

## Remembering Charles Richard Knowles.

25<sup>th</sup> October 1918. Aged 24.



Charles Richard Knowles was born on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1894 at Centenary Place (now Centenary Row), off Pasture Road, Embsay, where his mother, Ann Smith Shacklock, had also been born in 1864. In 1891 she had married William Henry Knowles, who had come to Embsay as a boy and also lived at Centenary Place.

Along with all the Shacklock family, Charles's mother was a Swedenborgian and attended the New Jerusalem Church on Pasture Road. Her great-grandfather, Richard Shacklock, one of the principal figures in the local branch of the New Church, had come to Embsay as a machine maker in 1812, and later founded Crown Spindle Works. In 1857, the centenary of a religious vision or "revelation" to the

New Church of Jerusalem's founder, Emanuel Swedenborg, the Shacklock's built the houses on Centenary Place, next to the chapel, for their family and workers.

Ann became a teacher at the non-conformist British School, which stood behind the New Jerusalem Church. This was also where Charles, her only son, first went to school just before his fourth birthday.

In February 1902, when Charles Knowles was seven, he went up onto Embsay Moor with his uncle, Thomas Henry Shacklock, to the rocky outcrop called Deer Gallows, and there his uncle carved their names, "T.H. Shacklock, C.R. Knowles, Feby 1902". Little did the young Charles know that it was to be his lasting memorial in Embsay.



Names carved on Deer Gallows, Embsay Moor

With the decline of the textile mills in Embsay his father found work as a warp twister and drawer in Keighley, and the Knowles family subsequently left Embsay for Keighley in 1910. The following year, when Charles was 16, he was working in one of the new Keighley cinemas as an assistant cinematograph operator - a growing profession which would have set him up for his adult life but for the intervention of the First World War.

In early 1915 he enlisted at Keighley with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, and arrived in France on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1915 – his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.

He was later transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, where he rose to the rank of Lance Sergeant. The Battalion were in Flanders in October 1918 when they were

ordered to take over part of the line held by the 11<sup>th</sup> Regiment Belgian Infantry. They spent the night of the 18<sup>th</sup> October in billets at Hulste, ten miles east of Ypres, where they were bombarded with high explosives and gas.

The war diaries for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion show that they advanced on 24<sup>th</sup> October, but were held in position under heavy shelling and machine gun fire. On the 25<sup>th</sup> October they advanced again at 09:00 hours, but "*found great difficulty in going forward and finally stopped*". Charles Richard Knowles was one of seven men killed that day. He was 24.

The West Yorkshire Pioneer recorded:

*"KNOWLES, Sergeant C.R., 2nd R.I.F., son of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Henry Knowles, Nashville Road, Keighley, formerly of Embsay, killed in action Oct. 25, 1918. "*

He was buried at Herlebeke New British Cemetery in West Flanders, where a white headstone marks his grave. He is not recorded on the village war memorial as his family had moved to Keighley before the start of the war.

However, he has his own lasting memorial at Deer Gallows, overlooking the village where he was born.

*David Turner, Embsay-with-Eastby Historical Research Group (2018)*