



Private

Henry Parkes

15419, 1st/5th Bn., York and Lancaster Regiment
who died on 22nd October 1917, aged 29

Remembered with Honour

Barrow Hill and Staveley Memorials
Tyne Cot Memorial (Panel 125 to 128)

Harriet Parkes Haycock was a widow with three young children, Elizabeth, Joseph and Phoebe, living in Netherton, Worcestershire, in 1881. Her first husband, Thomas Parkes, had died three years earlier and Harriet supported her family by working as a nail maker and by taking in a lodger, coal miner Joseph Parkes, who became her second husband in 1882.

Harriet and Joseph were still living at Simms Lane in Netherton when their daughter Jane and sons Richard and Benjamin were born but had moved to Barrow Hill by 1887. Their house on the "Blocks" was a three bedroomed cottage at number 59 on the second row of dwellings at Barrow Hill; one of the many identical cottages built for employees of the Staveley Coal and Iron Company for whom both Joseph Snr and Joseph Jnr worked in the coal mines.

It was at Barrow Hill that HARRY THOMAS PARKES, known as HENRY, was born in the summer of 1887, followed two years later by a brother, Ezekiel and five years later by another sister, Florence. These three younger children would have attended the local school, just a short walk away from home, on the summit of the hill.

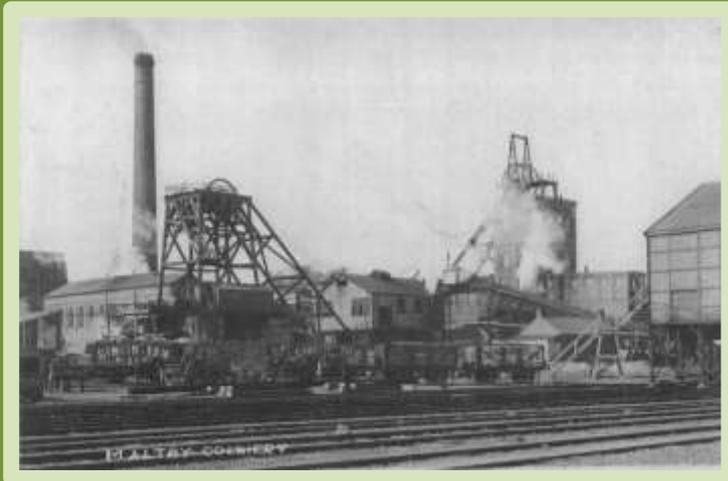
Henry's sister Jane married Alfred Madin in 1900, easing the pressure of overcrowding in the cottage where the family had grown with the addition of granddaughter Annie. Joseph Snr was still working as a hewer in the coal mines in 1901 and had been joined by sons Richard, Ben and Henry who were working in the mines as pony drivers. Harriet's eldest son, Joseph Jnr was, by this time, a railway fireman, but sadly died in 1902 aged 24.

1911 was an eventful year for the Parkes family. The April census records Joseph and Harriet still living at no.59 with just Ezekiel, Florence and granddaughter Annie still at home and where the family supplemented their income by taking in two lodgers. Phoebe had married in 1904 and Richard, who had married in 1906, was living with his wife, Tamar, and their daughters just 4 doors away from his parents at 63, The Blocks. Recently married Benjamin was now living with his wife Hannah at Brimington.

Researched and written by Ann Lucas as part of the Barrow Hill: A Community Remembers project

Henry had also recently married Lily Dodson, the daughter of Mattias and Serena Dodson of Speedwell Terrace, Staveley. The couple and their 3 month old daughter, Sarah Ann, were lodging at number 63 with his brother Richard and Henry was working as a fitters labourer at the local engine sheds.

Within the next few months, Ezekiel left home to get married and tragedy struck Henry and his wife when their baby daughter, Sarah Ann, died. Another daughter, Florence Ethel was born in 1912.



Henry moved to Maltby, near Rotherham, where he worked at Maltby Colliery. The first shafts of the mine had been sunk in 1910 with the first coal produced in 1914. As a subsidiary of the Sheepbridge Coal and Iron Company, it is likely that Henry and others had been offered some incentive to transfer.

At the outbreak of war, Henry enlisted at nearby Rotherham. The 1/5th Battalion York & Lancaster Regiment was a Territorial Army Unit that was mobilised in Rotherham [Drill Hall] August 1914 as part of the 3rd West Riding Brigade, West Riding Division. The Battalion was initially stationed at Rotherham then moved to Doncaster, then to Gainsborough and York.

At the beginning of 1915, Henry's wife Lily gave birth to their daughter Sarah whose birth was registered at Chesterfield. This suggests that Lily had either remained in Barrow Hill whilst Henry worked at Maltby or moved back whilst he was on active service.

The battalion had been mobilised for war and landed at Boulogne in April 1915. The formation had become the 148th Brigade in 49th (West Riding) Division before Henry arrived to join them on the Western Front on 27th August 1915.

On 19th December of the same year, the 49th Division were badly affected by the first combined chlorine-phosgene attack by Germany, at Wieltje near Ypres, Belgium when 88 tons of the gas was released from cylinders causing 1069 casualties and 69 deaths.

During 1916, the Division was in action at The Battle of Albert, The Battle of Bazentin Ridge, The Battle of Pozieres Ridge and The Battle of Flers-Courcelette. In 1917, they took part in Operations on the Flanders Coast and The Battle of Poelcapelle.

Henry's Medal Index Roll Card reveals that he was, for a time, a Lance Corporal with the York and Lancaster Regiment and that he also served for a time with the Royal Engineers (190589). This was not unusual as soldiers were sometimes transferred to other regiments if their peace time occupation had equipped them with a particular skill. His R.E. service number suggests the possibility that Henry's previous experience as a fitters labourer at the Barrow Hill engine sheds could have been of use to the Royal Engineers when the Light Railway Operating Companies were formed in early 1917.

Between 7th June and 10th Nov 1917 the 1/5th Battalion was involved in the Flanders Offensive that consisted of several battles to take the ridge that collectively became known as 'Passchendaele'. After several advances the salient was extended towards Passchendaele but it had become narrowed and, prior to the final advance on the town and ridge by the Canadians due to start on the 26th October, there were several actions to widen the salient and straighten the lines.



Henry Thomas Parkes was killed on 22nd October 1917 *"by the bursting of a shell"*. He was 30 years old and left a widow and two young children.

He is remembered on the Tyne Cot Memorial which forms the north-eastern boundary of Tyne Cot Cemetery on the Passchendaele-Broodseinde road. It stands close to the farthest point in Belgium reached by Commonwealth forces in the First World War until the final advance to victory.

His father, Joseph, also died within a few weeks of Henry's death.

Henry Parkes was posthumously awarded the 15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Sources include:

1. *England Census 1851-1911*
2. *England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth /Marriage/Death Indexes, 1837-1915*
3. *UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919*
4. *Web: International, Find A Grave Index*
5. *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*
6. *British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920*
7. *Derbyshire Courier Newspaper*