William Armitage





Rank: - Private

Number: - 2612

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry "X" Coy. 1/4th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 6th September 1915 aged 34 years

Cemetery: - Bard Cottage Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium 1.G.25

"GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN"

Family Details

William was born in Leeds in 1880 the son of Henry and Sarah Ann Armitage, nee Armitage. Soon after the couple were married, they lived with Alice at Brighton because Henry was a Private in the 6th Dragoon Guards. The couple had married on 14th July 1868.

In 1881 he was living at Back Cobden Street, Morley with his Rothwell born father, Henry, who was a house painter mother Sarah Ann, who was from Hunslet and siblings, Alice 1870, Sarah Ann 1872, Henry 1875, Mary 1877 and Elizabeth 1878.

Both Ernest born 1884 and Albert 1886 were born in Morley before the family moved to live at Stump Cross in the West Ardsley area of Morley.

When the 1901 census was taken only Ernest and Albert were living with their father at Haigh's Buildings, Britannia Road, Morley. Sarah Ann had died in 1899.

William married Mary Walker at Batley Parish Church on 30th June 1900 giving his occupation as a blast furnace man and his address as East Ardsley.

In 1901 he and his wife and son Harry, aged 6 months, were living at 11, Fearnside's Yard, off Commercial Street, Batley when the census was taken. He gave his occupation as a coal miner hewer.

Within the next decade he changed his occupation to work at the gas works, as a stoker, for Batley Corporation and was known as "Gashouse Bill" and he moved his family to live in a two roomed home at 18A, Well Lane, Batley. The additions to the family were Sarah Ann born 1904 and Allen 1909. Sadly Mary born June 1904 died aged one hour, Walker born 1905 had died in October 1906 aged 17 months and William born 1907 died in June 1908 aged 15 months. Another child was born after 1911 and the family moved to live at 35, Russell Street, Batley.

Service Details

William went to France with the first batch of the 1/4th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry landing in Boulogne on the 15th April 1915.

The Battalion fought at the Battle of Aubers Ridge (9 May). In August 1915 there was a large amount of heavy rain and by the 3rd September because of the

persistent heavy rain water was over two feet deep in the trenches and deeper still in particular hollows and dips in the ground where there was no outlet for the water. Many of the dugouts were flooded out or had collapsed.

William was killed by a shell along with two other men and four more were injured, one of them being a Batley lad.

In his last letter home, he said: -

"You want me to give your best respects for Harry Parkinson. Well he is here cooking his dinner just now. They have made him Lance-Corporal. I have a very good job now being on the sanitary staff of the regiment, looking after the cleanliness of the trenches, so I am doing fine. My pal just got a decent job too, being in the Royal Engineers and he is now making a tunnel under the canal you will have read so much about. I shall not be able to send you any more notes for a few weeks as we came into the trenches last night and we are here for three weeks. By the way some Batley fellows have come into our section."

The first intimation of his death was received by a friend who was requested to break the news to his wife. She later received a letter from Mrs Haselgrave the wife of Colonel Haselgrave who commanded the battalion: -

"I was most grieved to hear from Colonel Haselgrave that your husband was killed by shrapnel on September 6th. My husband much regrets his loss, and we sympathise with you in your sorrow. Let me know if I can be of any assistance."

The Brigadier Chaplain, (Rev. H. J. Elgood) has addresses the following letter of condolence to Mrs. Armitage: -

"It is with a deep feeling of sympathy for you that I write to tell you of the death of your husband, Private William Armitage, which was caused by a German shell that fell into the trench in which he was working, he and two others being killed instantly without pain or suffering. This sad occurrence took place about three o'clock on Monday afternoon, September 6th.. Your husband was one of the best men and well liked. As chaplain of your husband's regiment I should like to add he was buried in the evening in a little cemetery just behind the trenches. A cross, with his name and that of the regiment on has already been set up, and the grave will be easily identified after the war."

His brother-in-law George Richard Preston, who lived next door, died of wounds on the 8th July 1916 after fighting at the Battle of Albert.

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

He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group