

Private Walter Burton©
Regimental number: 203888
1st/4th Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry

born: 1882 - died: 26 July 1917

Private Walter Burton was born in about 1882¹ in Sheffield, Yorkshire, the son of William and Sarah Ann Burton.² Like Walter, his parents were born in Sheffield—his father in about 1844 and his mother about two years later. William and Sarah Ann (the former Sarah Ann Sanford) married on 9 October 1865 at St George's Church in the parish of Sheffield³ and probably had eight children:⁴ Elizabeth Ann (born in 1866),⁵ Lily (born in 1870),⁶ William (born in 1872),⁷ Frederick (born in 1876),⁸ Emily (born in 1879),⁹ Walter, Jane (born in 1884 but died at the age of one week)¹⁰ and George Henry (born in 1885).¹¹

In 1891, this Wesleyan family was living on Matilda Street in Sheffield, where Walter's father was a table knife cutler and his mother a metal rubber.¹² Sheffield has long been associated with the cutlery trade, which probably existed in Sheffield as early as the thirteenth century.¹³ Ten years later, the family had moved to 202 Lancing Road in Sheffield and, like his father, Walter was now a table knife cutler.¹⁴

By 1911, Walter had left home and was boarding with John Savory Vincent and his family at 8 Horner Road, off Highfields, in Sheffield.¹⁵ His parents were still at 202 Lancing Road and his father, now 67, was still a table knife cutler.¹⁶

Walter enlisted in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in Sheffield. The 1st/4th Battalion of the KOYLI landed at Boulogne, France, on 12 April 1915,¹⁷ however, it is not known when Walter joined the battalion. In the summer of 1917, he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station where he died of gas poisoning on 26 July. His mother, who was living at 5 Court 10 House, Ledmill Road in Sheffield, was his next of kin and was notified of his death. His father received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.

Walter was buried in Coxyde Military Cemetery (Grave Reference: Plot II, Row L, Grave 18).¹⁸ His parents, who were living at 36 Petre Street, Sheffield, after the war, asked to have the following inscription placed on his gravestone:

IN THY GRACIOUS KEEPING
LEAVE WE NOW
THY SERVANT SLEEPING

Coxyde Military Cemetery (located near the village of Koksijde in Belgium) was about 10 kilometres behind the front line in 1917. Commonwealth troops had relieved the French forces in the area and the village was used for rest billets. Although the village was occasionally shelled, the cemetery, which had been started by French troops, was reasonably safe. "It became the most important of the



Inscription to Private Walter Burton, City Road Cemetery
Source: *Sheffield Soldiers of the Great War*

Commonwealth cemeteries on the Belgian coast and was used at night for the burial of the dead brought back from the front line.”¹⁹ There are now just over 1,500 Commonwealth graves from the Great War in the cemetery.

No information was found about his service medals, but he was probably awarded at least the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).

Walter is commemorated on the grave of his father in City Road Cemetery, Sheffield, with the inscription: “Also of PRIVATE WALTER BURTON son of the above who was killed in action in France July 26th 1917 aged 36 years.”²⁰

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¹ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 2 May 2017) entry for Burton, Walter, Registration district: Sheffield, Volume 09C, Page 455

² 1891 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 2 May 2017), entry for Walter Burton, Registration district: Sheffield, Sub-registration district: South Sheffield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 12, Piece: 3823, Folio: 124, Page: 29

³ “Yorkshire Marriages,” *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 2 May 2017), entry for William Burton, County: Yorkshire (West Riding), Archive: Sheffield Archives & Local Studies, Archive reference: PR-62-2-8. Page: 156

⁴ On the 1911 Census, William and Sarah Ann indicated that they had had seven children, all of whom were still living. However, the General Registry Office register of births suggests that they had an eighth child (Jane) who lived for only one week.

⁵ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 2 May 2017) entry for Burton, Elizabeth Ann, Registration district: Sheffield, Volume 09C, Page 374. A baptism was found of an Elizabeth Ann Burton, born in 1877, with the same parents as the other children. If this baptismal entry is correct, it is not known how this child is connected to the Burton family. (“West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813–1910,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 2 May 2017), entry for Elizabeth Ann Burton)

⁶ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 2 May 2017) entry for Burton, Lilly, Registration district: Sheffield, Volume 09C, Page 408

⁷ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 2 May 2017) entry for Burton, William, Registration district: Ecclesall Bierlow, Volume 09C, Page 455

⁸ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 2 May 2017) entry for Burton, Frederick, Registration district: Sheffield, Volume 09C, Page 478

⁹ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 2 May 2017) entry for Burton, Emily, Registration district: Sheffield, Volume 09C, Page 454

¹⁰ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 2 May 2017) entry for Burton, Jane, Registration district: Sheffield, Volume 09C, Page 476; “West Yorkshire, England, Deaths and Burials, 1813–1985,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 2 May 2017), entry for Jane Burton

¹¹ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 2 May 2017) entry for Burton, George Harry, Registration district: Sheffield, Volume 09C, Page 471

¹² “1891 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 2 May 2017), entry for Walter Burton

¹³ “Sheffield Master Cutlers & Apprentices,” Sheffield Records Online (<http://www.sheffieldrecordsonline.org.uk/>: accessed 3 May 2017)

¹⁴ “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 2 May 2017), entry for Walter Burton, Registration district: Sheffield, Sub-registration district: South Sheffield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 16, Piece: 4369, Folio: 163, Page: 30, Household schedule number: 195

¹⁵ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 2 May 2017), entry for Walter Burton, Registration district: Ecclesall Bierlow, Registration district number: 509, Sub-registration district: Sharrow, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 15, Piece: 27826

¹⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 2 May 2017), entry for Wm Burton, Registration district: Sheffield, Registration district number: 510, Sub-registration district: South Sheffield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 18, Piece: 27866

¹⁷ "Unit History: King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry," *Forces War Records* (<https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/units/445/kings-own-yorkshire-light-infantry>: accessed 7 April 2017)

¹⁸ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 29 April 2017), entry for Burton, W., Service No: 203888

¹⁹ "Coxyde Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 2 May 2017)

²⁰ *Sheffield Soldiers of the Great War* (<http://www.sheffieldsoldierww1.co.uk>: accessed 9 May 2017), entry for Walter Burton