William Abbott





Rank: - Private

Number: - 2800

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry "W Coy (1/4th Battalion**)**

Shot by a sniper: - 21st November 1915 aged 19 years

Cemetery: - Bard Cottage Cemetery, West Vlaanderen, Belgium 1.G.10

"MAY HIS REWARD BE AS GREAT AS HIS SACRIFICE"

Batley News, 27 Nov 1915, 4 Dec 1915 (photo)

Family Details

William was born in Batley in 1896 the youngest son of John and Ellen Abbott (nee Shaw). The couple had married at Dewsbury Parish Church on 30th July 1877.

John came from Nun Monkton and was a plasterer's labourer and in 1881 was living in Norfolk Street, Batley with his wife, stepson Harry Shaw (1873) and daughters Mary Sarah (1878) and Agnes (1880).

Francis was born in 1884, Jane (1882-April 1887) followed by Minetta (1887) John Hays 1889 who died aged 17 months in October 1890, John 1894 who died in February 1900 aged 6 years, Jane 1891 and William,

In 1901 the family was living at 20, Norfolk Street, Batley and John was a coal miner but he sadly died in February 1908.

The family moved to a two roomed home at 8, Baines Street, Batley before 1911.

Before enlisting William was employed as a piecener at Messrs. G. & J. Stubley's, Bottoms Mills, Batley. His brother- in-law Harold Harris died on 20th July 1916.

Service Details

The 1/4th K.O.Y.L.I. left York at about midday on the 14th April 1915 and arrived at Liverpool Street Station about 6.30pm and embarked at Folkestone for a night crossing to Boulogne. They arrived in France on 15th April 1915. Most of the K.O.Y.L.I. Territorial's were eager to get to the front and begin the "great adventure". From 18th April onwards they were introduced to trench life. By 19th April they had concentrated in the area of Estaires-Merville-Neuf Berquin.

Their first battle was the Battle of Aubers Ridge on the 9th May.

On the 15th May they became part of 148th Brigade, 49th (West Riding) Regiment.

During 9th July the KOYLI battalions left Watou and marched eastwards towards the front line. The 1/4th was in reserve near Modder and Hull's Farms to the west of the Yser Canal with battalion HQ at Saragossa Farm. In October the King went to the Front to inspect his troops and was thrown from his horse.

The weather turned colder and wetter as winter set in, many of the letters home complained of the terrible conditions. The trenches were very often ankle and sometimes knee deep, in water, and it appeared to have rained every day. Things got worse with the passing weeks and their only comfort was a liberal ration of rum

every evening. The first cases of trench foot were reported at the end of October, water logged trenches and very cold weather being ideal conditions for the spread of this crippling disease.

The first intimation of his death was received by a letter from Mrs. Haslegrave wife of Lieut. Colonel Haslegrave who was in command of the 1/4th K.O.Y.L.I. who wrote: -

Dear Mrs. Abbott, -I was most grieved to hear that your son has nobly given his life for his country. Lieut-Colonel Haslegrave joins with me in an expression of deepest sympathy in your time of sorrow. I do hope you will write to me if I can be of any assistance to you."

His last letter home was also received the same week "*We have just returned to the trenches after being out eight days. I am trying to get home for Christmas, but I don't know whether I shall. Don't forget me at Christmas, if I don't come home."*

A tribute to William's character is paid by a friend Lieut. H. G. Fraser who said in a letter dated November 23rd: -

"Dear Mrs. Abbott, -I deeply regret to inform you that your son Willie was killed the night before last by a German bullet whilst carrying out his duties in the trenches. This is a terrible price for you to pay, and the sympathy of the whole Company goes out to you. He was a popular fellow, and has been buried in a proper place just behind the firing line and his body was laid to rest with Christian rites."

William was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal

He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial and Purlwell Wesleyan Chapel.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group