David Ainley





Rank: - Private

Number: - 34479

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 2/4th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 20th July 1918 aged 21 years

Memorial: - Soissons Memorial, Aisne, France

Batley News, 17 Aug 1918, 24 Aug 1918 (photo)

Family Details

David was born in Batley on 15th October 1896 the son of David and Elizabeth Ainley (nee Hardy) who had married at Batley Parish Church on 8th March 1884. He was baptised at Batley Parish Church on 6th January 1897 when his father gave his address as 2, East Street, Batley and his occupation as a boot maker.

His siblings were Ethel, William, Ada, Lucy, Annie and before 1901 the family had moved to live at 9, Peel Street, Batley. Joe was born in 1903 but sadly died in August 1906.

His father, David, died in March 1909 and his occupation was now given as a musician of 9, Purlwell Lane, Batley.

The family lived at 16, North King Street, Batley and David was working as a twister before 1911. His mother died in May 1917 and David and his sisters moved to live at 3, Preston Street, Batley.

David attended Purlwell Council School and Wellington Street Primitive Methodist Sunday School. He worked as a twister at J. Blackburn & Co., New Ing Mills before enlisting. The Batley News reported that David came from a well known Batley family, his father being a boot maker and musician and grandson of Allen Ainley an old Batley worthy who had also been a boot maker by trade.

His cousin Allen Ainley was killed on 17th August 1918 aged 19 years.

Service Details

The 2/4th KOYLI was attached to 187th Brigade in 62nd (2ndWest Riding) Division.

David enlisted in 1915 at Wakefield and went to France in September 1917.

He would have taken part in 1917 in the Cambrai Operations (Tank attack 20 – 21 November and the capture of Bourlon Wood 27 – 28 November). In 1918 the Division fought at:

The Battle of Bapaume (25 March)
the First Battle of Arras 1918 (28 March)

The Battle of the Tardenois (part of the Battles of the Marne 1918) (20 – 30 July). On Saturday 13th July the Division received sudden orders to move, they marched to the station at Doullens on the 14th and the train journey which

followed took them through Paris, Melun, and Troyes to Sommesous. They were then bussed to Aulnay-sur-Marne on the north bank of the river between Epernay and Chalons with the 2/4th stopping off at Aigny where they could swim in the river.
On the 18th the French pounded the Germans positions much to their surprise and later in the evening the 5th KOYLI and the 2/4th received orders to march into positions in the valley of the Ardre. The line of attack for the 187th Brigade was along the steep sided valley through the Bois du Petit Champ and the wooded hills of the Chateau de Commetreuil. The 2/4th were subjected to intermittent shellfire which caused a number of casualties. The morning of the 20th was brilliantly sunny and the brigades moved forward at 8 am as the French and Italians opened fire. The 2/4th captured a machine gun, killed the crew and took the commanding officer prisoner. They were near the Courmas –Onrezy road going towards Bouilly but heavy machine gun fire caused many casualties and was held up. During the operations on the 20th approximately 35 prisoners and many machine guns were captured by the brigade. David was one of the soldiers of the 2/4th killed on this day.

He is remembered with Honour at Batley Primitive Methodist Church, Wellington Street and Batley War Memorial.

David was awarded the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group