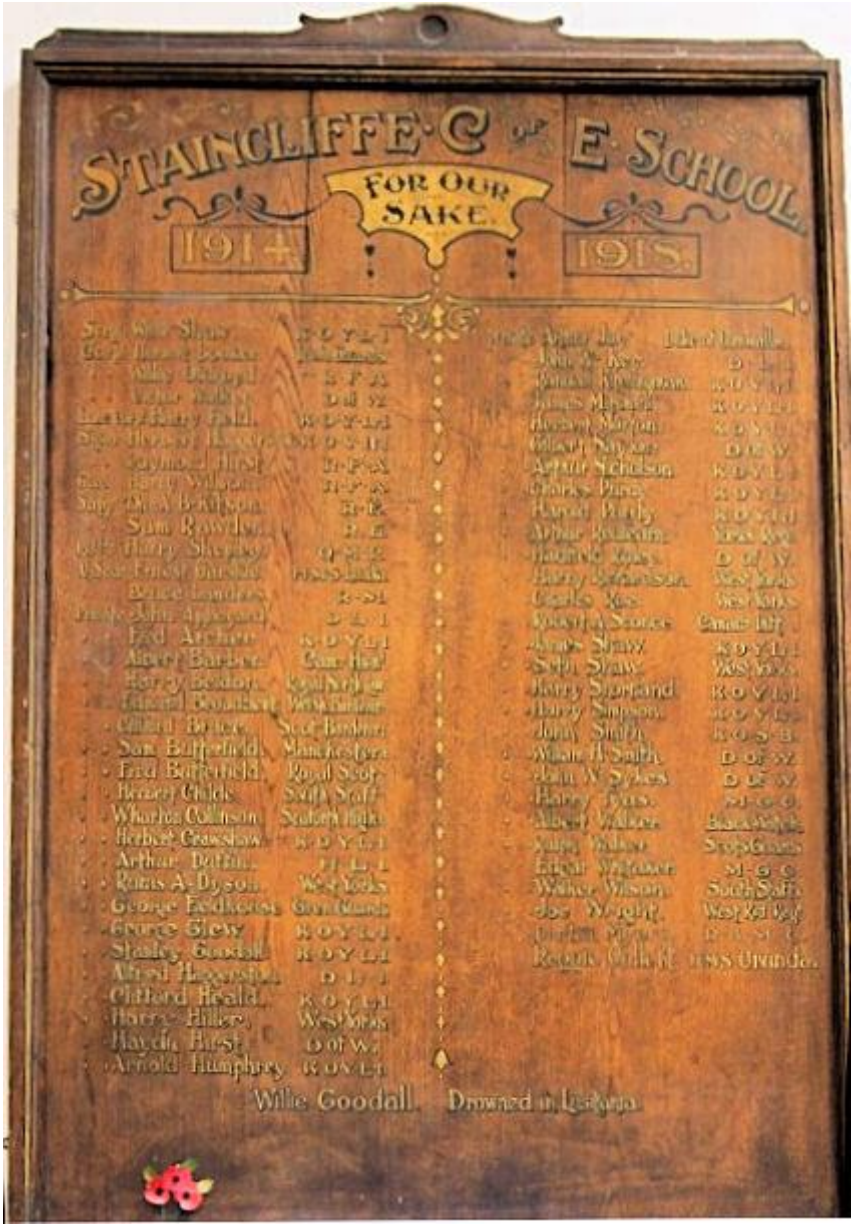
Willie Goodall



Willie Goodall was born in Batley on 26 October 1881 and baptised at Staincliffe Wesleyan Chapel on 20 December 1881. He was the second son of Staincliffe couple Fairfax and Emma Goodall nee Broadhead. He and his elder brother George Arthur are recorded as living with their grandparents at Bunkers Lane (1891) and Yard 5, 3 Halifax Road (1901) whilst their parents and younger

siblings lived at Tichbourne Street. Willie attended Staincliffe C of E Day school. In 1901 he was a woollen piecer but he had become a rag grinder, like his father, before his marriage on 16 February 1907 to Beatrice Lockwood at Batley Parish Church. Companies he worked for included John Brooke and the Co-op's Livingstone Mill, both at Batley Carr. His wife Beatrice, also worked in the textile industry as a weaver, at the time of her marriage at the Co-operative Mills.

Leonard was born later in 1907.

In 1906 Beatrice's uncle, Dick Lockwood, had emigrated to America and settled in Kearney, New Jersey, but his wife Florence and their children returned in May 1911 for a summer visit because her mother was ill. Her return journey was made on board the *Campania* which docked at New York on 12 August 1911, accompanying her were Willie, Beatrice and Leonard who had decided to make the move to the USA with their destination Kearney.

The family settled in Kearney, New Jersey and this is where Jack was born in 1914. Life was tough, with Willie finding work hard to obtain. He switched jobs regularly, and he worked in a cotton mill, motor works and in a linoleum shop.

The employment situated further deteriorated after the outbreak of war, and this prompted them to return home. Only a week or so before the family planned to travel Willie obtained a promising new post and he decided to stay on for two or three months to see how it went and his wife and children booked third class accommodation with Florence Lockwood and her two children and her cousin Edith Robson on the *Lusitania*.

This remained the belief of Willie's parents in Batley. They did not realise that he had changed his mind the day before sailing and surprise his parents.

Early in the voyage home the Goodalls made friends with Eddie and Annie Riley from Great Horton, Bradford. They were amongst the lucky ones being saved with their four-year-old twins. Once they got back to England, they voraciously read the newspaper accounts for any updates. These updates included on from the parents of Willie, stating he had remained in America whilst his family sailed home. Knowing this not to be true the Riley's travelled to Staincliffe on 15 September to break the news of Willie's death to his parents in person.

When the *Lusitania* was torpedoed Willie was in the smoke-room and Leonard was running about playing on deck. Beatrice was also on deck with baby Jack, talking to the Riley family. When the explosion occurred, Beatrice ran off to seek her husband and eldest child, whilst the Rileys made for the lifeboats. They did not see the Goodalls again.

The Riley family, before returning to England, did make the grisly visit to the mortuary in Queenstown, but fail to recognise any of the Staincliffe family. Subsequently Cunard wrote to Willie's parents: -

"*We have now received some photographs of the unidentified bodies recovered and other photographs will be taken as the bodies are brought in, and will be sent here (Liverpool) and displayed for identification. We shall be very pleased to show you these photos, should you care to come to Liverpool...."*

The RMS *Lusitania* had been sunk off the coast of Queenstown, Ireland on 7 May 1915 by German U boat U-20.

When names were being sought for inclusion on Batley's town War Memorial in 1923, Willie Goodall's father put his son's name forward. He explained he was Batley-born and went to America prior to the war. On his journey home with his wife and children he drowned in the *Lusitania.* The Borough Council rejected the claim. He is not on Batley War Memorial but his name does appear on Staincliffe Church of England School's Roll of Honour.

Researched by Jane Roberts for more details see
www.pasttopresentgenealogy.com