Charles Edmund Blakeley





Rank: - Lance Corporal

Number: - 2386

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 1/4th Regiment (machine gun section)

Died of Wounds: - 21st December 1915 aged 22years

Cemetery: - Wimereux Communal Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France 1.L.3

"HE DIED THAT WE MIGHT LIVE"

Batley News, 1 Jan 1916 (photo)

Family Details

Charles Edmund was born in Mirfield on the 7th Oct 1893 the son of George and Lily Blakeley nee Holroyd, who had married on 25th October 1890 at Christ Church, Staincliffe, Batley. He was baptised at St. Peter's, Knowle, Mirfield on 16th November 1893 but added to the register at Christ the King, Battyeford. George's occupation was given as a blanket raiser.

In 1901 the family which consisted of George, Lily, Percy Ingham born 1891, Charles and Mark 1898 was living at 1, Moorland Cottages, Dewsbury. Dorothy was born in 1901 and Arthur in 1903 but sadly died in infancy in 1903.

George died in 1910 aged 45 years. In 1911 Lily and her family were living at 107, Back Whiteley Street, Boothroyd Lane, Dewsbury. Charles was an apprentice leather belting working for a currier and leather belting manufacturer. Before enlisting Charles had changed his occupation and was working at Messrs. Machell Bros. shoddy manufacturers Cloth Hall Mills, Dewsbury as a rag grinder. He and his mother lived at Halifax Road, Staincliffe and he was well known and highly respected in the area.

He was connected with Moorlands Wesleyans, Dewsbury. He came home on leave seven weeks before he was killed and his mother reported to a "News" reporter that he had never felt or looked better and was "A1".

Service Details

Charles spent four years in the local Territorial force and rejoined them at the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914. He went to France with them at Easter 1915, landing at Boulogne on 12th April. From the 15th May 1915 they came under the orders of 148th Brigade in 49th (West Riding) Division.

They fought at the Battle of Aubers Ridge 9th May 1915 and the defence against the first Phosgene attack on 19th December.

In the early hours of the morning of the 19th December sentries along the line alerted their officers to the unusual rocket signals put up by the enemy. From their positions in the front line the 1/4th KOYLI heard:-

4.50 am – A hissing noise like a fast running motor car was heard in the Greman lines. Very shortly after the presence of cylinder gas said to be "Fossgene" was

detected in the air. Warning was given, Tube helmets were put on and rapid fire opened on the enemy's parapet with rifle and machine guns. The 1/4th was well prepared for a gas attack having recently received gas attack helmet drill. Every man had been issued with two of the new PH helmets. The gas quickly reached the support trenches where some men were still asleep and many were badly affected before they could put on their gas helmets. One Officer and 23 men were killed and two officers and 149 men were "affected to a lesser or greater extent." They were known as Wounded-Gas. Private Atha, a stretcher bearer made three journeys carrying wounded badly gassed men from the front line to the dressing station over the open ground, the communication trenches being too full for him to get through quickly enough. It took half an hour for the gas to pass over the front line the worse effected being between trenches E 25 and E29, the section occupied mainly by 1/4th KOYLI.

Charles was gassed and taken to hospital where he passed away on the 21st December and the news reached home on Christmas Eve. His last letter home was received two weeks before Christmas when he was then "quite well".

His brother Bombardier Percy was with the R.F.A. in the East and attached to the Division which had been complimented a few days before the news of Charles' death was received for holding back the Bulgarians.

Charles Edmund was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Christ Church, Staincliffe and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group