Alfred Brearey





Rank: - Private

Number: - 205106

Regiment: - Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) 8th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 27th August 1917 aged 32.

Remembered with Honour: - Tyne Cot Memorial, West Vlaanderen, Belgium
Panel 82 to 85 and 162A

Batley News, 15 Sep 1917 (photo)

Family Details

Alfred was born in Hanging Heaton in 1885 the only son of Thomas and Martha Ann (nee Crossley) Brearey.

In 1891 the family was living at Mill Lane with his siblings Hannah Rebecca (1877), Lilly (1879), Phoebe (1883), Amelia (1886) and Sarah Jane (1888). Thomas was working as a general labourer.

A decade later they had moved to 4, Drake Street, Batley and Thomas was working as a cab driver (groom). A further daughter, Miriam, had been born on 11th April 1891. The 1911 census shows that the couple did have a total of fourteen children born alive but only seven were still living by 1911.

Alfred had married Florence Shephard on 2nd September 1905 at Batley Parish Church. Alfred jnr. was born later the same year but lived for only a few hours. At some point before 1911 the couple went to live at 12, Pearl Street, Carlinghow, Batley and Alfred was working as a warper and Florence was a weaver.

Alfred was a sidesman at St. John's and also a member of the Church Institute. For a considerable time, he was the secretary of the St. John's Church Football Club. He was enthusiastic in all sorts of sports but was a particularly good cyclist and a well-known member of the Yorkshire Road Club. In 1909 he was awarded the Yorkshire Road Club Medal for creating a record for cycling to Goole and back in 4 3/4 hours.

Prior to joining up he was a warper for J.T & J. Taylor, at Blakeridge Mills. His father Thomas was a well-known cab driver for George Box and in 1917 resided at Wellington Street, Batley.

Service Details

Alfred was called up in February 1917 and embarked for France in June 1917. He had at this time left Carlinghow to reside at 7, Ivy Terrace, Woodkirk, Dewsbury.

The 8th Battalion Duke of Wellington's was part of 11th Northern Division. In July 1916 they returned from Gallipoli to fight in France, where Alfred joined them.

In August 1917 they were taking part in the offences of the Ancre. Between the 18th and 25th August the battalion was resting at Dirty Bucket Camp and practising for the

forthcoming operations before being moved back to Murat Camp. On the 26th at 9 p.m. they moved to take over the portion of the front line held by the 9th Battalion Sherwood Foresters. The Battalion H.Q. was at Maison Bulgare.

At 1.55p.m.the enemy was attacked, the objective for the battalion was to take and hold Pheasant Trench in the first wave. The Duke of Wellington's were on the left and the attack was made simultaneously by the 11th and 48th Divisions. Owing to heavy rain the ground was in very bad condition being impassable in places where shell holes were continuous and full of water.

The enemy barrage was put down at 1.58p.m. on the Langemarck to Winnipeg road. The advance was checked from the Pheasant trench, which was very strongly held, by machine gun and rifle fire. By the time the barrage had lifted to enable the men to enter Pheasant Trench there had been several casualties and although a few entered the trench they were unable to remain there. This tour lasted until the 29th.

Alfred was killed at about 3 p.m. in an attack on the enemy's front line. A pal wrote:-

"I was not near him when he fell but I understand from those who saw him that death was instantaneous and that he suffered no pain. I can assure you all the lads in our platoon feel the loss of such a pal and deeply sympathise with you in your heavy loss."

He had only been in France for two months.

He was awarded the British War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal.

Alfred is Remembered with Honour at Carlinghow St. John's, St.Paul's Hanging Heaton, Batley War Memorial and Tyne Cot Memorial along with 527 other soldiers on the same day.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group