Spencer with violin, photographed at a studio in Leigh
Courtesy of Andrew McIntyre

The family must have been reunited, in Dewsbury, as Leo attended Mirfield Grammar School and his mother Annie died there in March 1913. She was buried at St. Andrew's, Kildwick, on the 23rd. She was 40 years old.

Leo may have worked for some time in a mill owned by his father, but by the time WW1 started he was an accountant, working for Bingley Council.

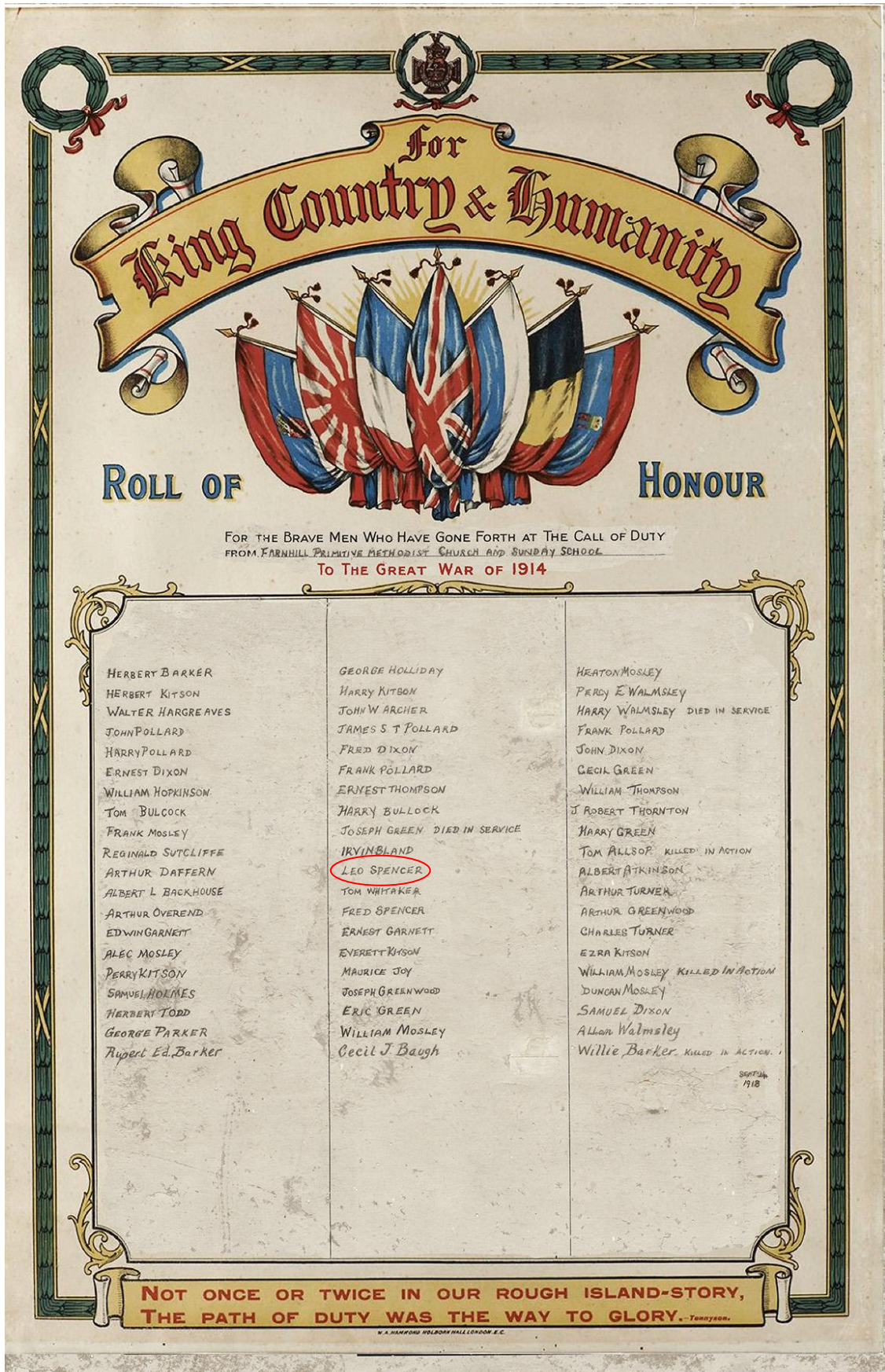
Note: Family members believe that George Spencer may have owned a textile business operated out of what was left of the old Farnhill Mill on Main Street, that had been partially destroyed by fire in December 1905.

WW1 service

Leo Spencer attested his willingness to serve with the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment on the 19th July 1915, at Skipton. He was assigned to the domestic, third-line, 3/6 battalion.

In the West Yorkshire Pioneer of 19th November 1915 there was a report of an event held in Farnhill Institute, to provide "winter comforts for the lads serving with the Colours". The piece ended with a list of the men who were "to be remembered", which included Leo Spencer.

Leo's name was also recorded on the Farnhill Methodist Chapel's roll of honour, unveiled on 9th July 1916.



The digitally-restored Farnhill Methodist Roll of Honour (1916)

On the 26th September 1916, Leo was promoted to Lance Corporal and transferred to 1/7 battalion, a front line unit. He was posted to France, where he served until the 2nd February 1917.

The Regimental diary for 1/7 battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment recorded that January 1916 was very cold and when the trenches, southwest of the town of Arras, weren't frozen, and covered in snow, they were wet and muddy. It appears that at sometime during this period of extreme weather Leo suffered from trench foot and septic poisoning and was invalided home.

Between the 3rd February and the 9th June 1917, Leo Spencer was back in the UK and immediately on his return to France, on 10th June, was transferred to the 8th battalion.

The 8th battalion were heavily involved in the battle of Passendaele (31st July to 10th November 1917). Entrenched near the Belgian town of Poperinge, in West Flanders, the battalion lost 116 men (killed, wounded and missing) in the first half of August; and a further 191 men in two days on the 27th and 28th of the same month.

Leo appears to have come through these assaults uninjured and was promoted to full Corporal, and acting Lance Sergeant, on 29th August. However he would remain in France for less than another four months.

At the end of November 1917, 8th battalion were stationed at Bully-les-Mines, just west of the town of Lens in northern France. On the 3rd of December they went into the front line.

On the 5th December, Leo was wounded by a shell burst and invalided back to the UK, as reported in the Craven Herald (28/12/1917).



By kind permission of Craven Herald

Leo Spencer was discharged from the army as "no longer physically fit for war service" on the 15th June 1918, and awarded a Silver War Badge. His service record suggests that his discharge was the result of an accidental gunshot wound to the right hip. From the documents that survive it is unclear whether this was a reclassification of the incident on 5th December 1917 or a subsequent injury.

Note: Silver War Badges (SWB) , sometimes known as the "Discharge Badge", the "Wound Badge" or "Services Rendered Badge", were first issued in September 1916. They were awarded to men who were unable to continue in the services due to illness or wounds sustained. They were intended to be worn on civilian clothing and so counteract the practice of “white-feathering” men who had wounds that rendered them unfit for war service, but which were not obvious from their outward appearance.

Name.	Corps.	Rank	Regtl. No.
S P E N C E R	W. Rid. B.	Cpl.	24107
L eo.			

Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	O/2/10/B91020		Disch. 15.6.18
BRITISH	" "		
STAR			
pwb List O/1899/2			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

K 1380.

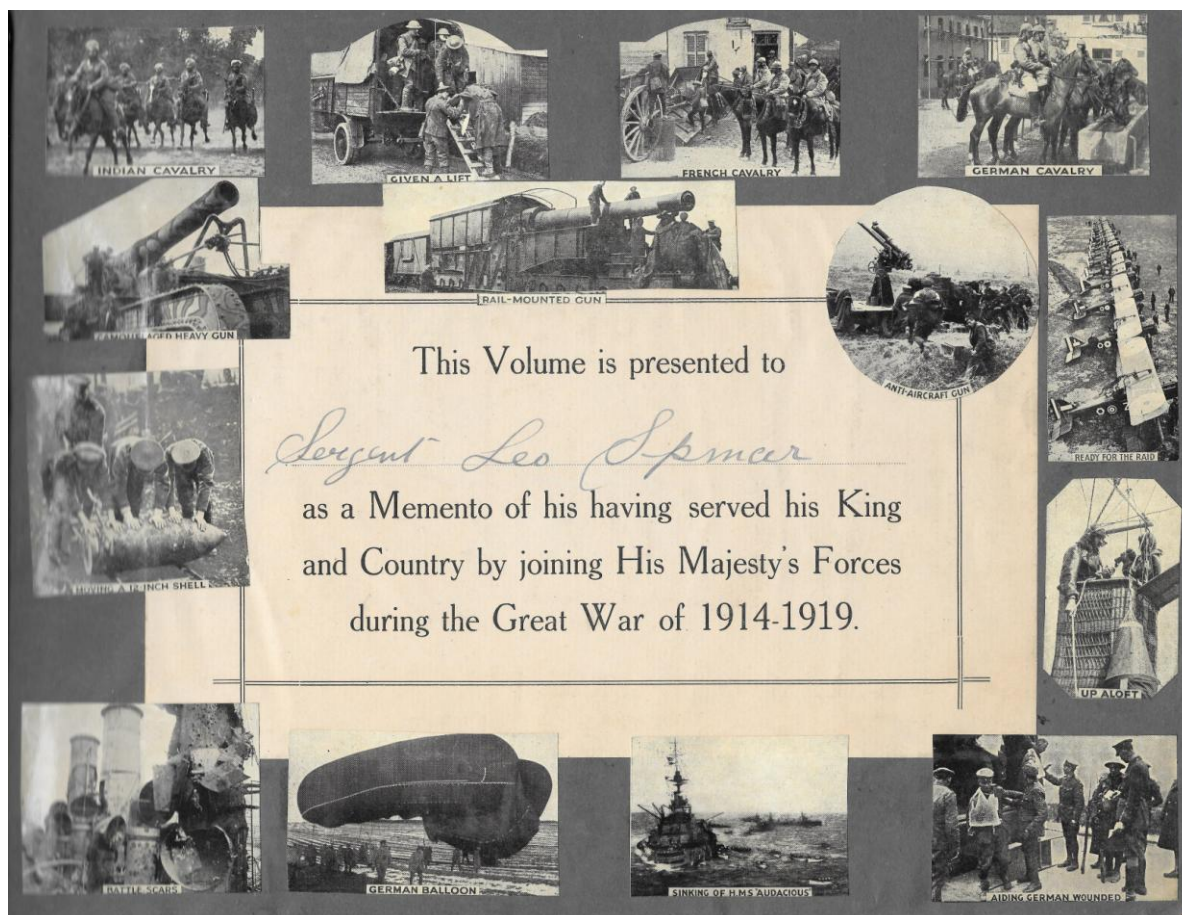
Leo Spencer's medal card, showing his eligibility for a Silver War Badge and the date of his discharge

Used under licence from the National Archive

West Riding Regt 3/6			Pte	19.7.15
W.R. Regt 4th	Posted		Lt Col	26.9.16
	transferred			
	Posted		Lt Col	3.2.17
3	Posted		Lt Col	8.11.17
8	Posted		Lt Col	10.6.1917
* 8	Appointed (paid)		Lt Col	29.8.1917
19/10/17	Posted		Lt Col	22.12.1917
* 8	Promoted		Lt Col	29.8.1917
D.	Discharged			
	S.S.W. of P.H. 1244		Lt Col	15.6.18
	(A.C.)			

An extract from Leo Spencer's WW1 service record – showing the various battalions of the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment he served with.
Used under licence from the National Archive

After the war, Leo, along with all the other men of Craven who served with the armed forces, received a copy of the book "Craven's Part in the Great War". Leo decorated the inside front cover of his copy with war pictures cut from magazines of the period.



Leo Spencer's own copy of Craven's Part in the Great War
Courtesy of Andrew McIntyre

Post-war life

After his discharge from the army, Leo returned to Farnhill.

On 6th July 1918 he was a member of a band, which also included his father and a fellow Farnhill WW1 Volunteer William Feather, which provided music for an event held in the grounds of Kildwick Hall to raise funds for the Institute.

KILDWICK AND FARNHILL.

AN "OLDE TIME FAYRE."—An "Old Time Fayre" was held in the grounds of Kildwick Hall on Saturday afternoon by permission of Messrs. Brigg. In the afternoon and evening children from the Kildwick National School, in lacy costume, gave concerts and dances under the direction of Mr. Tom Appleby, and solos were given by Miss M. Gotch, Miss D. Hill, Master Jack Feather, and Miss E. Dawson. Encores were frequent. The "star" soloist was Miss Dorothy Hill, a promising young soprano, who was recalled for all her numbers. A party of Bradford ladies gave displays of Old English and national dances, and at the evening performance they were encored for every item. Their programme included national dances by Misses G. Moore, A. Coates, E. Pickard, and E. Holdsworth, and a fine performance closed with a "minuet." Mrs. Sheldon and Mr. George Spencer, assisted by a string band, composed of Miss D. Gill, and Messrs. W. Feather and Leo Spencer, were the accompanists, and the proceeds were for the Kildwick and Farnhill Institute funds. Side shows in the grounds and the hall armoury proved great attractions, and upwards of 700 people were present.

A report of the Olde Time Fayre held at Kildwick Hall in July 1918

By kind permission of Keighley News

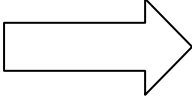
After the war, Leo continued to participate, along with other members of his family, in the musical life of the village. Below are two reports from August and November 1919.

KILDWICK & FARNHILL.

The War Memorial.—A sale of work on behalf of the Kildwick Church of England School War Memorial was held in the schoolroom on Saturday. Mrs. Hodge presided in the absence of the Vicar (Rev. C. E. V. Hodge). The sale was opened by Mrs. E. A. Matthews (Eastburn), to whom and to Mrs. Hodge bouquets were presented by two school girls, Miss Mary Hill and Miss Marjorie Green. There were various well-filled stalls including Old Scholars' (girls) stall, old boys' stall, present day scholars' work stall, and present day scholars' produce stall, flower stall, refreshment stall, and bran tub. Selections of music were given by Mr. Edward Spencer (piano) and Mr. Leo Spencer (violin). The proceeds amounted to £35.

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ELOCUTIONARY RECITALS.



During last week-end Mr. Edward F. French, the well-known elocutionist, paid a visit to the Farnhill Primitive Methodist Church in connection with the choir anniversary. On Saturday evening, before a crowded audience presided over by the Rev. T. Ladlay, Mr. French gave in the school a series of recitals, and fully upheld the high reputation won by him on his previous visit. His best numbers were "Craven" and a boy's story, "The Roman Road." Mr. French also gave monologues, and Miss Dorothy Hill contributed songs, and Mr. Leo Spencer violin solos. A trio was given by Miss V. Spencer and Messrs. E. and L. Spencer, and the choir sang two part-songs. Mr. R. E. Barker was the accompanist.

On Sunday the pulpit was occupied in the morning by Mr. A. J. Clayton (Cononley), and at the afternoon service Mr. French gave a number of recitals and Miss Dorothy Hill a solo, and the choir an anthem. At the evening service, which was chiefly taken up with recitals by Mr. French, there was a crowded congregation. The last recital of Mr. French, "The Singing of the Magnificat" (with organ accompaniment), was splendid. Miss Hill gave a solo and the choir anthems. Mr. E. Spencer was conductor, and Mr. R. E. Barker presided at the organ. The proceeds for the choir funds amounted to over £19.

By kind permission of Keighley News

Note: Edward Spencer was Leo's uncle, and occasional organist at Farnhill Methodist Church.

On the 15th December 1920, Leo Spencer married Annie Smith at St. Andrew's Church, Kildwick – they had probably both attended Kildwick school at about the same time.



Annie Smith in costume as "Sleeping Beauty" for a play performed at Christmas 1912, at Kildwick school
Courtesy of Andrew McIntyre

The marriage was witnessed by two other Farnhill WW1 Volunteers, George Holliday and Benjamin Thornton Smith (the bride's uncle). Annie gave her home address as Prospect View, Starkey Lane, Farnhill, which may have been the name given to numbers 62 and 64, Ben Thornton Smith's home.

B121535

CERTIFIED COPY of an ENTRY OF MARRIAGE.
Pursuant to the Marriage Acts, 1836 to 1898.

[Printed by authority of the Registrar General.]

M. Cert. Church.

Registration District Skipton

1920. Marriage Solemnized at The Parish Church of Kildwick in the County of York

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
109	Dec 15 th	Leo Spencer	23	Bachelor	Hander	Crag End Kildwick	George Spencer	Manufacturer
	1920	Annie Smith	21	Spinster	—	Prophet View Kildwick	—	—

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by or after banns by me,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, { Leo Spencer } in the Presence of { George Holliday }
{ Annie Smith } { Ben T. Smith } C. E. V. Hodges, Vicar.

I, C. E. V. Hodges, of Kildwick, in the County of York, do hereby certify that this is a true copy of the Entry No. 109 in the Register Book of Marriages of the said Church, and that such Register Book is now legally in my custody.

WITNESS MY HAND this 15th day of December, 1920.

C. E. V. Hodges, Vicar.

The Act 3 & 4 Geo. V., cap. 27, section 3, enacts that "FORFEIT of the following documents, if committed with intent to defraud or deceive, shall be FELONY and punishable with Penal Servitude for any term not exceeding fourteen years:—Any register or record of Births, Baptisms, Marriages, Deaths, Burials, which were in, or hereafter may be, by law authorized or required to be kept in the United Kingdom, relating to any Birth, Baptism, Marriage, Death, Burial, or any part of any such Register, or any Certified Copy of any such Register, or of any part thereof."

State "Rector," "Vicar," or "Curate."

Spencer – Smith marriage certificate – scanned from the original

The 1921 census records Leo and Annie living at 13 Starkey Lane. Leo was working at the Hayfield Mill in Keighley.

Shortly afterwards the couple moved to 17 Mary Street, which is where their two daughters were born: Betty (born 19th April 1922), and Mary Cryer (born 5th July 1923). Sadly, Mary died in March 1924.

In 1927 or 1928 Leo and his family left Farnhill and moved to Compeigne Avenue, Riddlesden.

The 1939 register, compiled at the start of WW2 to allow ration cards to be issued, recorded them living at 11 Westleigh Avenue, Riddlesden. Leo was a clerk, working for the Ministry of Labour; Annie and Betty were both involved in silk fabrication. The household also included Sarah Hannah Smith, Annie's mother, who died there in 1948.

Note: Many local mills worked with artificial silk during WW2, when it was in high demand for use in parachutes and barrage balloons.

Betty, Leo and Annie's daughter, married in 1942. She would marry for a second time in 1949.

After WW2, Leo continued working for what became the Ministry of Employment, at Skipton Employment Exchange – where he was photographed, with other members of the staff, by the Craven Herald in 1960.

Friends of the public



SKIPTON EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE STAFF photographed during a lunch hour, outside their office this week.

Seated (left to right): Miss M. Coates, Mr. W. Whalley (manager), Mrs. E. Whincup.

Standing: Mr. L. Spencer, Mr. R. J. Dyer, Mr. H. E. Stephens, Mr. J. Kirby.

(Craven Herald and Pioneer Picture.)

Staff of Skipton Employment Exchange, 1960. Leo Spencer is standing, far left

Courtesy of the Craven Herald

Leo and Annie moved from Riddlesden to 5 Cavendish View, Embsay, near Skipton, in the mid-1950s. This is where they were living in December 1970, when they celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary (reported in the Craven Herald 18/12/1970).

Mr. and Mrs. Leo Spencer, of 5 Cavendish View, Embsay, brought forward celebrations of their Golden Wedding, which was on Tuesday, to Saturday, when a family party was held at their daughter's home.

Mr. Spencer, 74 years old, was, before he retired in 1961, a civil servant with the Ministry of Labour. His 33 years service comprised 5½ in Kighley and the remainder at the Skipton office.

A native of Farnhill, he moved to Lancashire at an early age, and was educated at Leigh Grammar School and later at Mirfield G.S. He saw active service in Belgium and France during the Great War, and was wounded in the hip after Passchendaele. He had attained the rank of sergeant by the time of his demob.

From a musical family (his father, George, was organist at Kildwick Church), he played the violin. He was also a keen photographer, but he has given both these hobbies up.

Mrs. Annie Spencer is 71, and is also a native of Farnhill. Her maiden name was Smith and she was a chorister like her husband at St. Andrew's Church, Kildwick, where they were married by the Rev. C. E. V. Hodge, Vicar. She also sang in the choir at Embsay.

Resident in the village for 17 years, the couple have one daughter, six grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

News report of Leo and Annie's Golden Wedding anniversary

By kind permission of Craven Herald

Annie Spencer died, in June 1972, after falling, breaking her hip, and being admitted to hospital. She was buried in Kildwick graveyard, in an old family plot.

Leo subsequently moved into sheltered accommodation in Embsay, at Laurel Croft.

Leo Spencer died, in Skipton General Hospital, on the 11th September 1985; aged 88. He was cremated and his ashes buried in Kildwick graveyard, in the same plot as his wife.

SPENCER. — September 11, at Skipton General Hospital. Leo aged 88 years of 8 Laurel Croft, Embsay. Beloved husband of the late Annie and dear father of Betty and father in law of Jim and a loving grandad and great-grandad. Funeral service today Friday, September 13, at 2.00 p.m. at St. Mary's Church, Embsay, prior to cremation at Waltonwtrays, Skipton, friends please meet at the church. Flowers to Howcrofts Chapel of Rest, Duckett Street, Skipton by 1.00 p.m. Please.

Leo Spencer's death notice
By kind permission of Craven Herald



Annie & Leo Spencer's grave – part of a large family plot in Kildwick graveyard



Detail of the gravestone – Annie’s grandfather, mother, and Leo



Annie & Leo probably photographed in the early 1970s
Courtesy of Andrew McIntyre

Postscript

Leo and Annie’s daughter, Betty, married and had children. Descendants are known to be living in the local area.

Leo Spencer – a life in summary

Born: 31/12/1896, Farnhill
Baptised: 21/2/1897, Farnhill Methodist Chapel
Died: 11/9/1985, Skipton General Hospital **Aged:** 88
Home address: 8 Laurel Croft, Embsay

Parents

Father: George; b. 10/10/1871, Farnhill; d. 7/6/1934, Farnhill
Mother: Annie (nee Cryer); b. 22/6/1872, Junction; bapt. 25/8/1872, Kildwick;
d. March 1913, Ravensthorpe; buried 28/3/1913, Kildwick
Married: 9/6/1896, Kildwick

WW1 service

Service period: 19/7/1915 to 15/6/1918
Regt.: Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment. (Private, later Sergeant; no. 24107)
Medals: Victory Medal, British War Medal, Silver War Badge
Home address: Crag End Cottage, 1 Grange Road, Farnhill

Relationship to other volunteers

Lily Green, sister of the three Green brothers, became Leo's step-mother in 1932 (George Spencer's third wife).

Ben Thornton Smith's half-sister was the mother of Leo Spencer's wife, Annie Smith.

Marriage

Wife: Annie Smith; b. 1/9/1898; bapt. 15/9/1899, St. Andrew's Kildwick
d. 25/6/1972, Worth Valley (Registration district); buried Kildwick
Date: 15/12/1920, St. Andrew's Kildwick

Children

Betty; b. 19/4/1922; bapt. 28/5/1922, Kildwick;
m(1). Walter E. Head, 1942, Keighley (Registration district)
m(2). Angus G. McIntyre, 1949, Worth Valley (Registration district)
Mary Cryer; b. 5/7/1923, Farnhill; bapt. 12/8/1923, Kildwick; d. 11/3/1924, Farnhill

