

Private Percy Chalk[©]

Regimental number: 200326

1st/4th Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry

born: 1896 - died: 26 July 1917

Private Percy Chalk was born in 1896 in Dewsbury, Yorkshire.¹ He was one of eight children of John Henry and Ann Chalk. His father John (born in London, Middlesex, in about 1855)² and his mother Ann (nee Beever) (born in about 1866 in Dewsbury)³ married on 25 December 1883 at St John's Church in the parish of Dewsbury Moor.⁴ Their first child was born on 26 January 1884 and baptized in a private baptism on 11 February.⁵ Perhaps she was not doing well from birth, because she died within a few months.⁶ Seven more children were born in the following years: Fred (born in 1886),⁷ Harry (born in 1888),⁸ Lilian (born in 1890 but died the following year),⁹ Annie (born in 1894),¹⁰ Arthur (born in 1900 but died a few months later),¹¹ Percy and Bertha (born in 1902).¹²

In the 1800s, Dewsbury was known as a mill town, which specialized in heavy woollen fabrics for use in blankets and uniforms.¹³ The Chalk family worked in the textile industry. In 1891, the family was living at 65 Watergate in Dewsbury, where Percy's father was a carpet weaver and his mother was a hawker.¹⁴ Ten years later they were living at 24 Senior Road in Dewsbury. John continued to work in the mills.¹⁵ In 1911, they were living at 15 Whitworth Road in West Town, Dewsbury, and Percy had joined his father in the mills—at age 14, he was a warper in a woollen mill.¹⁶

Percy enlisted in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in Sheffield¹⁷ in the first month of the war.¹⁸ The 1st/4th Battalion of the KOYLI landed at Boulogne, France, on 12 April 1915;¹⁹ however, it is not known when Walter joined the Western Front. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, where he died of gas poisoning on 26 July 1917.²⁰ He was just 20 years old. His mother, who was his next of kin, was notified of his death²¹ and received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.²²

Percy was buried in Coxyde Military Cemetery (Grave Reference: Plot II, Row L, Grave 15).²³ 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 Commonwealth cemeteries on the Belgian coast and was used at night for the burial of the dead brought back from the front line."²⁴ There are now just over 1,500 Commonwealth graves from the Great War in the cemetery.

Percy was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁵ He was also awarded the Territorial Force War Medal.²⁶ This medal was awarded to members of the British Territorial Force who served overseas in the Great War. Recipients had volunteered for service overseas before the end of September 1914, had been serving with the force on or before the day that war was declared and did not qualify for the 1914 Star or 1914–15 Star.²⁷

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¹ "GRO online index-birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 11 May 2017) entry for Chalk, Percy, Registration district: Dewsbury, Volume 09B, Page 687

² “1891 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 April 2017), entry for John Chalk, Registration district: Dewsbury, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 9, Piece: 3732, Folio: 43, Page: 8

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ “West Yorkshire, England, Marriages and Banns, 1813–1935,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 April 2017), entry for John Henry Chalk. Although the marriage certificate indicates that she was 19 years of age when they married, her birth registration was in 1867, suggesting that she was probably only 16.

⁵ “West Yorkshire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813–1910,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 April 2017), entry for Eliza Chalk

⁶ “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 April 2017), entry for Eliza Chalk, Registration district: Dewsbury, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9b, Page: 440

⁷ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 11 May 2017) entry for Chalk, Fred, Registration district: Dewsbury, Volume 09B, Page 687

⁸ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 11 May 2017) entry for Chalk, Harry, Registration district: Dewsbury, Volume 09B, Page 674

⁹ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 11 May 2017) entry for Chalk, Lilian, Registration district: Dewsbury, Volume 09B, Page 682; “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 April 2017), entry for Lilian Chalk, Registration district: Dewsbury, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9b, Page: 451

¹⁰ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 11 May 2017) entry for Chalk, Annie, Registration district: Dewsbury, Volume 09B, Page 691

¹¹ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 11 May 2017) entry for Chalk, Arthur, Registration district: Dewsbury, Volume 09B, Page 687; “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 April 2017), entry for Arthur Chalk, Registration district: Dewsbury, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9b, Page: 420

¹² “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 11 May 2017) entry for Chalk, Bertha, Registration district: Dewsbury, Volume 09B, Page 670

¹³ “Dewsbury,” *Wikipedia* (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dewsbury>: accessed 11 May 2017)

¹⁴ “1891 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 April 2017), entry for John Chalk

¹⁵ “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 April 2017), entry for Percy Chalk, Registration district: Dewsbury, Sub-registration district: Dewsbury, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 4267, Folio: 20, Page: 21, Household schedule number: 73

¹⁶ “1911 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 April 2017), entry for Percy Chalk, Registration district: Dewsbury, Registration district number: 503, Sub-registration district: Dewsbury, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 8, Household schedule number: 78, Piece: 27301

¹⁷ “UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 April 2017), entry for Percy Chalk

¹⁸ Based on “War Gratuity Calculator” (<https://wargratiuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 May 2017), entry for Percy Chalk

¹⁹ “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)

²⁰ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 11 May 2017), entry for Chalk, P.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 May 2017), entry for Percy Chalk

²³ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 29 April 2017), entry for Chalk, Percy., Service No: 200326

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 May 2017), entry for Percy Chalk

²⁶ "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 May 2017), entry for Percy Chalk

²⁷ "Territorial War Medal," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_War_Medal: accessed 10 May 2017)