Harry Batley





Rank: - Private

Number: - 47657

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

Killed in action: - 20th July 1918 **aged** 26 years

Cemetery: - Courmas British Cemetery, Marne, France 11.J.8

Batley News, 7 Sep 1918 (photo)

Family Details

Harry was born in Birstall in c.1891 the youngest son of Thomas Henry and Janet Batley (nee Fawcett). The couple had married at Batley Parish Church on the 24th September 1881.

George William was born in 1883 followed by Mary Ann 1884 Rachel Emma 1886, James Arthur 1888, Gertrude 1890 and Harry. In 1891 the family lived at Church Street, Birstall. Jane born 1892 sadly died in August 1893.

Gomersal born, Thomas Henry, was a greengrocer in Birstall but he sadly died in September 1896 and the family moved to live at 44, Low Lane and Janet became a laundress to support her family.

Harry was educated at Birstall National School and attended St. Saviour's Church, Brownhill.

Within the next decade Janet was living at 54, North Terrace in a three roomed home with her three youngest surviving children. The 1911 census states that Harry was a foundry labourer, his two sisters were weavers James Arthur was a blacksmith labourer whilst their mother was described as a charwoman.

On the 14th August 1915 Harry married Mary Ann Ineson of 16, Brownhill Road at St. Saviour's Church, Brownhill. His occupation was a baker and she was a weaver. He was employed at Dewsbury Pioneers' Industrial Society as a baker until he enlisted in August 1917. He had held office in the Dewsbury Branch of the Amalgamated Union of Bakers and Confectioners.

Service Details

Harry enlisted in August 1917 and was eventually sent to France to join the 2/4th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry who had landed at Le Havre on 15th January 1917.

In 1918 they took part in: -
the Battle of Bapaume~ (25 March)
the First Battle of Arras 1918~ (28 March)
both were phases of the First Battles of the Somme 1918
and the Battle of the Tardenois (part of the Battles of the Marne 1918) (20 – 30 July)

The morning of the 20th July was brilliantly sunny and the 2/4th were in support of the York and Lancs. Regiment but were subjected to intermittent shellfire as they lined up for attack in the early hours.

The 2/4th York and Lancs. were heavily engaged as they advanced on Courmas and as the 2/4th KOYLI moved off 10 minutes later a heavy bombardment dropped around 100 yards inside Chateau wood. The York and Lancs were held up from machine gun fire but as the 2/4th KOYLI drew level with it they captured the gun, killed the crew and took the commanding officer prisoner. The company drew up along the Courmas-Onrezy towards Bouilly but heavy machine gun fire caused many casualties. The 2/4th York and Lancs. had actually fought their way into Bouilly, capturing one officer and 20 men but were driven out by constant heavy fire coming from the Chateau and a determined German counter-attack.

The 2/4 KOYLI arrived from Sermier and it with remnants from other three companies were ordered to take up a position in the centre of the Brigade frontage along a line from the Courmas-Bouilly road south to the Bois de Petit Champ.

During the operations of the 20th July approximately 35 prisoners and many machine guns were captured by the Brigade. One of the officers Lt. F. Cocker "A" Company 2/4th KOYLI was wounded. He later described the day in a letter home:-

"Have just come back down from a stunt "over the top" this morning with a nice lump of shrapnel in my thigh so am well away for a month or two---"

Harry was reported missing on the 20th July but shortly afterwards his wife received official intimation that he was killed in action on or shortly after that date.

His brother James Arthur was in France with the A.V.C and Driver George Willie, Royal Engineers was at Aldershot, after serving a considerable time in France.

Harry was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. He is remembered with Honour at St Saviour's Brownhill; Birstall War Memorial and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of Batley History Group