

## ERNEST PASSEY –A CHESTERFIELD STORY

Ernest Passey was my grandfather. He was a Chesterfield boy, born in June 1891 and was the third of five children. His father, who had come to Chesterfield from Gloucestershire, married a Chesterfield girl and was a guard on the London Midland and Scottish Railway. The family lived in Mill Street, close to what is still Chesterfield Station.

Aged 11, Ernest won a place at Netherthorpe School in Staveley. Although he could stay for only 3 years, the education he received there led him to a career in local government.

When war was declared in August 1914, Ernest volunteered, enlisting on 11 September. I found his enlistment papers on *Ancestry* and saw that he joined the York and Lancaster Regiment, Sheffield City Battalion. He was promoted first, to Lance-Corporal in December 1914 and then in October 1915 to Corporal. I recall him saying that he was stationed for a while on Cannock Chase; he then moved to Hurdicott in Wiltshire and from there sailed first to Egypt for training, then to Malta, and finally to Marseilles, from where he went by train to Flanders.

Between December 1915 and March 1916 Ernest kept a short diary which ends with his arrival near Abbeville. It shows a young man, wide-eyed with curiosity at the sights, sounds and smells of his first (and only) trip outside the UK. He also recounts sea-sickness, church parades and the price of everything – with tobacco of clearly great importance.

What happened after that is unclear, but by the end of 1917, Ernest had been invalided out of the army with shell-shock. He was formally discharged on 28<sup>th</sup> November. He told me once that he'd spent some time in a hospital for nervous diseases, working to restore his memory, which had been badly affected by his experiences.

After that, Ernest went back to civilian life. He had married in October 1914, between enlisting and seeing active service, and he and his wife Sarah Ellen (nee Madin) went on to have four children, moving to Lincolnshire around 1921, then retiring in the mid-1950s, to Hampshire where they spent the rest of their lives. Ernest himself had a long life, passing away shortly before his 97<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Ernest's older brother Joseph Edwin, also joined up and spent WWI in the Durham Light Infantry. He returned safely but died in 1942. However, four of their cousins were killed. Three of these: Arthur, Joseph and Luke Jackson were from the same family and are commemorated on the Wadshelf war memorial and on their parents' grave in Old Brampton churchyard. A fourth, Harry Jackson, served with the Sherwood Foresters and was killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

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