Arthur Lee Binns





Rank: - Private (Machine Gunner)

Number: - 23218

Regiment: - Alexandra, Princess of Wales' Own (Yorkshire Regiment) 9th Btn Machine Gun Corps

Killed in Action: - 25th May 1917 aged 25

Cemetery: - Railway Dugouts Burial Ground (Transport Farm) Belgium 1V.F.28

Family Details

Arthur Lee was born on the 16th July 1891 at 35, King Street, Batley Carr the son of Durham born, Florence Lee and an unknown father. Florence later married Herman Binns at Batley Parish Church on the 15th December 1895 and Arthur was thereafter known as Arthur Lee Binns. Florence went on to have four girls Carrie (1896), Ida (1899), Amy (1901), and Lily (1905). In 1901 Herman, a bookmaker's tipster, and Florence were living at 6, Taylor Street with Arthur and his two half-sisters Carrie and Ida. In 1911 the family which now including Amy and Lily are recorded at 29, Taylor Street and Herman was working as a finisher for a woollen manufacturer. Arthur was 19 years old and working as a "looker over" for a woollen manufacturer.

Arthur attended Warwick Road School and was a member of the Batley Parish Church Lads' Brigade.

He was employed as a tuner at G. & J. Stubley's Mill, Batley. Arthur married local girl, Nellie Wear at St. John's Carlinghow, on Saturday 15th April 1916. By this time he was a Private in the 13th Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment and his father,Herman, was working as a commercial traveller.

Arthur's half-sister, Carrie was a witness at the wedding. He was married on the Saturday and returned to his Regiment on Monday 17th April obtaining a short leave pass three weeks later before proceeding to the Western Front. He never saw his native country again.

Service Details

Arthur Lee Binns' Army Service record has not survived but it is known he enlisted in Batley and joined the Yorkshire Regiment and by the time of his marriage in April 1916 he had been posted to the 13th Battalion. He was killed in action on the 25th May 1917, when he was serving with the 9th Battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment.

The Yorkshire Regiment, from 1920, is perhaps better known as the "Green Howards." This title dates back to the wars of Austrian Succession in the mid 1700's. The Colonel at the time was named Howard. At this time, regiments were often referred to by the name of their Colonel. As the regiment was brigaded with another whose name was also Howard, there was duplication.

This regiment who wore green facings to its uniform became the Green Howards and the other regiment the "Buff" Howards. These names were still in use in 1914-18.

The 13th (Service) Battalion of the Yorkshire Battalion was formed in Richmond in July 1915 as a Bantam Battalion. It moved to Aldershot in July 1915 and came under the orders of 121st Brigade, 40th Division and on the 2nd April 1916, it absorbed the 18th Battalion Sherwood Foresters. On 6th June 1916 the battalion landed at Le Havre and it seems probable Arthur was with them. He had been married less than 9 weeks.

At the time of his death, less than 12 months later, Arthur was serving with the 9th Battalion Yorkshire Regiment. The 9th had been formed in September 1914 and embarked for France landing at Boulogne on 26th August 1915 where it was part of 69th brigade of the 23rd Division. Over the winter of 1915-16 this Division spent almost five months in the front line and was subject to severe shelling in March 1916 and in the same month many miners were transferred from the Division to establish a Tunnelling company of the Royal Engineers. On 21st May 1916 the German forces launched their attack on Vimy Ridge, a battle where many British and allied men were killed and one in which the 23rd Division were involved. They were relieved on 11th June 1916 and it is possible Arthur was transferred from the 13th to the 9th Battalion around this time to make up the numbers. This transfer was probably shortly after he landed in France on 6th June 1916.

The 23rd Division subsequently took place in several of the 1916 Battles of the Somme between July and September 1916.

In mid-October 1916 the 23rd Division were moved up to the Ypres sector for rest and "re-fitting". This sector tended not to be so active as the front but there were significant spells of shelling and artillery bombardments including gas shells. The British were preparing for an offensive in this sector later in the year and this involved a great deal of tunnelling work. Many of the troops were required to both hold the front line and also support the Royal Engineers. It seems likely that Arthur was the victim of artillery shell and shrapnel.

Arthur was buried at Railway Dugouts Burial Ground (Transport Farm). Railway Dugouts Cemetery is 2 Kms west of Zillebeke village, where the railway runs on

an embankment overlooking a small farmstead, which was known to the troops as Transport Farm. The site of the cemetery was screened by slightly rising ground to the east, and burials began in April 1915.

On the family grave in Batley Cemetery the memorial reads:

In Loving Memory of Private Arthur Lee Binns.
M.G.C. Killed in Action in France,
May 28th 1917 aged 28years.

Arthur Lee Binns was awarded the British War Medal 1914-1920 and the Victory Medal.

He is commemorated on Batley War Memorial, Batley Parish Church, St. John's Church, Carlinghow, Railway Dugouts Cemetery and the family grave at Batley Cemetery.

Research courtesy of Alan Howe.

