

Private William Short (25762) of the Durham Light Infantry
was born on 31 March 1890 in Gunnislake
and killed in action in France on 15 April 1917.
Although he enlisted in Durham, he was the son of
William Thomas Short and Clara Down of Calstock.

William Harold Short, born 31 March 1890, was baptised on 17 June in Gunnislake. His father, William Thomas 1857-1900, a copper miner, was the son of John Short 1819-1891+, also a copper miner, and his wife Ann 1828-1891+. Although both parents and their older children had been born in Devon, the family had moved to Calstock, prior to William Thomas's birth in 1857 and baptism in Calstock on 26 May 1859, remaining there until at least 1891.

William Harold's mother, Clara was the daughter of John Down 1828-96, a copper miner, and his wife Thirza Stephens 1836-1904. William and Clara married in 1881. They had four children: Francis Aubrey 1883-98, Archie Ambrose J 1885-1918, William Harold 1890-1917 and Ella May 1899-1980. While William Harold was an infant, they had moved to Durham, as the 1891 census shows the family living at 8 South Pentop, Greencroft, Co Durham. They had returned to the Tavistock area by 1898, where Francis died, aged 15. Ella was born the following year and their father, William died the year after that, leaving Clara with three children including a small baby. Living in Chilsworthy, Calstock in 1901, her son Archie 16, was a grocery shop assistant and William 11 was at school. Her mother Thirza was living with Clara's sister Annie and her husband, James Hodge, a railway ganger in Burn Lane, Brentor in 1901. In 1891 Annie had been staying with her sister Jane King and her husband Willie at Forda Mill in Brentor. The King family was living in Burn View in 1901 where William was a coal and corn merchant, but by 1911 they had moved to Surrey

In 1911 William Harold had returned to Durham and was living at 25 Ryde Terrace, Annfield Plain, Co Durham where he was a coal miner shifter, working underground. Early in 1917 he married Flossie Hall Pilkington 1891-1978 in Bury, Lancashire. She continued to live at her family home, 42 Walmersley Rd in Bury. At some stage, prior to this, William enlisted at Consett, Co Durham, joining the 11th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry as a Private, 25762. Within months or even weeks of his wedding he was killed in action in France on 15 April 1917.

It is likely that William, and others of the 11th Battalion, who died on the same day, 15 April 1917, and are buried at the Lebuquiere Communal Cemetery Extension at Pas de Calais, were killed in the Battle of Arras. The first days of the battle were a tactical success causing the Germans to fall back to their second line defence. But rapid re-inforcement enabled the Germans to launch a counter attack, starting on

William Short 1890-1916

14 April 1917, which checked the British advance. William is commemorated on the War Memorial in Brentor, the village where his mother and aunt lived. It is likely that his mother, Clara died in 1917 in the Exeter area.

His widow, Flossie Hall Short 1891-1978 married Clifford Nunns in 1931 and in 1939 was living in Ramsbottom, Lancashire running her own millinery and gowns business.