

HERBERT BEWICK DEES

**Pte 1413 18th Battalion
Durham Light Infantry**

Herbert (Bert) Dees (1892-1965) was born in Gateshead and came from a large and artistic family (pictured below in 1906).



Bert's elder brother John Arthur (Jack) Dees (1875-1959) studied at the School of Art in Gateshead and was a regular exhibitor in Northern Counties Exhibitions from 1905. In 1904 the family moved to Spennymoor where Bert's father became a manager at the Weardale Steel, Coal & Coke Company.

At the outbreak of war Bert Dees was employed as a cokeman and lived at 110 Weardale Street, Low Spennymoor with his wife, Florence May. Their son, Herbert, was born on 8th October 1914.

Dees enlisted with the DLI on 10th March 1915 as Pte 1413. Sadly, a month later, his son died of bronchial pneumonia and, probably as a result of this loss, on 21st January 1916, the Army released Dees to “war service” work in munitions at Redcar Ironworks.



After moving to Redcar tragedy struck again when, on 20th July 1918, their four month old daughter, Thelma, died from spina bifida.

When the war ended, Bert and his wife returned to Spennymoor where he set up a business as a home painter and decorator. He was also coached by a local artist, Jack Evans, and developed such skills as an amateur painter of landscapes that, by 1929, he was exhibiting in the *Artists of the Northern Counties Exhibition* at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle.



Herbert Dees : Storm Clouds (view from Tudhoe to Brancepeth)

THE SETTLEMENT SKETCHING CLUB

More research is needed but there is strong evidence that Bert Dees was the “father” of the Sketching Club at the Spennymoor Settlement. He painted landscapes and local scenes until his death in 1965. Many of his works were given to his customers as Christmas presents but a few are now part of this Gallery’s permanent collection.



Bert Dees in old age in Spennymoor Settlement Garden with [right to left standing] : Bob Heslop, Bill Farrell, Tom Alderson.