

THE FALLEN OF SUTTON-IN-CRAVEN



WILLIAM BLAKE SPENCER

DUKE OF WELLINGTON REGIMENT

KILLED IN ACTION 3RD MAY 1917

BORN IN 1888 AT KILDWICK, THE SON OF WILLIAM
AND CAROLINE SPENCER

Spencer Family History

- **1891 census** shows William, his wife Caroline and their 6 children living at Gordon Street, Sutton-in-Craven as follows:

Name	Age	Work	Birth place	Birth year
William (Head)	43	Warp dresser worsted	Yorkshire	1848 - 1928
Caroline (wife)	40		Poringland, Norfolk	1851 - 1928
Thomas	13	Worsted spinner	Kildwick, Yorkshire	1878
Mary	11	Worsted spinner	Kildwick, Yorkshire	1880
Charles	9	Scholar	Kildwick, Yorkshire	1882 - 1891
Phoebe	7	Scholar	Kildwick, Yorkshire	1884
Fred	5	Scholar	Kildwick, Yorkshire	1886
William Blake	3		Kildwick, Yorkshire	1888 - 1917



Villagers stood at the top of Gordon St, Sutton-in-Craven
(source: Rachel Simpson & Richard Whiteoak from the Glyn Whiteoak collection)

- **1901 census** shows William, his wife Caroline and their 5 children still living at 30, Gordon Street, Sutton-in-Craven as follows:

Name	Age	Work	Birth place	Birth year
William (Head)	53	Warp dresser worsted	Farnhill, Yorkshire	1848 - 1928
Caroline (wife)	49		Poringland, Norfolk	1852 - 1928
Thomas	23	Warp twister & loom	Farnhill, Yorkshire	1878
Mary	21	Weaver, worsted mill	Farnhill, Yorkshire	1880
Phoebe	17	Spinner, worsted mill	Farnhill, Yorkshire	1884
Fred	15	Jobber, worsted mill	Farnhill, Yorkshire	1886
William Blake	13	Bobbin pegger, worsted mill	Farnhill, Yorkshire	1888 - 1917



Gordon St, Sutton-in-Craven (circa 1900)

(source: Rachel Simpson & Richard Whiteoak from the Glyn Whiteoak collection)

- **1911 census** shows William and Caroline had been married for 40 years and that of their 9 children born alive, 6 were still living and 3 had since died. It also shows the Spencer family now living at 5, King Edward St, Sutton-in-Craven as follows:

Name	Age	Work	Birth place	Birth year
William (Head)	63	Warp dresser	Kildwick, Yorkshire	1848 - 1928
Caroline (wife)	60	House keeper	Poringland, Norfolk	1851 - 1928
Thomas	33	Warp twister	Kildwick, Yorkshire	1878
Mary	31	Weaver	Kildwick, Yorkshire	1880
Phoebe	27	Weaver	Kildwick, Yorkshire	1884
William Blake	23	Weft man stock room	Kildwick, Yorkshire	1888 - 1917



King Edward St, Sutton-in-Craven
(photo taken by Barbara & Allen Chapman)

World War 1



It had been **99 years** since Britain was last involved in a major European conflict following the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815

August 4th 1914 **Britain declares war on Germany**

In the autumn of 1914, the young men of the nation came from town and village to take the King's shilling and to offer him their dedicated services in defence of their homeland. From mills and mines, from shops and farms, from office chairs and civic departments, from loom, lathe, bench, plough and counter they flooded into the recruiting centres in answer to their nation's call for young manhood. These new recruits came to be known as **'Kitchener's Volunteers'**

The New Armies: "Kitchener's Volunteers"



Earl Kitchener recruitment poster 1914



Parliamentary Recruiting Committee
London, 1916



British volunteers, 1914 (Kitchener's new army)

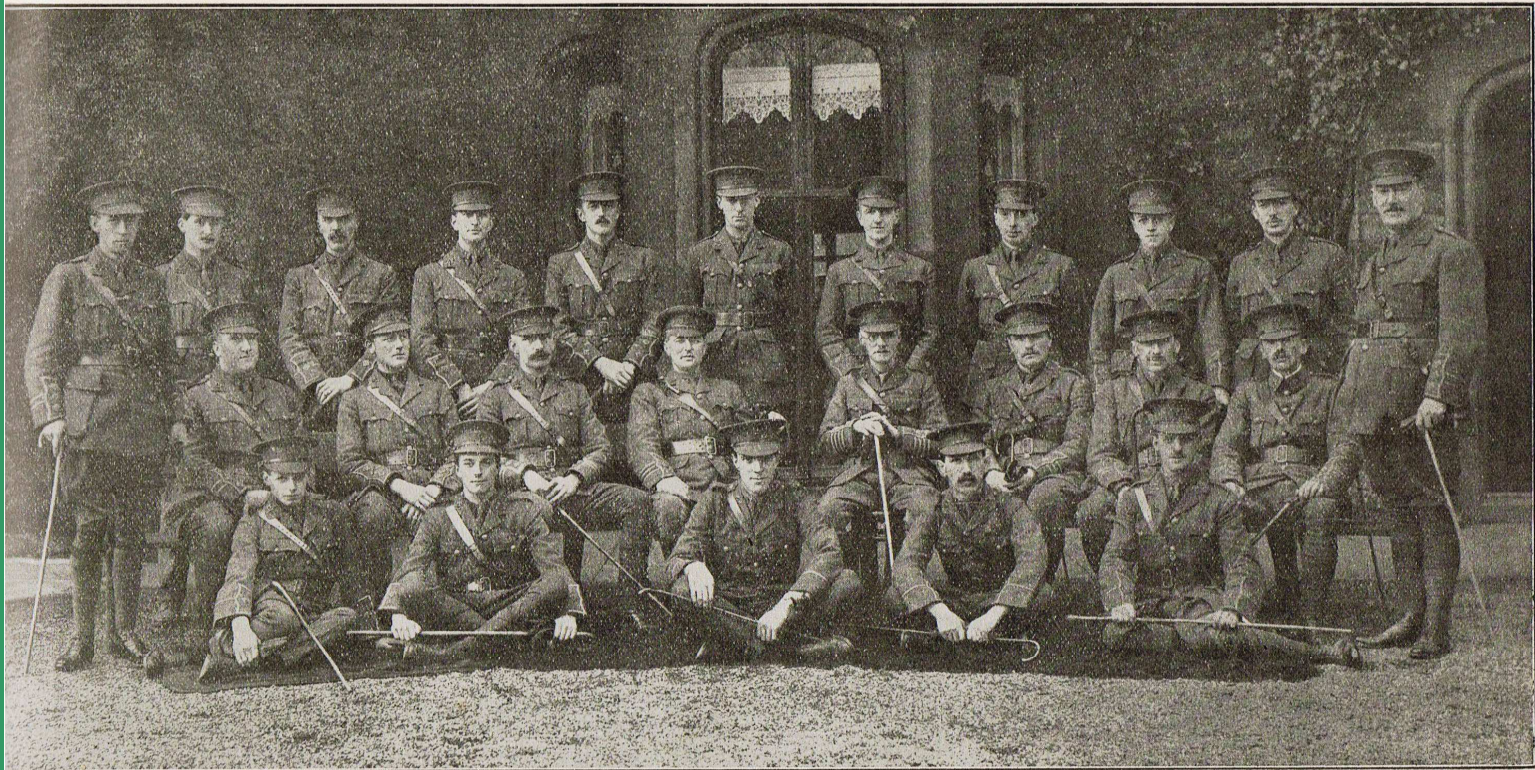
Prior to enlistment, William Spencer was employed in the weft department at Messrs. T. and M. Bairstow, Sutton Mills.

During the Great War, William Spencer responded to the call and enlisted into the 2/6th battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) in March 1916. His regimental number was 267082 and his rank was Private.

The West Riding Regiment raised 24 battalions during WW1 including the 2/6th (Territorial Force) battalion which was formed as a home service (second line) unit.

Officers of 2/6th West Riding Regiment group photo

2/6th DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S WEST RIDING REGIMENT.



LEFT TO RIGHT. Back Row, standing.—Capt. G. H. Ermen (deceased), 2nd Lieut. (now Capt.) N. Geldard, D.S.O., M.C., 2nd Lieut. (now Capt.) L. Jaques, 2nd Lieut. W. Woodhead, Lieut. N. Clapham, 2nd Lieut. W. K. Law, 2nd Lieut. G. L. Lupton, Lieut. (now Capt.) G. Broughton, 2nd Lieut. G. R. Armstrong, Lieut. (A/Capt.) C. D. Bennett (K.), Capt. C. P. Charlesworth.

Sitting.—Capt. N. C. Prince (K.), Capt. (A/Lt.-Col.) N. A. England, D.S.O., Major W. Claughton (deceased), Major (A/Lt.-Col.) J. Mackillop, Col. R. E. Williamson, V.D. (C.O.), Major E. Dewhurst, Capt. Birbeck (Adj.), Capt. J. Groves.

Front row.—2nd Lieut. J. R. Walker, 2nd Lieut. (now Capt.) R. C. Barrett, 2nd Lieut. C. G. C. Kilner, Lieut. and Quarter-Master M. J. McDermott, 2nd Lieut. (now Capt.) G. C. Foulds.

(source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* original 1919 copy owned by Andrew Monkhouse)



WW1 Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) Cap Badge

Pte William Blake Spencer entered the Theatre of War in France in January 1917 with the 2/6th (Territorial Force) battalion West Riding Regiment, as part of the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division.

Name.		Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
SPENCER		W R R	Pte	267082
William B.				
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.	
VICTORY	0/2/101 B22	4090		
BARRAGE	do	do		
STAR				
Theatre of War first served in				
Date of entry therein				

MEDAL INDEX CARD for William Spencer (source: *The National Archives*)

The Western Front

The Western Front was the name applied to the fighting zone in France & Flanders, where the British, French, Belgian and later American armies faced that of Germany.

It was marked by a system of trenches and fortifications separated by an area known as No Man's land. These fortifications stretched 475 miles and precipitated a style of fighting known as trench warfare.

From the moment the German army moved into Luxemburg on 2nd August 1914 to the Armistice on 11th November 1918, the fighting on the Western Front in France & Flanders never stopped.

Just as there were quiet periods, there were also the most intense, savage, huge-scale battles the world has ever known.



Trench warfare, WW1

The First Battle of Bullecourt

11th April 1917

The village of Bullecourt is situated on the flat landscapes of Picardy, north-eastern France. There a combined force of British and Australian soldiers, for the most part conscripts, were faced with a force of professional Prussian troops entrenched within the Hindenburg line.

The first Battle of Bullecourt took place on the 11th April 1917 and involved the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division and the 4th Division of the 1st Anzac Corps. The plan was to attack either side of the village of Bullecourt and push the German's out of their fortified positions and into the reserve trenches.

Tanks intended for the assault were delayed by bad weather and the attack was postponed for 24 hours. However the order to delay did not reach all units in time and two battalions of the West Yorkshire regiment attacked and were driven back with significant losses. This aborted attack alerted the German's in the area to the impending assault and they were better prepared for the attack to follow.



WW1 British Mark 1 tank destroyed by shell fire at the Battle of Bullecourt, 1917

Badly planned and hastily mounted, the German's quickly overcame the attack. This was largely due to the failure of tanks to support them, due to their breaking down and vulnerability to attack. Also a limited artillery barrage left much of the barbed wire in front of the German trenches uncut.

The Second Battle of Bullecourt

3rd – 17th May 1917

After the initial assault to take the village of Bullecourt failed to penetrate the German lines, British commanders made preparations for a second attempt. British artillery began an intense bombardment of the village of Bullecourt which by the 20th April had been virtually destroyed.

The second offensive began in the early hours of the 3rd May 1917 with the British attacking the village itself and the Australians attacking the German lines to its east. The fighting was fierce and slow moving. On the east of the village the Australian advance was halted by accurate machine gun fire.

In the village the British troops advanced to the far side but strenuous resistance combined with confusion between the movements of the different units led to the British being thrown back and out of the village. Both the British and Australians then established defensive positions.



Sentries during the fighting for Bullecourt, spring 1917

When additional Allied troops were sent in several days later to reinforce the attack, the British & Australian troops were able to link up. This enabled British troops to eventually push the Germans out of Bullecourt on the 15th May.

German resistance had been fierce and when the offensive was finally called off on the 17th May, the Allies had incurred massive casualties.



British casualties, WW1

Pte William Spencer fought in both battles of Bullecourt in the spring of 1917 with the 2/6th Territorial Force battalion West Riding Regiment, as part of the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division.

In the second week of May 1917, the parents of Pte Spencer received information from an unofficial source that their son had been wounded in action in France.



Article Date: 11 May 1917

SUTTON

Mr. and Mrs. Spencer, of King Edward Street, have received indirect information that their son, Private William Blake Spencer, of the West Riding Regiment, has been wounded in action in France.

(source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* www.cpgw.org.uk)

One week later however, Mr and Mrs Spencer received official information that their son William had been **Killed in Action** during the great push on the 3rd May 1917. This was the **First Day of the 2nd Battle of Bullecourt**.

He was 29 years of age



Article Date: 18 May 1917

SUTTON MILL - DEATH OF PTE. W. BLAKE SPENCER

Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Spencer, of King Edward Street, Sutton Mill, who received un-official information last week that their son, Pte. William Blake Spencer, of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, had been seriously wounded, received official information on Wednesday that their son had been killed in action on May 3rd. The letter, which is from a lieutenant commanding 'C' Company, reads as follows:- "It is with extreme regret I have to inform you that your son was killed in action during a big attack on the 3rd of this month. He was one of our very best men, and died as a brave man with his face to the enemy. We shall all miss him greatly." Pte. Spencer joined the forces in March, 1916, and went out in February last. His brother, Pte. Fred

Spencer, is in the Garrison Artillery. Prior to joining the army he was employed at the firm of T. and M. Bairstow.

(source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* www.cpgw.org.uk)



Casualty Details

Name: SPENCER, WILLIAM BLAKE

Initials: W B

Nationality: United Kingdom

Rank: Private

Regiment/Service: Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)

Unit Text: "C" Coy. 2nd/6th Bn.

Age: 29

Date of Death: 03/05/1917

Service No: 267082

Additional information: Son of William and Caroline Spencer, of 5, King Edward St., Sutton-in-Craven, Keighley, Yorks.

Casualty Type: Commonwealth War Dead

Grave/Memorial Reference: III. K. 14.

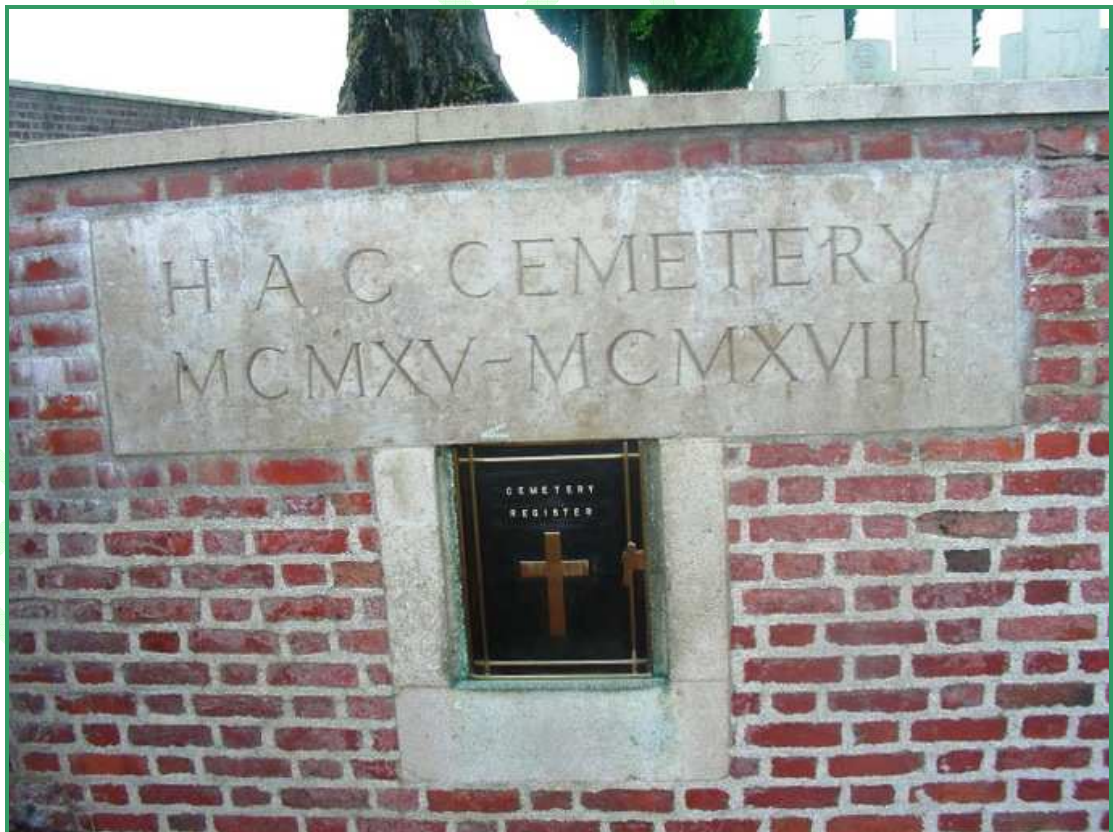
Cemetery: H.A.C. CEMETERY, ECOUST-ST. MEIN

H.A.C. CEMETERY, ECOUST-ST. MEIN

Ecoust-St. Mein is a village between Arras, Cambrai and Bapaume. H.A.C. Cemetery is about 800 metres south of this village. After the Armistice, graves were added from the battlefields of Bullecourt and Ecoust and from a number of smaller burial grounds. There are nearly 2,000 Great War casualties commemorated in this site. Of these, over half are unidentified.



H.A.C. CEMETERY, ECOÛT-ST. MEIN
(source: *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* www.cwgc.org/)



H.A.C. CEMETERY, ECOÛT-ST. MEIN

WAR MEMORIAL, SUTTON-IN-CRAVEN PARK



(source: *South Craven, the official guide, 1950*)



Sutton-in-Craven War Memorial (photo taken by Paul Wilkinson)

Pte William Blake Spencer was posthumously awarded the
British War Medal & Victory Medal



Original pair of WW1 medals (source: owned by Andrew Monkhouse)

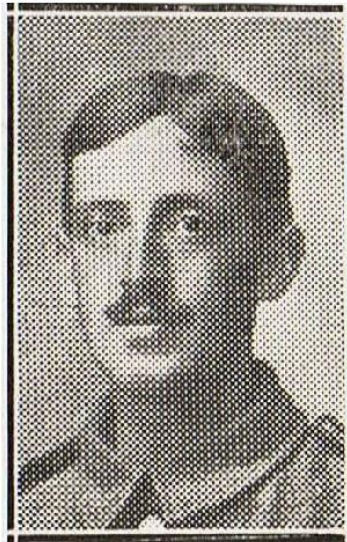
A Memorial Plaque inscribed with the soldiers name was also given to the family of those who were killed during WW1



Original WW1 Memorial Plaque issued to the parents of William Blake Spencer
Also referred to as a Death Plaque or Dead Man's Penny
(source: plaque owned & photo provided by Robert Smith)

Lest we Forget

CRAVEN'S ROLL OF HONOUR



PRIVATE WILLIAM BLAKE SPENCER, Duke of Well's Regt., son of Mr. & Mrs. Spencer, Sutton, killed in action 3rd May, 1917. Aged 27 years.

source: *Craven's Part in the Great War*

(Original 1919 copy owned by Andrew Monkhouse)

FOR THE FALLEN

*THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD, AS WE THAT ARE
LEFT GROW OLD*

*AGE SHALL NOT WEARY THEM, NOR THE YEARS
CONDEMN*

*AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN AND IN THE
MORNING*

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

LAURENCE BINYON, 1869-1943



(Information compiled by Andrew Monkhouse 2011)