Robert Henry Broomhead





Rank: - Private

Number: - 33273

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry "W" Coy 6th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 24th August 1917 aged 29 years

Memorial: - Tyne Cot memorial, West Vlaanderen, Belgium Panels 108 to 111

Batley News, 3 Nov 1917 (photo) 27 Jul 1918 Batley Reporter, 4 May 1917, 16 Nov 1917 (photo), 19 Jul 1918

Family Details

Robert Henry was born in Batley Carr on 29th August 1886 the son of Walter and Minnie Broomhead nee Clayton who had married at Batley Parish Church on 27th January 1883 and both made their mark. Walter gave his occupation as a spinner.

He was baptised at the Wesleyan Chapel, Batley Carr on the 17th June 1894 on the same day as his siblings Amy Isabelle, born 18th April 1887 and Susannah born 23rd April 1894.

Fred was born in November 1883 but sadly died in December 1883 aged 3 weeks.

The couple had twins Florence and Emily born 7th August 1885 who were baptised at the Wesleyan Chapel, Batley Carr on 6th September 1885. Sadly, Florence died in November 1885 aged 16 weeks and Emily in January 1886 aged 5 months.

In 1891 the family was living at 25, Dale Street, Batley Carr and Walter gave his occupation as a travelling draper.

Charles Albert was born in July 1891 but sadly died in February 1892 aged 7 months.

Before 1901 the family had moved to live with Robert's maternal grandfather at 72, Town Street, Batley Carr and Walter who came from Barnsley gave his occupation as a hardware dealer.

(Picalo) Minnie who came from Hightown died in January 1904 and in 1909 Walter married widow Ada Kilburn nee Spurr but before the 1911 was taken they were living apart. Walter and Robert Henry were living together in a two roomed home at 1, West Street, Batley Carr. By this time Walter was a very good writer and his signature was very clear. He was self-employed as a general dealer in the glass, china hardware trade and Robert was his assistant.

When Ada died in 1926 Walter married his third wife Emma Taylor in 1927. Walter died on 21st March 1928 and Emma in February 1931.

On 16th September 1911 at Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Hanging Heaton, Robert married Sarah Eliza Tate, who was born in Berlin, Germany on 21 October 1889 but her father John Tate was English and her mother Amelia was from Widminner, East Russia but had German nationality.

A former resident of Earlsheaton recalls that in the 1930's Liza (described as very cheerful and having Germanic features) worked on her own account as a laundress and used to travel the neighbourhood collecting gentlemen's stiff collars for washing and starching. She carried them in a black cloth bag carried over one shoulder. Sarah Eliza died 1 November 1976 (she would have been aged 88) and is buried in her parents' grave in Earlsheaton Cemetery in 'E' section General

John Robert was born on 28th June 1913.



Sarah Eliza, John Robert and Robert Henry by kind permission of Heather Fletcher

Service Details

Date of attestation: 22 July 1916 Dewsbury; billeted at North Ferriby on the River Humber (probably in the schoolroom of the Methodist Chapel which was used to accommodate soldiers in the village); embarking to France October 1916.

The 6th Battalion came under the command of 14th Brigade in 14th (Light) Division.

The Battalion would have fought at the Battle of Flers-Courcelette 15th -22 September on the Somme just before Robert Henry joined them.

In 1917 they took part in:-
The German retreat to the Hindenburg Line
The First Battle of the Scarpe (9-14th April)
the Third Battle of the Scarpe (3-4 May)
which were phases of the phases of the Arras Offensive
The Battle of Langemark (16-18 August)

During his War service fighting in France, Pte Broomhead regularly sent letters home to his parents, a few being published in the local press. The letters reveal a man of extreme bravery, with a hearty disrespect for the enemy. The following are extracts:

Published 5 May 1917:

'The Germans won't fight at close quarters, but they beg for mercy. Poor Albert. It seems to be a matter of luck. I did not fear anything. We simply made them run like rats. I hope to be home soon, because they are done any day. I have been in one of the biggest battles of the year, and I am proud of it; indeed, I have been in the fighting all along.' In another letter, addressed to 'Dear Horace,' he remarked: 'Just a year ago we went to Blackpool. This time I am ready for going over to the Boche. You ought to see them run to us with their hands up when they see the bit of steel. I did well at collecting souvenirs. I got a revolver, wallet, watch, belt and bayonet, and p/c. They could not keep us back. Talk about laughing at the Tanks – nobody could help it.
The shell-fire they got was hell for them. It was a walk-over for us. They will only fight at a distance. Of course, we lost a few, but we won the day, and we never thought of death. They were ready to be taken prisoners, and if they continue to give themselves up like this the war will soon be over.'

Note: No record exists of the 'souvenirs' having been recovered, which is to be expected as Pte Broomhead's body was not found

Published 26 May 1917

'Please send the Reporter on regularly, as we want something to read. I have had some exciting experiences since I last wrote, and I was again lucky. You have no idea what a bombardment is like. The best idea of it you can have, perhaps, is for you to imagine the noise produced by, say, a thousand express trains rushing past

a given point at the same time, and all blowing steam off and whistling. That might be something like the noise of a bombardment. To add to the lurid character of the thing, you must also imagine the flashes and flames here, there, and everywhere. Then there are shells flying about. The whole thing makes you feel a bit shaky at times, but then you get used to it' "

REPORTER 25/08/1917 p 5 column 3
"WHAT A 'PUSH' IS LIKE.
BATLEY CARR SOLDIER'S DESCRIPTION
Pte. Robert Henry Broomhead, of the K.O.Y.L.I., writing to his father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Broomhead, of West Street, Batley Carr, describes a 'push' he has taken part in France. He remarks 'I will try to give you some idea of what a 'push' is like. Well, we entered what we call 'the kick off' trench in the darkness of the night, and as quietly as we possibly could, because we knew the Germans were only 200 yards away. Being very tired after our long march we laid down to rest. Next morning at dawn we could hear the bullets coming over the parapet, and the click, click, click of the machine-gun fire. Something to 'sup' came along in petrol tins, and we could see tanks getting into position in readiness for the order to advance. That time arrived, and the words, 'Now, my lads, over'; and there was not a shirker. Then the battle commenced. And what a noise! Fritz was taken by surprise, and the ground simply rocked before our eyes. I don't know how any German lived at all in our artillery fire. Then I thought of all at home, and trusted to God. We had not gone far when we saw the Germans running for their lives. Others ran towards us and cried 'Mercy! Mercy!' All the time shells were coming over on to us, but we gave them ten for every one we received. German dead and dying were all around and, of course, we had a few casualties, but we won the day and held our ground; and another pal next morning went to bury a fallen comrade, when the order came to advance again. I said my prayers, you bet, and went. I am glad to say that I returned safely."
The British Red Cross Society had made every endeavour to trace Robert when his family had not heard from him and in October 1917, they sent sad news.

The last news concerning him was contained in a letter written by Lance-Corporal Malia of the same regiment to his parents. It said that Pte Broomhead was in a shell-hole on 24 August, and he called out and said he was hit and could not lift his arm. The Lance-Corporal crawled to him and tried to help him but was unable to get his equipment off, he regretted he could help him anything further . He felt Pte. Broomhead could not have survived, as he looked very bad when he had to leave him.

Whilst serving in France, officially posted wounded and missing since Friday 24 August 1917, In July 1918 his wife received official notice from the War Office that he was presumed to have died on or since 24 August 1917.



His parents lived at Warwick Cottages, Warwick Road, Batley and his wife at Malt kilns, Wakefield Road, Dewsbury.

Robert Henry was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Warwick Road School, Batley War Memorial, Dewsbury War Memorial, Earlsheaton Park War Memorial and St. Peter's Church, Earlsheaton.



Thanks to Dewsbury Sacrifices for allowing research from Betty Goodwin to be reproduced.