Willie Benson





Rank: - Private

Number: - TR6/ 19234

Regiment: - Training Reserve 15th Battalion

Died of Wounds: - 10th May 1917 at Midlands Training Camp aged 18years

Cemetery: - Batley, Yorkshire R 72

Batley News, 12 May 1917, 19 May 1917 (photo)

Family Details

Willie was born in Batley in c. 1899 the son of Tom and Mary Ann Benson (nee Thompson) who came from Sunderland.

In 1901 he was living at 2, off East Bath Street, Batley with his parents and elder brother Harold, who was born in 1896.

Ralph was born in 1902 and before 1911 the family had moved to live at 15, Victor Street, Batley. Tom was working as a compositor at a printing firm.

Willie attended Park Road School and was apprenticed to Messrs William North and Sons, joiners and undertakers, Batley. He was actively associated with Zion United Methodist Church and was a teacher in the junior Sunday school being particularly good as an elocutionist. He was a good teacher for the Band of Hope.

Service Details

Willie enlisted in March 1917 and had only been in training at a Midland Training Camp for six weeks when an accident happened with a hand grenade. The grenade exploded and wounded him above the eye and penetrated the brain.

He was taken to hospital but septic poisoning set in. He died on Thursday evening, 10th May 1917 at Brockton Hospital, Staffordshire.

He was buried at Batley Cemetery preceded by a service at the Zion Chapel. Rev. A Bluck officiated and in a short address said that the pity and pathos of a young life being cut short distressed them very much. A member of the church, a teacher of the junior school, a good worker for the Band of Hope, the deceased was fresh and hopeful at 18 and possessed great usefulness. His recitations were always welcomed at their social gatherings. He was keen to do his duty as a soldier and would have enlisted long before he was of age. He offered himself as soon as he was 18. He was joy and love of his home and his friends.

The reverend gentleman went on to say he regretted the loss of manhood of today. It was terrible and tragic and all they could do was express deep sympathy with those whose heart ache was unspeakable.

Floral tributes were sent by father, mother and brothers, uncles and aunts, Aunt Winpenny and family, Vincent and Leonard (Sunday School scholars) , junior and

primary department at Zion Sunday school, Mr. and Mrs. Hainsworth, Mrs. Roberts, employers and employees of Messrs. William North & Sons, chums of No.9 hut, Officers and N.C.O.'s and men "G" Company, Mr. and Mrs. Bradbury, Hilda and Horace, boys of Military Camp T.R.B. , Lily and Annie , Mr. and Mrs. H. Burnley, Gladys, Winnie and Renie Hainsworth , Committee Zion Band of Hope, Mr. And Mrs. G. S. Greenwood and family and Mr. And Mrs. Sykes (Sandal).

At the time his brother, Harold, who had just received the D.C.M. was in France with the K.O.Y.L.I.

Willie is remembered with Honour at Zion Methodist Chapel, Batley and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group