Charles Christopher Bray



Rank: - Private

Number: - 26497

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 2nd Battalion

Killed in Action: - 18th November 1916 aged 21 years

Cemetery: - Waggon Road Cemetery, Beaumont Hammel, France A.22

Family Details

Charles Christopher was born in Batley on the 30th January 1896 the son of Charles and Emma Bray (nee Chappell). He was baptised at Batley Parish Church on the 4th March 1896 when the family was living at Timothy Lane Batley and his father's occupation was given as a gardener.

His father Charles Bray came from Thorpe, Lincolnshire and his mother from Castleford. They had married at St. Thomas's Church on 5th August 1895. Charles was a widower and his first wife Rose Hannah had died in July 1894. They had one son James Walter Bray who was born on 26th April 1891.

William Henry was born in early 1898 in the Edgerton area of Huddersfield or as the 1911 census states Batley. Rose followed in 1901.

In 1901 the family was living at 1, Edgerton Lane, Huddersfield and in 1911 they were living in a three roomed home in Edgerton Lane, Huddersfield and the census shows there had been another child who had died in infancy. This would have been Arthur Rawlinson Bray born 1905 and died in the summer of 1906 in the Huddersfield area.

Some of the family moved back to the area after 1911 because James Walter was living at Ravensthorpe when he enlisted in 1916 and Charles Christopher enlisted at Dewsbury. His service records have not survived but we know from his medals he did not serve abroad before 1916. The 2nd Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry from 28th December 1915 was attached to the 97th Brigade in 32nd Division.

In 1916 they fought in the Battles of the Somme taking part in the battles of Albert and Bazentin in July and the Battle of the Ancre 13th-19th November.

At the beginning of November 1916, the regiment was at Lavicogne and there were parades and training. On the 12th there was a church parade before they moved to Contay on the 13th and the Battle of the Ancre began. On the 13th they moved to North Bluff and on the 15th they were told to be ready to move at a moment's notice to Englebelmer. At 10 pm on the 16th the battalion took over from the 11th Berkshire Regiment and 10th Bedfordshire Regiment with the 11th Borders in support and the 16th and 17th Highland Light Infantry in reserve. The final orders for the attack were issued and the first objective was Munich Trench

followed by Frankfurt Trench. The order battle from right to left was 17th H.L.I., 16th H.L.I. and 2nd K.O.Y.L.I. During the night of the 17th/18th the Brigade moved into the battle position which was a line marked out in front of the original trench. The relief was difficult to carry out owing to the troops not having previous knowledge of the trenches. At 5.15 am at Beaumont Hamel on the 18th an advanced line had been marked out by the Royal Engineers running due north to south and the battalion dug in. The conditions were bad and it started snowing just before the attack and therefore observation was very difficult. At zero hours which was 6.10 am the barrage started and was intense and apparently effective because the enemy sent up bright lights which with the white ground lit up all the surroundings. The line advanced to Munich Trench and the left half reached their objective but the right half was held up by intense machine gun and rifle fire so they took up a position in a line of shell holes in front of the German wire. Meanwhile the left reached their final objective after heavy fighting. After this there was no news of the two left companies and eventually at 5.30 pm with still no news it was decided to withdraw to the original line. At about 6.30pm the battalion which then consisted of the Colonel, Adjutant, Intelligence Officer and a 2nd Lieutenant took up the old line. Charles Christopher was killed in this fighting along with many more of his friends.

There are 195 soldiers of whom 144 soldiers are identified buried at this cemetery between 13th and the 23rd November 1916 including 11 from the 2nd Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry on Saturday the 18th November. Sometime later James Walter returned to live at Drill Hall Yard, Batley.

Charles Christopher was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial Addenda 2019.



Researched by members of Batley History Group