

Percy Edward Walmsley

(1894 – 1986)

Percy Walmsley was born in 1894 and came from an established and extended Farnhill family.

After leaving Kildwick School he worked as a weaver and he was married, in 1915, whilst a private with the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment.

During the course of his war service Percy seems to have used up some of his proverbial 'nine lives'. He suffered frostbite and trench foot, was wounded by shell burst and survived the sinking of two ships he was travelling back to England on.



Photograph courtesy of Sam Tyler

In 1919 he was discharged from the army as being no longer fit to serve.

Percy and his wife, who had a daughter and a son, lived at various addresses in Farnhill. They resided, for a few years, in neighbouring Cononley – before moving back to the village of Percy's birth.

Ethel Walmsley, Percy's wife, died in 1957. He lived on for almost another twenty-nine years. When Percy died, aged ninety-one, he was the last surviving Farnhill World War 1 Volunteer.

Pre-war life

Percy Edward Walmsley was born on 29th June 1894, in Farnhill, and baptised later that summer in St. Andrew's Church, Kildwick. His father, James Walmsley, was from an established Farnhill family and his mother, Elizabeth (nee Barrett), was originally from Luton.

Percy was very much the baby of the family, the last of seven children – the previous six having been born between 1873 and 1885. However he was not the youngest member of the household.

Percy's sister Margaret married William James Baugh in 1897. However, when William died of a kidney infection in 1900 (at the age of just 21), Margaret and her young son, Cecil Baugh, moved back to live with her parents at 25 Main Street, Farnhill.

3 ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	4 HOUSES			7 Name and Surname of each Person	9 RELATION to Head of Family	10 Qualifica- tion as to Marriage	11 Age last Birthday of		13 PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	14 Employer, Worker, or Own account
	1 In- habited	2 In Orphan House	3 Not in Orphan House				Males	Females		
23 Main St 25 - 80 -	1			2 Jane Walmsley	Head	Single	58		Retired Cotton Weaver	
				4 James Walmsley	Head	Mar	49		Wounded York W. Soldier	Worker
				Elizabeth Baugh	Wife	Mar	47			
				Margaret Baugh	Daughter	Wid.	24		Wounded Twister	Worker
				William A. Walmsley	Son	Mar	15		Wounded Twister	Worker
				Percy E. Walmsley	Son	Mar	6			
				Cecil J. Baugh	Grandson	Mar	3			

Extract from the 1901 census, showing 25 Main Street, Farnhill – Margaret and Cecil Baugh living with her parents
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Like many of the Farnhill WW1 Volunteers, Percy attended Kildwick school where he appears to have been a good student. One of his quarterly school report cards, for October 1903, survives and includes the following comment from the headmaster, Thomas Appleby: *Percy has done good work & deserves his place.* He was ranked second in a class of 13.

Kildwick Nation.
 MIXED DEPARTM

Quarterly Examination by the Head Master.

Name of Scholar..... *Percy Walmsley*.....
 Standard..... *III*..... Date..... *Oct 20th 1903*.....
 Number in Class..... *13*..... Place in Class..... *2nd*.....
 Attendances..... *98*..... Absences..... *None*.....
 Remarks..... *Percy has done good work & deserves his place*.....
 Signed..... *Thos. Appleby*.....
 Head Master.

Percy Walmsley's school report card – October 20th 1903
 By kind permission of Kath Whitton

At Christmas 1906, he was one of the pupils recorded in the school log book as having won a prize for their performances in an end of term examination.

By the time of the 1911 census, when the household at 25 Main Street consisted of just him and his parents, Percy had left school and was working as a weaver at one of the local mills. Subsequent reports suggest that this was at Sir John Horsfall's Hayfield Mill, in Glusburn.



Hayfield Mill (left) with Glusburn Institute (right)
Photograph courtesy of Keighley and District Digital Archive

WW1 service

Percy Walmsley's WW1 service records have not survived (70% of the records were destroyed during WW2, in the London blitz of 1940) but it is clear from other sources that he entered the forces on 12th October 1914 as a member of 1/6 battalion the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment (Private, no. 2832).

He then began a period of training in the UK. W.B. Whitham, a resident of Farnhill during WW1, recorded in his diary that he spent Easter Day 1915 (4th April) in Derby with his brother, John Spencer Whitham, and other men from the West Riding Regiment including Percy Walmsley. The diary also recorded that John Spencer Whitham was moved from Derby to Doncaster on 12th April 1915; it seems likely that Percy Walmsley was moved at the same time.

On 1st May 1915 Percy married Ethel Mary Jane Beedom, of Sutton, at Keighley Register Office. He gave his address as the Race Course Camp, Doncaster, and his occupation as a Private with 2/6 battalion West Riding Regiment. From August 1914 the racecourse in Doncaster was used as a camp for soldiers.

1915 Marriage solemnized at <i>The Registrar Office</i> in the District of <i>Farnhill</i> in the County of <i>York</i>								
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.
132	First May 1915	Percy Edward Walmsley	20 years	Bachelor	Private, 2nd Batt. (Army) (General Labour)	Rece. House Camp, Doncaster	James Walmsley	Master Weaver
		Ethel Mary Jane Beedom	21 years	Spinster	Driver at a Worsley Mill	17 Wighill Street, Sutton Mill, Sutton	John Beedom	General Labourer
Married in the <i>Registrar Office</i> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the _____ by <i>Reverend</i> <i>by me,</i> This Marriage was solemnized between us, { <i>Percy Edward Walmsley</i> } in the Presence of { <i>Thomas Beedom</i> } <i>J. J. Mitchell, Registrar</i> { <i>Ethel M. J. Beedom</i> } { <i>Lily Beedom</i> } <i>S. M. Clarkson</i> <i>Superintendent Registrar</i>								

Walmsley – Beedom marriage certificate
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Note: The 2/6 battalion designation was either incorrect or, more likely, a temporary assignment. A temporary assignment to 2/6 battalion would account for why Percy did not leave for France with the rest of 1/6 battalion on 14th April 1915.

A WW1 medal roll of men serving abroad in 1915, recorded Percy Walmsley as entering service in France, with 1/6 battalion, on 29th June 1915 – his 21st birthday. The battalion was located at Le Doulieu, just west of Armentières, a town in Northern France, close to the border with Belgium.

Back in Farnhill, Ethel gave birth to the couple's first child, a daughter called Eileen, on 18th October.

In November 1915, 1/6 battalion were entrenched near Elverdinghe in the Ypres salient. The weather was wet and freezing cold. On the 7th the Regimental Diary reported:

During this tour in the trenches ... In some places the mud and water was up to the waist; and in most places up to and over the knees ... Through exposure 57 men were sent to Hospital, of these 27 men were suffering from trench feet, 1 from Pneumonia ... Gum boots were issued and worn after first day.

It is likely that Percy Walmsley suffered frostbite during this period and was sent home for treatment in the UK.

On 13th November 1915 an event was held in the Institute building, in Farnhill, arranged 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 Percy Walmsley.

By the time news of this event was reported in the local press (West Yorkshire Pioneer 19/11/1915), Percy was in the war hospital in Epsom – albeit after having had some adventures in the Channel. He wrote home to his friend Peter Baldwin, who took the letter into Kildwick school to show the headmaster Tom Appleby.

Nov 22

Mr P. G. Baldwin (School Manager) visited the school this morning. I brought an interesting letter from an old scholar, Pte P. Walmsley, who was on Hospital Ship "Anglia" when she was sunk in passage to Dover.

Extract from the Kildwick school log – November 1915

For further information on Percy Walmsley's travel problems, see [Article – Percy Walmsley and the "Anglia" disaster](#).

His family received the standard letter of notification from the army on the 24th November 1915.

Army Form B. 104-80.

No. (If reply only, please quote above No.)

Territorial Force Record Office,
York Station.
November 24th 1915.

Sir,

I regret to have to inform you that a report has this day been received from the War Office to the effect that (No.) 2832
(Rank) Private (Name) Percy Ed. Walmsley.
(Regiment) 16th West Riding is ~~seriously~~ ill at
County of London War Hospital, Epsom, suffering

I am at the same time to express the sympathy and regret of the Army Council.

Any further information received in this office as to his condition or progress will be at once notified to you.

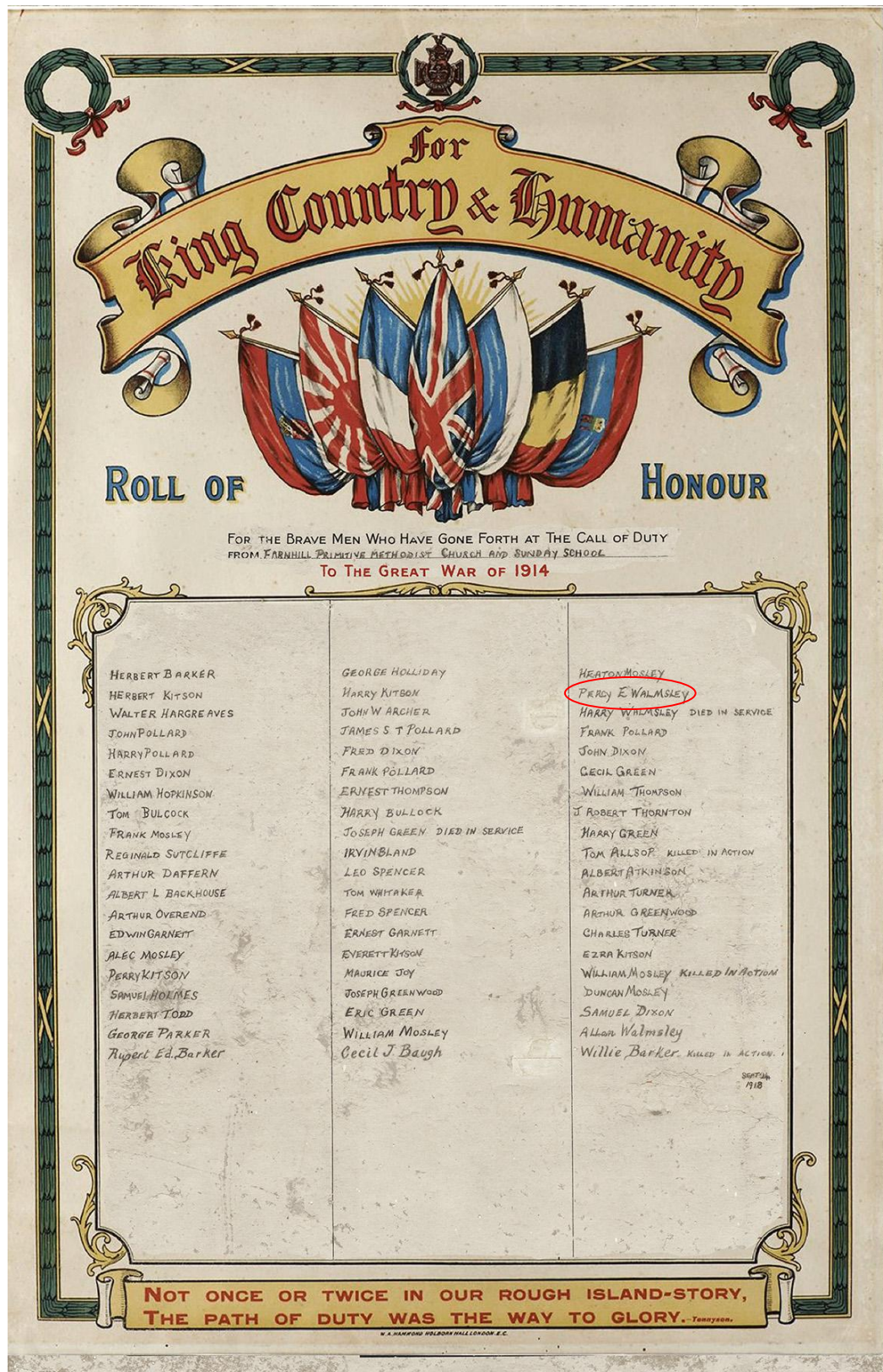
M^r: James Walmsley I am,
25 Main Street
Farnhill
Kildwick.

Sir,
Your obedient Servant,
C. H. Clough
Officer in charge of Records.

(H31219) Wt W2537-200,000-8/14. W & Co., Ltd.
Forms
B. 104-80

The "I regret to have to inform you" letter sent to Percy Walmsley's parents – he was in hospital with frostbite
By kind permission of Sam Tyler

Percy's name was included on Farnhill Methodist Chapel's Roll of Honour, which was unveiled on 9th July 1916 – by which time he was probably back in France, possibly after having been transferred to 2nd battalion Yorkshire Regiment (the Green Howards).



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

In March 1918, while serving with the Yorkshire Regiment, Percy Walmsley wrote home to his wife to let her know that he was in hospital again (reported in the Craven Herald 5/4/1918).

Signaller Percy Walmsley writes to his wife, March 26th, stating that he is in hospital, having had a bad shaking up with a shell. He is in the Green Howards and in November 1915 was being invalided home with trench feet and was on the hospital ship Anglia when she was mined in the Channel. He had just been rescued by the collier Lusitania when she was also blown up, and he was again thrown into the water, but was rescued by another vessel and landed safely in England.

Percy Walmsley letting his wife know that he was in hospital
By kind permission of Craven Herald

Later he wounded yet again, when a gunshot wound to the chest marked the end of Percy Walmsley's active service. He spent Armistice Day, 11th November 1918, in hospital, from where he wrote the following letter to his nephew, George Croft:

Monday night Nov 11th

Dear George

I was ever so pleased to receive your ever welcome letter tonight and pleased also to hear that you are in the best of health, as for myself I am getting on very nicely so I musn't grumble; you are trying to have me on a bit when you say "don't look at the writing" now how could I read it if I didn't look at the writing; I did look for the pictures as well; oh George give up kidding your uncle; but nuff sed, well we have got the hospital all trimmed up to celebrate the armistice which we heard had been signed this morning, it is hard to believe isn't it, and what a place to be in on such a day; this is no bigger than Kildwick Grange, so you can bet there is no life here except what we make ourselves; we are going to have a bit of (a) do tonight a sing-song or something. You will be pleased at having holiday from school aren't you, especially today I expect all the mills have closed down haven't they; wish I was in Farnhill tonight; but never mind we will have a good time when I come home on leave; which may not be long now, yes Alec had a poor do in the Rabbit trade I hope I have better luck with mine when I get them home; well George I don't seem to have much fresh news, I expect a letter from your mother tomorrow so I will wait and then send this along with the reply to your ma's. Well no more this time except best love to all

From your loving

Uncle Percy

(Transcribed from the original by Helen Moran)

Note: Percy had an allotment, at the top of Starkey Lane, where he bred fancy rabbits which he exhibited at local shows.

The "Alec" mentioned was probably Alec Hargreaves of Kildwick. Rosemary Hargreaves, Alec's niece, recalls that Percy gave her one of his rabbits to keep as a pet.

It is unclear how long or where Percy was in hospital. However in December 1918 he was at the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) hospital at Crawley Downs, in Sussex. While there he made a tapestry showing the Yorkshire Regiment badge.



no 235286 Private P. E. Walmsley
2nd Batt. Yorkshire Regt
(Green Howards).
Crawley Downs.
Convalescent Hospital
Decr 1918

Front and rear of tapestry done by Percy Walmsley while in hospital, December 1918
By kind permission of Kath Whitton

Percy Walmsley was discharged from the army, as a result of being no longer fit for active service due to wounds, on 4th February 1919.

Serial No. *not 3406* *3406* Army Form B. 2073.

NOTE—This Certificate is to be issued without any alterations in the manuscript.

Certificate of discharge of No. *235286* Rank. *Private*

Name *Walmsley* Surname. *Percy Edward* Christian Names in full.

Unit* and Regiment or Corps from which discharged } *Yorkshire Regt.*

* The unit of the Regiment or Corps such as Field Co. R.E., H.T., or M.T., A.S.C., etc., is invariably to be stated.

Regiment or Corps to which first posted. *West Riding Regt.*

Also previously served in *1st Bn.*

Only Regiments or Corps in which the soldier served since August 4th, 1914, are to be stated. If inapplicable this space is to be ruled through in ink and initialled.

Specialist Qualifications (Military) *Signal 1st Class*

Medals, Clasps, Decorations and Mentions in dispatches { * *nil* Wound Stripes* *One*
Auth. Prior to 11-11-18 To be inserted in words.
Two Blue Chevrons

Has served Overseas on Active Service*

Enlisted at *Edlington* on *12th Oct. 1914*

*Each space is to be filled in and the word "nil" inserted where necessary.
 †To be struck out in ink if not applicable.

He is discharged in consequence of *being surplus to military requirements having suffered impairment since entry into the service Para 222 X.VIa R.P.*

after serving* years* days with the Colours, and
 * *4* years* *116* days in the Army Reserve or Territorial Force† } Strike out whichever inapplicable.

*Each space is to be filled in and the word "nil" inserted where necessary; number of years to be written in words.
 †Service with Territorial Force to be shown only in cases of soldiers serving on a T.F. attestation.

Date of discharge *4th Feb. 1919*

W. H. Smith for N. Col. } Signature and Rank.
 Officer i/c *no I 2nd Lt* Records.
York (Place).

Description of the above-named soldier when he left the Colours.

Year of Birth *1894* Marks or Scars.....

Height.....ft.....in.....

Complexion.....

Eyes..... Hair.....


(31817.) Wt. W1912/PP1138. 750m. 5/18. S. & C. (E3267.) [P.T.O.]

Percy Walmsley's WW1 discharge certificate
 By kind permission of Kath Whitton

He was awarded a Silver War Badge.

W 1641—PP 1592 5000 1/20 HWV(P707) H 1570
5106—HD 7403 5000 4/20

No. **469311**



WAR BADGE awarded to P. E. Walmsley
(Name.)

late No. 230286 **YORKSHIRE REGIMENT**
(Regimental Number and Unit.)

for "Services Rendered" in H.M.'s Military Forces since 4th August, 1914.

Station **INFANTRY RECORD OFFICE**
21 MAY 1920
Date **1 YORK.**

[Signature] Lt.
No. No. 1 INFANTRY RECORDS, YORK.
Officer by whom Badge is issued.

Certificate issued with Percy Walmsley's Silver War Badge

By kind permission of Sam Tyler

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.

He also received the 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal due to him for his war service.

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Name.	Corps.	Rank	Regtl. No.
WALMSLEY Percy E.	* W. Rid R.	Plt	2832
	Yorkshire R.	Pte	235286

Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	* 01/1/01 Bts	176	Disemb'd
BRITISH	" do	do.	
15 th STAR	01/1/20	46	

Theatre of War first served in	(1) France
Date of entry therein	29 - 6 - 15

K 1380.

Percy Walmsley's medal card – service with the West Riding Regiment and Yorkshire Regiment
Used under licence from the National Archive

As a result of his wounds, Percy was awarded a pension of 8s (40p) per week for himself and 3s 6d (17½p) per week for each of his children for what was judged initially to be a 20% disability. In 1921 this was changed to a total payment of 9s 6d for 52 weeks plus a final gratuity of £10.

Form No. S.B. 36

Surname (in block letters) **WALMSLEY** Christian Names **Percy Edw.** Regional No. **4/MW/8634**

Unit and Regiment or Corps **Yorkshire** Regtl. No. **235286** Rank **Plt**

Date of Discharge **4.2.19** Year of Birth _____ Marital Status ☒ S. = Single
☐ W. = Widower
☐ M. = Married

Address **25, Mansh. - Towhill.**
Bridworth - Rotherham

Disabilities: **Gen Chest** State whether attributable to or aggravated by Service or non-attributable:—

1. _____ 3. _____
 2. _____ 4. _____

Particulars of Awards for previous Service (if any) **DORMANT**

AWARDS OF PENSION, GRATUITY OR WEEKLY ALLOWANCE.										
Date of Award or other Action	Degree of Disablement	Nature of Award			Weekly Rate		No. of Children under 16	Period of Award		REMARKS. Note.—This column is to be used for explanatory remarks where necessary, e.g., that an award is made or revised under Article 9, or as the result of an appeal to the Tribunal, or for increase of Pension.
		Art. under which granted (and Warrant if necessary)	Whether Pension, Gratuity, or Weekly Allowance	Whether Permanent, Conditional, or Final	Man	Child		From	To	
29.12.20	20%	1(4)19	P	C	8/-	3/6	2	2.2.21	31.1.22	
12.12.21	1-5%	1(3)19	S	C	7/6	5/-	2	2.2.21	31.1.22	plus 10

Extracts from Percy Walmsley's WW1 pension ledger (SB 36)
Used under licence from the National Archive

Post-war life

On his return to the village, Percy and his wife Ethel set up home at 3 South View, Farnhill and were living there when their second child, a son they called Alec, was born on 17th February 1921. This is confirmed by the 1921 which also shows that Percy was working as a General Labourer for Frank Troup at Boxtree Farm, Farnhill.

The family subsequently lived at 7 Bright Street (1923 and 1924) and 7 Starkey Lane (1925 to 1928) before moving to 61 Back Lane, Cononley (1929 to 1935).

The Kildwick School pupil admissions records for 1918 to 1931 (the only years for which records have been found) record the attendance of both the Walmsley children:

- Eileen Walmsley from 23/2/1921 (aged 5 years and 2 months) until 21/10/1927, when she moved to Cononley school.
- Alec Walmsley from 25/8/1926 (aged 5 years and six months) until 21/10/1927, when he also moved to Cononley school. He may have returned to the school on 18/3/1935.

The suggestion that the Walmsley family may have returned to Farnhill in 1935, fits in with the fact that in 1937, Percy was a member of the committee that organised the Farnhill celebrations for the Coronation of King George VI, on 12th May.

Certainly, by 1938 the family were living at 25 Starkey Lane, which would be Ethel and Percy's home for the rest of their lives.

On 30th June 1938, Percy and Ethel's daughter, Eileen, was married in Farnhill Methodist Chapel. Percy was one of the witnesses.

1938. Marriage solemnized at <u>Methodist Church Farnhill</u> in the District of <u>Shepton</u> in the County of <u>Yorkshire</u>							
Column—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.
12	Thirtieth day of June 1938	William Lee	23 years	Bachelor	Handwritten and Decorator (Garnishman)	Wooded Cottage Cononley	Harold Lee
		Eileen Walmsley	22 years	Spinster	Artificial Silk Weaver	25 Starkey Lane Farnhill	Percy Edward Walmsley
Married in the <u>Methodist Church Farnhill</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Methodists</u> by License This Marriage was solemnized between us, { <u>William Lee</u> } in the Presence of us, { <u>Percy Edward Walmsley</u> } And in the Presence of { <u>Elizabeth Ellen Lee</u> } <u>Ernest G. McKean</u> Authorized Person for the said Church							

Lee – Walmsley marriage certificate

Scanned by members of Farnhill & Kildwick Local History Group

Alec, Percy and Ethel's son, married in 1944.

Ethel Walmsley died on 11th July 1957 and was buried in Kildwick church's extension graveyard.

Percy Walmsley died on 22nd February 1986 – the last of the Farnhill WW1 Volunteers. He was aged 91.



Percy Walmsley, as a WW1 Private and outside his home in Starkey Lane in 1977
Photographs by kind permission of Sam Tyler

Percy Walmsley – a life in summary

Born: 29/6/1894, Farnhill
Baptised: 5/8/1894, Kildwick
Died: 22/2/1986 **Aged:** 91
Home address: 25 Starkey Lane, Farnhill

Parents

Father: James; b. 1852, Farnhill; d. 1935, Farnhill
Mother: Elizabeth (nee Barrett); b. 1853, Luton;
d. October 1927, Farnhill; buried 26/10/1927, Kildwick
Married: 1873, Skipton (Registration district)

Siblings

James Alfred; b. 9/6/1873, Farnhill; m. Elizabeth Ann Jarvis, 28/10/1893, Kildwick; d. 4/3/1943
Emily; b. 22/4/1875, Farnhill; m. Albert Edward Crossley, 18/7/1900, Kildwick; d. 30/10/1944, Sutton
Margaret; b. 9/9/1876, Farnhill;
 m1. William James Baugh, 18/9/1897, Skipton (Registration district)
 m2. Wilfred Kennealy Crossley, 25/4/1908, Kildwick
 d. 23/3/1966, Crosshills
John; b. 6/7/1878, Farnhill; d. 1878 (infant)
Thomas; b. 20/2/1880, Farnhill; d. February 1884, Farnhill
Beatrice Annie; b. 5/7/1885, Farnhill; m. Harry Croft, 1906, Keighley (Registration district);
 d. 11/10/1955, Farnhill

WW1 service

Service period: 12/10/1914 to 4/2/1919
Regt.: 1/6th battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment (Private, no. 2832)
2nd battalion Yorkshire Regiment (Private, no. 235286)
Medals: 1915 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal, Silver War Badge
Home address: 25 Main Street, Farnhill

Relationship to other volunteers

Cecil Baugh was Percy's nephew.

Percy was also distantly related to Harry Walmsley – Percy's great-grandfather was also Harry's great-great-grandfather.

Marriage

Wife: Ethel Mary Jane Beedom; b. 21/9/1890, Ellenthorpe (nr. Boroughbridge);
d. 11/7/1957, buried in Kildwick churchyard
Date: 1/5/1915, at Keighley Register Office

Children

Eileen; b. 18/10/1915; bapt. 14/11/1915, Farnhill Chapel;

m. William Lee, 30/6/1938, Farnhill Methodist Chapel;

d. 1989, Keighley (Registration district)

Alec; b. 17/2/1921; bapt. 20/3/1921, Farnhill Chapel;

m. Vera Cooper, 1944, Keighley (Registration district); d. 2007, Keighley (Registration district)

