

L'Cpl. Charles W. MAJOR (1882 - 1915)
(King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry)



Charles William Major was born in Arnold, Nottingham in 1882. He was, however, registered as William Charles Major and appears in both the 1891 and 1901 Census with this name when still living at home with his parents.

His parents were Caleb John Major and Elizabeth Northage who were both born in Nottinghamshire and were married in 1882. Charles had two older siblings, Martha Northage (1877) and John Northage (1879). His younger brother, Samuel James Major, was born in 1885. At some point after the 1891 Census the family moved to Dewsbury. Caleb was a miner. Martha married John Slavin on Christmas Day 1895 at St John the Evangelist, Dewsbury Moor.

In 1902 Charles married Gertrude Wainwright at Dewsbury Parish Church. They moved to 8 Bromley Road, Hanging Heaton and had four children; Sarah Elizabeth (1902), Charles William (1906), Amy (1908) and Ivy (1911).

Charles enlisted in December 1914 and disembarked on the 9th February 1915. He was sent to the front and was killed in action during the battle for Hill 60 which took place at Flanders near Ypres.

His wife Gertrude received notification of his death from a comrade, Private James Toft of Dewsbury.

The following report appeared in the Batley News in May 1915

"I am sorry to tell you that your husband, Lance Corporal Major, was killed in action on 18th April. He died without pain. He was killed whilst we were making a charge. It was a very great blow to me as we were great friends. I express my deep sympathy with you and the children. I hope you will bear the sorrow as best you can, knowing his life was given for his King and country and he is now on the roll of honour. We are all ready to undergo the same as he has done. We miss him in the Company as he was well liked by all the comrades. He was willing to do anything he could. I am sending his watch and chain and his book-case; they were all I could get out of his pockets at the time."

James Toft survived the war, but Charles' brother Samuel James Major died in 1918 and is buried at Doullens Communal Cemetery, France and his name appears on Dewsbury War Memorial.

Charles William Major had worked at Messrs. Critchley's collieries prior to his enlistment. He was formally in the Militia. He had previously been employed by Wilman Bros. shoddy manufacturers and also John Illingworth at White Lee. He was actively associated with Dewsbury Socialist Sunday School. (The National Council of British Socialist Sunday Schools was formed in 1909. They encountered opposition from local authorities and politicians who argued that the schools were subverting the minds of young people with political and anti-religious doctrines and teachings.)

Lance Corporal Charles William Major, 3/3427, 2nd Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, is Remembered with Honour at Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial. His name also appears on the Hanging Heaton War Memorial in St Paul's churchyard.

Researcher:

Susan White, Batley History Group, January 2015.