Joseph Norman Balmforth





Rank: - Private

Number: - PS/10915

Regiment: - Royal Fusiliers 23rd Battalion

Missing, presumed killed in Action: - 14th November 1916 aged 23 years

Cemetery: - Serre Road Cemetery No.2, France 1.A.32

Batley News, 9 Dec 1916. Dewsbury Reporter, 9 Dec 1916

Family Details

Joseph Norman was born on 7th September 1893 the son of John Walter and Sarah Ann Balmforth nee Holt and was baptised at the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at Batley Carr on 22nd October 1893 giving their address as Trinity Street, Batley Carr. His siblings were, Herbert Edward born in 1895 but died aged 8 months and Ernest Arthur in 1897 but sadly died in August 1911.

In 1901 the family with the addition of Ernest Arthur was living at 10, Longlands Road, Staincliffe, Dewsbury.

His mother, Sarah Ann, died in February 1910.

In 1911 Joseph was living in a six roomed house with his father and paternal aunt at 4, Tate Naylor Street, Dewsbury. John Walter was described as a rag merchant and Joseph was assisting him in the warehouse.

He attended Batley Carr Wesleyan Church and Sunday School. His father had a rag business in Town Street, Batley Carr.

On the 18th September 1915 Joseph married Martha Hannah Clayton at Purlwell Wesleyan Chapel, Batley when he gave his occupation as a foreman rag warehouseman living at 28, Stratford Road West, Heaton, Newcastle on Tyne.

Service Details

Joseph joined under the Derby Scheme in April 1916 and was sent to the Front in July 1916.

The 23rd (Service) Battalion (1st Sportsman's) at this time came under the orders of 99th Brigade in 2nd Division.

In 1916 they fought on the Somme at: -
The Battle of Delville Wood (15th July-3rd September)
the Battle of the Ancre (13th -18th November)

Joseph was posted missing during the Battle of the Ancre.

His wife who was residing with her parents Mr.& Mrs.H.W. Clayton at 33, Purlwell Hall Road, Mount Pleasant received a letter from his officer: -

"Your husband Private J.W. Balmforth has been reported missing and I regret that I can add little to this information. Your husband took part in an advance on November 14th since when we have had no news of him. I may add that his platoon came in for heavy machine gun fire. I have closely questioned his comrades as to his actions that morning but no one can remember seeing him leave our trenches. Although I should much like to give you some hope for his safety, I fear that since so long has elapsed without news there is no doubt that he was killed. I cannot find words to express my deep sympathy with you in your great sorrow."

At the time he went missing his brother-in- law Charles Clayton was in a convalescent home in Ireland recovering from shell shock which he had received in October 1916.

When the memorials were erected in the 1920s his wife had moved to "Stoneleigh," 62, Saville Rd., South Shore, Blackpool.

Joseph was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group