

## Ambrose Grainger (1897 – 1938)

Ambrose Grainger was born in Clay Cross in 1897. His parents were Emlen Grainger (1860 – 1939) and Eliza Case (1865 – 1928). Ambrose was their sixth child..

Until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Clay Cross was a small village known as Clay Lane, but increasing demand for coal and other minerals trebled the population by 1840. The railway 'mania' of the 1840s witnessed expansion northwards facilitated by the Clay Cross tunnel dug in 1837-38. Whilst tunnelling under Clay Cross they discovered vast quantities of commercial grade coal. Clay Cross became a boom town. The 'Liverpool Party' of Stephenson engineers formed the Clay Cross Company in 1839 which they funded from their considerable resources. As well as sinking a number of shafts, there were coke ovens, brickworks, limeworks, iron furnaces and a foundry. The Stephensons also built more than 400 miners cottages. Alma Square was built by the Stephensons.

On the 1901 Census, the family had moved to Whitwell in Derbyshire and they were living on Colliery Row. Ambrose was 4 years. His father was working at Whitwell Colliery which was sunk by the Shireoaks Colliery Company in 1890-1891. Colliery Row had been built by the Shireoaks Colliery Company to provide homes for the miners, and distinguished by the black coloured brickwork at each end of the row of terraced houses. The map below shows how close Colliery Row was to the colliery.



On the 1911 Census, Ambrose was 14 years old and already working as an underground pony driver. During the Great War he signed up on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1915 and joined the Royal Army Service Corps (R.A.S.C.) as a driver. R.A.S.C. was responsible for land, coastal and lake transport, air despatch, etc. He was discharged on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 1919, due to sickness. His service number was T4/212533. He had served in Salonika. The Salonika campaign began on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1915 with the landings at the port of Salonika in Greece.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> December 1919, Ambrose was awarded the Silver War Badge. The badge was awarded in the United Kingdom and the British Empire to service personnel who had been honourably discharged due to wounds or sickness from military service in World War 1.

### Silver War Badge



The award sheet shows that Ambrose received the award under Kings Regulation 392 para XV1A – Surplus to military requirements (having suffered impairment since entry into the service). On the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1920 he received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. The British War Medal is a campaign medal that was awarded to officers and men of the British and Imperial forces for services in World War 1. The Victory Medal was issued to all those who received the 1914 Star or the 1914-15 Star, and to most of those who were awarded the British War Medal.

In 1920 Ambrose married Gertrude Bromley (1900 - 1951). They had two children

Victor Grainger 1921 –  
Thomas Grainger 1927 - 2004

In 1932, Ambrose used his Army driving skills and set up a bus company. In June 1932 he was given a licence to operate a bus service from Clowne to Langwith Colliery. This services ferried miners back and forth, including his own relatives. It is not clear if this was a part time or full time occupation.

Ambrose Grainger had worked at the Markham Pit for five months, previously being engaged at Langwith Colliery for 11 or 12 years. Ambrose is believed to have met his death after rescuing his brother, Thomas. Ambrose was among the first to experience the full force of the explosion. Going back he found his brother with a fractured thigh. He carried him to safety and then returned to do more rescue work. That was the last seen or heard of him.

At the time of the disaster, Ambrose, with his family were living at 9 Mansfield Road in Clowne.

*A year after Ambrose was killed, his relatives placed several 'In Memoriam' notices in The 'Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald'*

*GRAINGER – In loving memory of a dear husband and father, AMBROSE GRAINGER, who died May 10<sup>th</sup> 1938  
“Silent memories”*

- From his loving Wife, Victor and Thomas

*GRAINGER – Treasured memories of my dear brothers, JOHN and AMBROSE, also nephew EMLLEN killed in Markham Pit Disaster May 10<sup>th</sup> 1938.*

*“Their death was sudden, the blow severe,  
We little thought their end so near”*

- From Lawrence, Lily and Johnnie. Clowne

## **Parents**

### **Father: Emlen Grainger (1860 – 1939)**

Emlen Grainger was born in Clay Cross in July 1860. His parents were John Grainger (1827 – 1889) and Anne Dove (1829 – 1879). On the 1961 Census, Emlen was living with his parents at 149 Chapel Row in Clay Cross. His father was employed as a coal miner. In 1871, Emlen was 10 years old and still living in Clay Cross on Tunnell Row. On the 1881 Census Emlen, aged 21 had left home and was boarding with Kirkland family at 103 Newstead Colliery, Newstead Priory. He was employed as a coal miner at the Newstead Colliery which had opened in 1875.

In 1885 he married Eliza Case (1865 – 1928) in North Wingfield. On the 1891 Census, Emlen, his wife, and three children were living on Alma Square. John William had just been born. Emlen and his growing family were living on Colliery Row Whitwell on the 1901 Census. In 1911 Emlen was living at 64 Neale Street in Clowne.

He retired after the death of his wife in 1928.

Emlen witnessed the death of two sons, one severely injured and the death of a grandson in 1938. He never recovered from the effects of this blow and five months before his death, while spending a holiday with his oldest daughter, Sarah, he had a seizure.

He died on 9 June 1939 at the age of 79. He had been a underground miner for 56 years and had lived in Clowne for thirty years

### ***Mother: Eliza Case (1865 - 1928)***

Eliza Case was born in Stonehouse, Plymouth in 1865. The Royal Navy, at the time, had significant operations in Stonehouse. Her parents were Stephen Case (1837 – 1870) and May Ann Laurence (1836 – 1909). Her father died when Eliza was five years old. On the 1871 Census, Eliza was living with her widowed mother and two older siblings, in Leicester at 21 Milton Street. Her mother married Abraham Kenning on 14 February 1881, and on the Census of that year, Eliza is living with her mother, stepfather and siblings in Clay Cross. Her stepfather was employed as an earthenware dealer.

In 1885 Eliza married Emlen Grainger in North Wingfield, which is just to the north of Clay Cross.

Between 1887 and 1907, Eliza and Emlen have 10 children, 5 boys and 5 girls.

Eliza died on the 23 August 1928 at the age of 62 in Clowne.

### ***Wife: Gertrude Bromley (1900 – 1952)***

Gertrude Bromley was born 8 December 1900 in the Rotherham area. Her parents were Wilfred Bromley (1874 - 1952) and Emma Jane Fox (1873 - 1939). Her father had been born in Birstall, near Batley and her mother came from Hanging Heaton in Yorkshire.

On the 1901 Census Gertrude was living with her parents and two older siblings in the Northfield parish of Rotherham. Her father was a hewer. Gertrude and her family moved to Warsop in Nottinghamshire. On the 1911 Census they were living at 5 Queen Street in Warsop. Her father was employed as a contractor at a local colliery.

Gertrude married Ambrose in 1920 and they had two children, Victor and Thomas.

Gertrude died in 1951.