

EMBSAY SOLDIERS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The Rush to Enlist 1914:

The Craven Herald (9th October, 1914)

“EMBSAY.

Roll of Honour. - This village may well be proud that so many of her sons have responded to the call for recruits by Lord Kitchener. The goodly list of names below reflects creditably on the patriotism of our young men, and, we have no doubt they will display the valour which is the attribute of every British soldier when his opportunity comes to defend his King and country: Lieut. Christopher Brown, Lieut. Wm. D. Anderton (R.A.M.C.), Lieut. R. Armstrong; regulars: Walter Jackson, Arthur Simpson, Robert Rimmer, Jonathan Thompson, A. Gauntlet, James O'Brien, Alfred Watson (Kitchener's Army); Territorials : Wm. Scott, Jack Birkett, Edward Rimmer, John Raw, George Smith, Jacob Osborne, J.W. Phillip, John Nelson (Kitchener's Army); Territorials: Edward King, William Rimmer, Edgar Smith, Henry Soulsby, Robert Cumberland, Harold Simpson, Richard Chapman, Robt. Jackman, Ebor Holmes (Bradford "Pals" Battalion). “

West Yorkshire Pioneer (23rd October, 1914)

“**Well Done, Embsay!** – The appeal by Lord Kitchener for recruits for the Army has been right nobly responded to by the young men of the village. No less than twenty-seven have joined some branch or other of the service.”

A “Thankful” Family:

RIMMER

Robert Rimmer was the gardener at Eastby Sanatorium, and lived with his wife Elizabeth on Main Street, Embsay. Their family of 10 children included 5 boys, aged 10 to 22 at the outbreak of war. Four of them went to war. All four were members of Embsay cricket club in 1914, and volunteered for Kitchener's army at the outbreak of the war.

The eldest, **John** (22) worked in the cotton mill.

Robert, at the age of 21, was already an experienced soldier, having enlisted in 1911.

William (19) was a warpdresser. He was wounded in May, and again in June 1918, but recovered to remain in the army until 1919.

Thomas (who preferred to use his middle name, Edward) was 17, and also worked at the mill. In 1914 he was allowed to join the Territorials, which kept him stationed in England until he was old enough to be sent to the Front.

All four Rimmer boys survived and returned to their parents in Embsay.

John disappears from the records after 1920.

Robert became a night watchman and stoker at the Tannery. He lived all the rest of his life in Embsay but did not marry.

Edward worked as a blacksmith and engineer at the quarry after he was demobbed in March 1919. He married in 1921 and had three children. He was still living here in the 1960s.

William returned with a permanent injury – a gunshot wound damaged his left arm so that it was 25% wasted. His shoulder was stiff although he had movement there and in his elbow, wrist and fingers. However, his grip was 30% impaired. He was discharged in December 1918, and married 2 years later, before moving to Broughton.

Another “Thankful” Family ; SIMPSON

Joseph Simpson worked as a foreman platelayer for the railway, and lived at Millhome with his wife Sarah. They had 4 children – daughter Elsie, and the boys: Arthur (21), Herbert (23) and Harold (25).

Arthur worked at the spindle mill as a forger and enlisted in 1914 as a gunner.

Harold, a weaver, enlisted into the 1/6th West Riding Regiment, and was still in service in 1919.

Herbert was a mechanic engineer and had married in Esther Firth in August 1914. He joined the army in 1916.

1915 – Arthur Simpson’s letter from the Front

Craven Herald & Wensleydale Standard (18 June 1915)

EMBSAY GUNNER’S LETTER TO SILSDEN CHUM.

Writing to Mr. Herbert Whittingham , Norwood, Skipton Road, Silsden, an Embsay soldier who is at the front (Gunner **Arthur Simpson**), says:-

“I came out here just a little over six months ago, and since then I have scarcely ever been out of the firing line. We go about three miles behind the trenches now and then for a rest, but we are never really out of the danger zone.

During our first two or three months out here the weather was shocking; there was mud everywhere, and it generally used to be about knee deep in the trenches. I have seen places where men had to stand in it up to their waists. Now, however, it is just the opposite, the weather being as fine as it possibly can be. I hope it keeps so too, until the end of the war. I don’t want to spend another winter out here if I can help it.

We have been doing some very good work during the last few weeks, and in some places have advanced a good distance. We have also taken a good many prisoners.”

1915 – Harold Simpson’s letter from the Front

The Craven Herald and Wensleydale Standard newspaper (4th June, 1915)

NEWS OF AN EMBSAY SOLDIER.

Writing to a friend at Silsden, an Embsay soldier, **Pte. H. Simpson**, A Company, 3rd Platoon, 1st 6th Duke of Wellington’s West Riding Regiment, who is in the trenches at the front, says:-

“I will remember you to the Embsay boys out here, also to Harold Hopwood, as soon as I see them. I am in the same company as they are, but not in the same platoon. You would be surprised if you could only see us at this moment. We are living in dug-outs, if you know what they are. To make a dug-out, we dig a hole in the ground, then cover the top over with branches, or, if we can get corrugated iron we cover it over with that, then we throw dirt and sods on the top to make it shell proof as far as we can. By so doing you see they are difficult to observe by the enemy’s artillery. Of course, if a shell hit the top it would make a mess of us. If we were in a house we

Jane Lunnon, Embsay-with-Eastby Historical Research Group (2018)

should be in far more danger, and though we often sleep in houses, we have these dug-outs to run to."

All three Simpson men came home after the war.

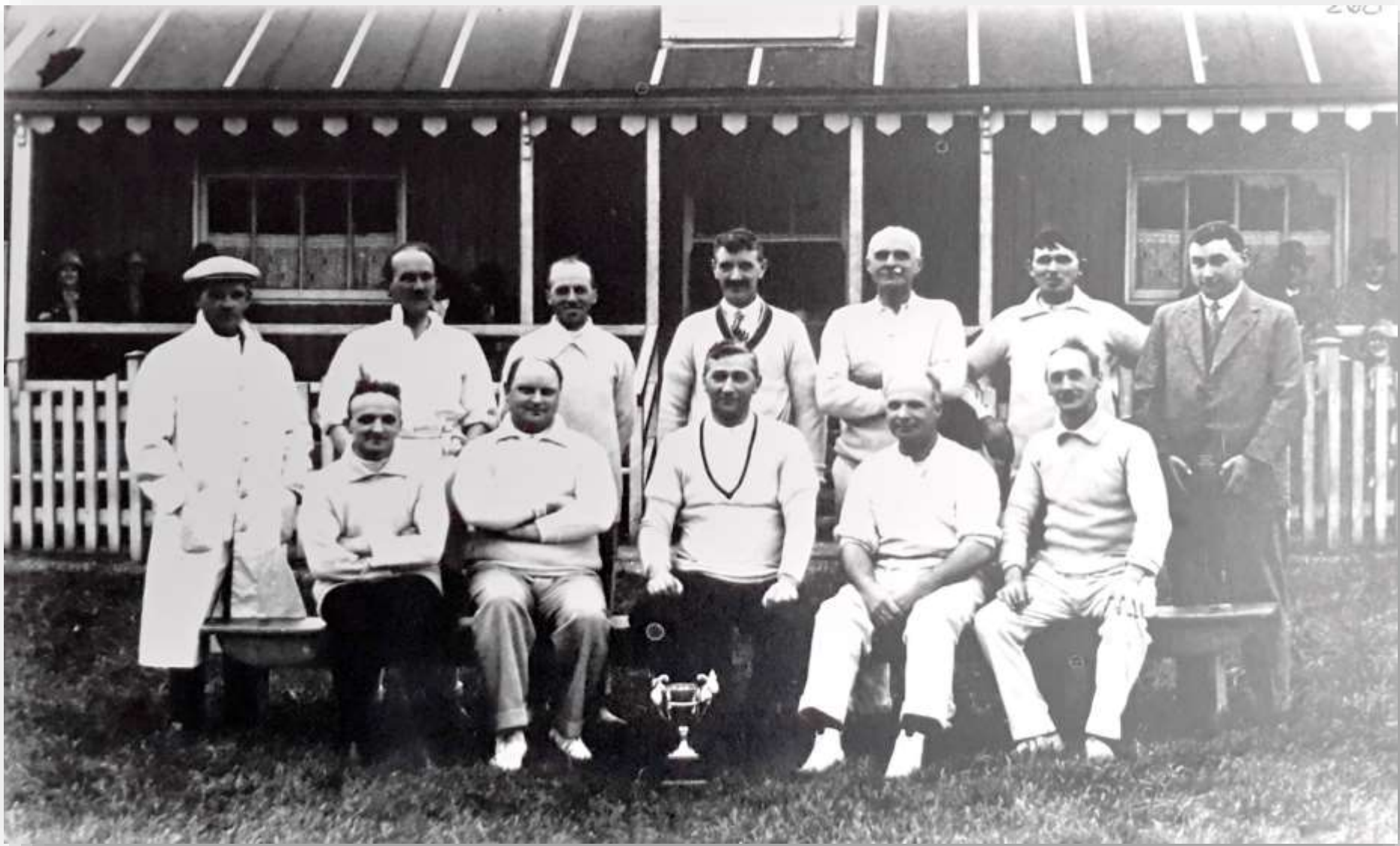
Arthur married and worked at the Tannery, living on South View Terrace.

Harold, worked as a leather tanner, cutter and packer at Embsay Tannery, and lived at Millholme with his wife Elsie.

Herbert, also worked at the Tannery, as a feeder for the leather splitting machines, but lived in Skipton with his wife, Esther.



*Embsay Cricket Team, winners of the Skipton and District League Cup, 1909.
Harold Simpson (4th from the left on back row)*



*Embsay Cricket Team, winners of the Skipton and District League Cup, c.1929.
Harold Simpson (sitting far left) and his brother Herbert (seated 2nd in from the right)*

OTHER RETURNERS FROM THE WAR

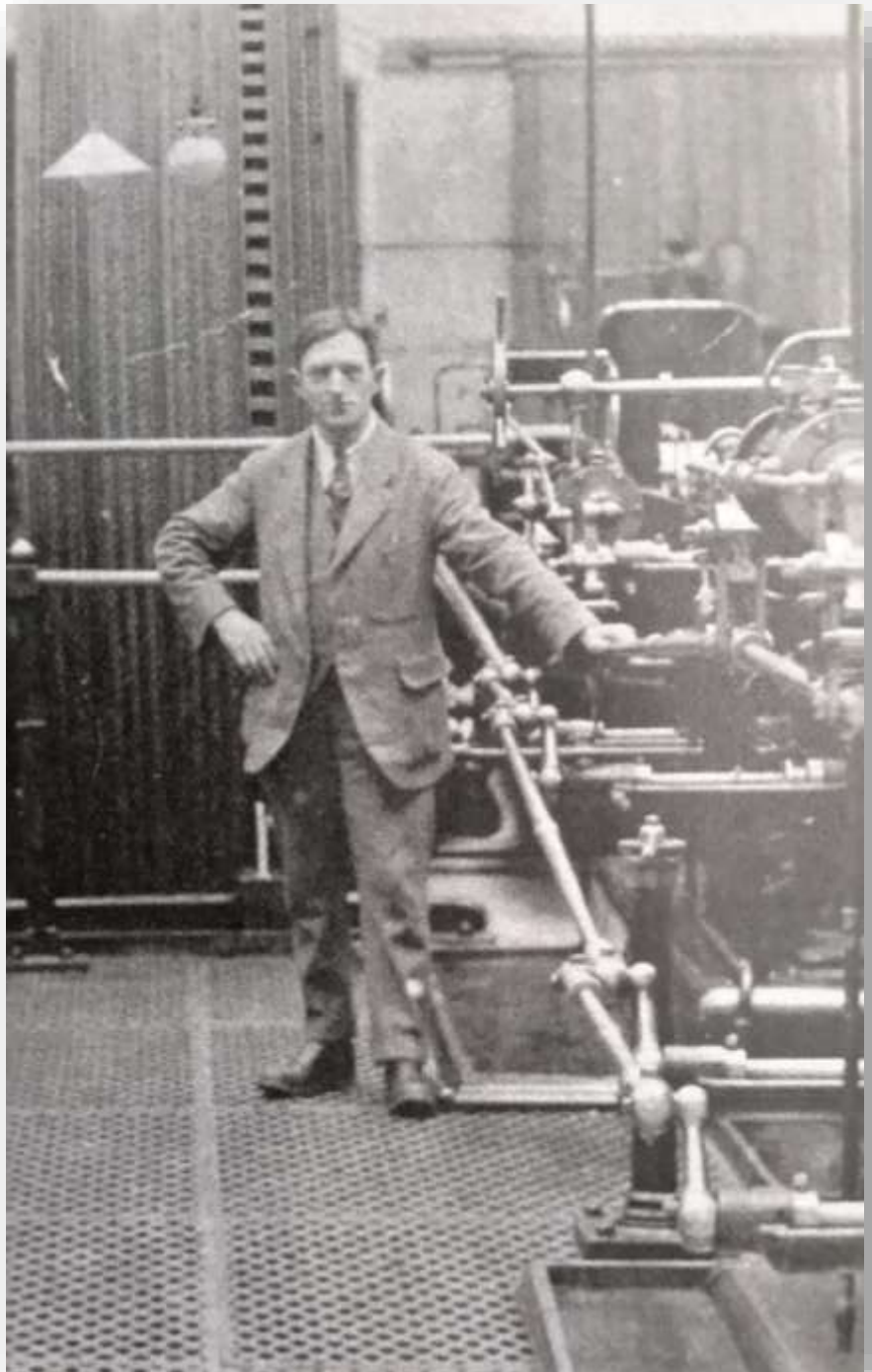
SETH BINNS

The foreman manager at Millholme Shed (Embsay Mill), Seth was a well-respected man in the village –popular with the employees and an enthusiastic member of the cricket team. He had arrived with his new wife Elsie in 1913, having previously lived in Cononley.

At the outbreak of the war he became one of the first committee members of the new Rifle Club, and was appointed its steward. He was also a member of the Wesleyan Guild and the local branch of the Liberal Association.

In October 1915 he left the mill, and joined the Army Reserves. In May 1917 he was posted overseas with the Lincolnshire Regiment, and was wounded that December. He was discharged as physically unfit in May 1919, but returned to live in East Lane, and work at the mill again. He even re-joined the cricket team. His daughter Constance was born in 1920.

Seth died in 1949 and is buried in Embsay churchyard.



*Seth Binns, in Milholme Shed,
1921*



Seth Binns, in the Cricket team, c.1923

WILLIAM PEEL READ jr.

Known as “Willie”, he was an assistant in Arthur Davy’s grocery business, and just 22 years old. His twice-widowed mother lived at Greenbottom, while Willie lived with his wife, Mary Ellen, at Roseville on Main Street. Their baby son, Jack, was barely 8 months old when war broke out.

Willie joined the Northumberland Fusiliers, and was later transferred to the Durham Light Infantry. He was wounded in October 1917, and again in June 1918, but was not demobbed until 1919.

By the eve of the Second World War he was a widower, still living on Main Street, with his daughter Eva, and working as a builder’s labourer. His son Jack was a builder’s foreman.

Two of his 4 brothers, Tom (known as “Harry”) and Sam, were killed in the war. The youngest brother Jack, was luckily only 13 when the war broke out; Dick was unable to join the army because of a damaged arm.

*Illustration on next page: The Read family at Greenbottom Farm, c.1898
(left to right) Nora, Willie (in front of the donkey), Dick, Tom (“Harry”), and their
father, William Peel Read Snr.*



Jane Lunnon, Embsay-with-Eastby Historical Research Group (2018)

Dick Chapman

Dick was 28 and working at the cotton mill in 1914. He was another member of the cricket team and enlisted during the first rush of volunteers for Kitchener's army. His military record of service has not survived, but we know he was still in the army by the Armistice. In 1921 he married in Nottinghamshire to Elsie Peat, and brought her back to live on Crag View Terrace in Embsay, and took back his old job as a warp dresser.

But he died within the year of heart disease and fluid in the abdomen – he was just 36 years old.

His brother Jack, also a cotton mill worker, was 32 and a married man with children. He was yet another member of the local cricket team. After the war he worked alongside Robert Rimmer as a night watchman at the Tannery. He died in Embsay in 1961.

Brother Albert was 35 at the start of the war, and worked through the war at the quarry, as did another brother, Robert (28).

Their brother, Tom, however, was killed in September 1918, at the age of 34.

Registration District SKIPTON.									
1922. DEATHS in the Sub-District of SKIPTON in the County of YORKS (W.R.).									
Column—	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
No.	When and Where Died	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
211	Fifth April 1922 Near Elm Tree Embsay Skipton R.D.	Dick Stockdale Chapman	Male	36 Years	Warp Dresser (Cotton)	(1) Morbus Cordis (2) Ascites Certified by W. Leversidge M.D.	Elsie Chapman Widow of deceased present at the death Near Elm Tree Embsay	Fifth April 1922.	William Henry Arthington Registrar.

Dick Stockdale Chapman's Death Certificate, 1922

Robert Walker Earnshaw

Robert, like his brother and sister, was a teacher. He taught languages at a North London private school but was back in Craven for the summer holidays when he joined the Welsh Fusiliers – he did so in order to avoid prosecution for impersonating a recruiting officer in a bid to obtain money from a Gargrave pub landlord. It worked – he was acquitted because of his uniform.

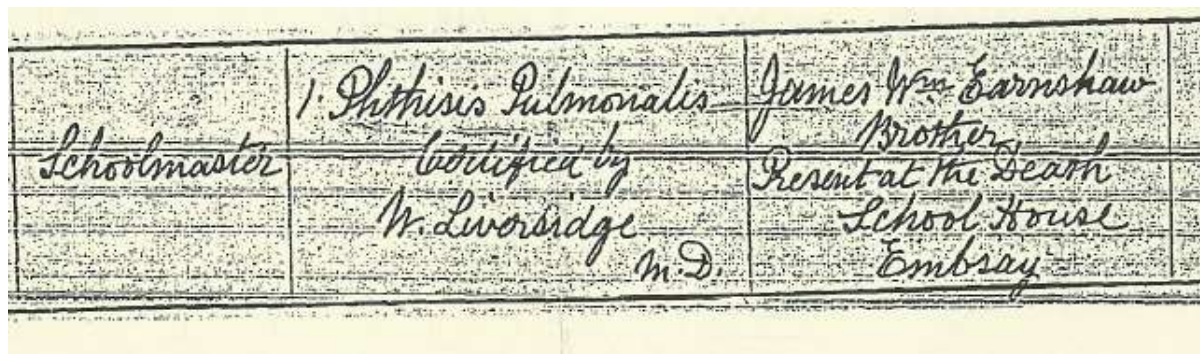
He married in 1915 to a Kendal girl, Dorothy Taylor, but Robert was sent out to France in June 1916, five months before his daughter was born. He served with the Fusiliers and also the South Wales Borderers, until June 1916, earning a “good character” reference.

He survived a severe face wound damaging his jaw, gas poisoning and severely injury in the leg after being buried in a shell explosion.

Nevertheless he was returned to duty and served in Ireland before going back to France again in October 1918.

On demobilisation in February 1919 he was given the relatively high medical classification B2, yet from November 1920 was granted a war pension for 100% disability, not for the wounds, but for tuberculosis, aggravated by the war.

He spent his last 2 years at the School House on East Lane, with his parents, and died in March 1921, aged 33. His brother James was with him at the death.





Robert Walker Earnshaw's gravestone, a Calvary cross, in Embsay Churchyard

PRISONERS OF WAR

At least 4 Embsay-with-Eastby men were captured by the Germans during the First World War. Unfortunately we only know the names of two of them: Thomas Lawson Whitehead, and John Nixon.

Thomas Lawson Whitehead.

Thomas was just 15 when the war started, the son of an overlooker at the cotton mill. He was a Lance-corporal in the North Staffordshire Regiment when he was captured in May 1918, and one of the 4 recipients of the regular monthly gift parcels sent by the Embsay War Distress Committee to POWs.

After the war, he followed in his father's footsteps as a weaving overlooker, working at the Union Mills in Skipton in the 1930s. He married in 1924, and died in 1988 at the age of 89.

John Nixon

Not to be confused with John Nixon who had lived in Embsay as a boy, before moving to Skipton. That John Nixon died at Gallipoli. And neither is he to be confused with John Frederick Nixon, of Main Street, Embsay, who was just 13 when the war broke out.

John Nixon, son of builder's mason, Michael Nixon and his wife Margaret, also lived on Main Street, and on leaving school worked in the cotton mill. Only 15 when the war broke out, he joined the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and was captured in June 1918 during the German Spring Offensive.

On his return he married Rosanna Doyle, and appears to have lived in Skipton as a lorry driver.

How many returned to Emsay and Eastby?

Of all the names of men with direct connections to Emsay-with-Eastby in the period leading up to the First World War (from the time of the 1911 Census) we have 109 names of probable survivors.

Of these it is known for certain that **67 returned to live in Emsay-with-Eastby immediately after the war** (between 1918 and 1920).

Many of the others moved to Skipton or elsewhere, either because their families had already moved out, or presumably they sought employment outside the parish.

The Wounded of Emsay and Eastby

The following is a list of those we know were wounded during the war, or received disability war pensions after demob (this includes some men who lived in Emsay before the war, but did not actually return to live here afterwards).

Due to the patchy nature of the British Army Service Records, this cannot be regarded as a complete picture – details are often had to come by, so we cannot tell how serious many of these wounds were. Some would have been life-changing, while others would have been completely treatable. The mental scars, of course, cannot be measured.

[GSW = Gun Shot Wound]

Seth Binns –discharged March 1919; 30% disablement

Frank Wilfred Birch – war pension 12/6d p.w.

William Brown – wounded Dec 1917 & April 1918 – severe burns hands & face from liquid fire

Frederick Arthur Chapman – wounded Aug 1917 – but still in service 1918

James Drake – Discharged as physically unfit ; lost part of fingers due to blood poisoning

Edwin Ellis – wounded Sept 1917 but still in service 1918 ; 20% disablement pension – GSW to jaw

John Buckle Humphries – wounded August 1915 but still in service 1919

John William Greenslade – wounded Sept 1915; July 1916 – discharged physically unfit – GSW & shrapnel limiting movement of right hand

John Percy Heyworth – June 1917 suffering bleeding into the joints which continued throughout the war, judged to be of “trivial nature” & he is recorded as not claiming disability pension on discharge in March 1919.

Malcolm Mitton – wounded Nov 1918

John William Nelson – 30% disability – GSW July 1916, but pension granted in May 1919 was for rheumatism attributable to war service.

John Fishwick Nixon – Accidental injury 1918 (oil lamp flare into his face); Discharged Feb 1920 medical classification A1 yet a few months later was claiming 100% war disability pension for tuberculosis aggravated by the war.

Frederick Mallender Phillip – GSW to face and arm, April 1917 – a month in hospital; GSW to head in April 1918 – fully healed after 2 months; Medical classification on Demob = A1.

George Edward Phillip – wounded May 1917

Willie Peel Read jnr – wounded Oct 1917 & June 1918; still in service 1919

Thomas Edward Rimmer – wounded May 1918

William Rimmer – wounded May & June 1918; 30% disablement – GSW left arm – impaired grip and stiff shoulder, 25% wasting of arm muscle

Harold Simpson – injured August 1915 – another soldier accidentally caught his leg on a pick while filling sandbags. The resulting septic knee was treated and he was returned to duty.

Amos Smith – discharged Sept 1916 with disablement pension.

John Darlington Tanswell – discharged physically unfit in March 1919 due to syphilis contracted in Oct 1917; After medical exam a pension was refused in March 1919, but the following month 50% disability pension given for his tuberculosis.

Ralph Tanswell – Bronchitis in February 1917; Shrapnel wound August 1917 – hospitalised for 2 years – 80% disability in his arm.

Jonathan Thompson - wounded Dec 1914 & May 1915 with GSWs to leg, and forearm – healed by end of war ; Granted 5% disability pension for shell shock

Alfred Watson – Influenza in Sept 1918; Signed form to say he was not claiming any disability pension on demob.

Charles William Whalley – No disability on demobilisation.

Wilbert Wiggan – signed form to say he was not going to claim war disability pension

George Thomas Woodhouse – discharged April 1919 invalided with bronchio-pneumonia after influenza ; 20% war disability pension for rheumatism

Thomas Wragg – discharged due to “sickness” in Dec 1918

John Wright – wounded 1915 and in 1917

Medallists

James Birkett, *West Riding Regiment*

Awarded Gallantry medal: June 1917

James was 17 in 1914; his brother Jack was killed in the war, September 1916; When their father also died in 1916, their mother moved the family to Skipton, and so James did not return to Embsay after the war, but went to live in Skipton, married in 1919, and worked for a coal merchant. He died in 1948.

John Wright, *Northumberland Fusiliers, Lewis Gun Section*

Awarded Military medal: December 1917

A 17 year old tobacco mill hand in 1914, John was nevertheless wounded in action by 1915, and again in 1917. He married in 1925, and although lived in Earby for a while, returned to Embsay , living at Crag View as a self-employed joiner.

William Inman,

Awarded Gallantry medal: March 1918 ; Killed in action,

Tom Watkinson, *West Yorkshire Regiment*

Awarded Gallantry medal: May 1918

From a large family of 13 children, Tom left Embsay as a young man to work in Masham as a grocer's salesman, having learnt his trade as an apprentice with Davy's grocery merchants at Cross End. Tom had 6 siblings and his parents still living here throughout the war, and by 1927 he was back as a grocer in his own shop in Embsay.

William Dinsdale Anderton

Awarded Military Cross – December 1918

Birthday honours list : For distinguished service in connection with Military Operations in Salonika — Captain William Dinsdale Anderton, Royal Army Medical Corps.

The son of businessman, Fred Anderton (wine merchant and manufacturer of sparkling water), William was brought up at Sawley Grange, and then at Embsay Cottage (on Shires Lane). He graduated in medicine from Leeds University in July 1914, and immediately took a commission as a Lieutenant in the Royal Army Medical Corps. There followed a long and highly successful career as an army doctor. During the First World War he rose to the rank of Major, serving in France, Belgium, Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Malta, and Turkey.

Between the Wars he served as a Field Ambulance Commander in Turkey, Malta, India and Bermuda. By the time World War II began William was Deputy Assistant Director of Medical Services in the Western Command, England.

During the Second World War, William Dinsdale Anderton commanded the 44th General Hospital in West Africa, and was then Assistant Director of Military Medical Services for Essex and Suffolk, and later for the Kent district.

After the war he served in the Middle East and again at Malta. He retired as a Brigadier in July 1949, retiring to Jersey in the Channel Islands, where he died in 1985.