Ernest Burnley



Rank: - Private

Number: - 202747

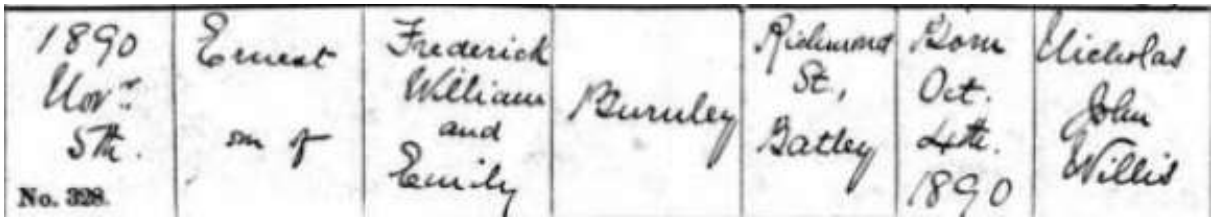
Regiment/ Battalion: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 1st/4th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 14th April 1918 aged 27.

Remembered with Honour: - Tyne Cot Memorial Panel 108 to 111.

Batley News, 18 May 1918

Family Details:



1890 Nov. 5th. No. 328.	Ernest	son of	Frederick William and Emily	Burnley	Richmond St., Batley	Born Oct. 4th. 1890	Nicholas John Willis

Ernest was born in Richmond Street, Batley on the 4th October 1890 the son of Hanging Heaton born Frederick William Burnley and his Batley born wife Emily (nee Preston). He was baptised at the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Batley on 5th November 1890.

His siblings were Walter Preston (1888), Florence (1889), Lucy (1892), Annie (1894) and Harry (1896-1915). His mother, Emily, died in March 1899 when the family were living at Pynate Road, Carlinghow, Batley.

Frederick William, then married spinster, Brighouse born, Harriett Brooke, on 25th July 1899 at Batley Parish Church, and by 1901 the family were living at 36, Pynate Road and Frederick was a manager at Cross Bank grocery store.

There were two children to this marriage, Winifred, who was born in Hanging Heaton in 1902 and Edith Laura who was born 1905 at Hillsborough near Sheffield.

Ernest attended Carlinghow Council School, whilst living in Batley.

In 1911 the family were living in a 5 roomed house at 121, Findon Street, Hillsborough, Sheffield. Frederick William was an Insurance Agent for the Wesleyan and General, Harry was a steel turner and Ernest a printer's assistant.

Harry also joined the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and was killed in action on 4th October 1915 at the Battle of Loos.

Service Details:

Ernest enrolled in Sheffield in the 1st/4th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. Many lads from Batley were in this regiment and he would have followed them to France.



Ernest 's war records have not survived but he did not receive the 1914 or 1915 Star so would not have joined at the same time as his brother.

The German Spring Offensive of 1918 meant they had to be stemmed in their advance.

A warning order was received by the 1/4th KOYLI H.Q. on 10th April which was followed by an operational order to move by bus from Ontario Camp at 9 a.m.

The German conditions of warfare had changed in the previous three weeks and now a war of movement over large tracts of land had returned and the battlefield skills which the BEF had possessed in 1914 were now required but unfortunately these skills had died with them. The bus journey which started near Reninghelst took the 148th Brigade to fields about a one mile west of Neuve Eglise where they remained with 30 minutes notice to move.

At 11.30 am on 11th April an urgent telephone call came that the 25th Division was being heavily attacked and falling back on a line Wulverghem-Neuve Eglise-Hill 63. The 148th Brigade now consisted of one battalion the 1/4th KOYLI and they were ordered to hold the Army Line on the left (800 yards to the east) of Neuve Eglise. The 4th King's Shropshire Light Infantry arrived to support them.

Throughout the next day, 12th April, the whole area was subjected to persistent enemy shelling and in the late afternoon the bombardment intensified. Major Chadwick took over command of the battalion but at 9.30 pm the enemy attacked with rifle and machine gun fire concentrating their effort on the line between the KOYLI and York and Lancs. At 7 a.m. the next day, the Germans penetrated the line and advanced along the Nieppe road entering the south of

the village. The actions cost the lives of two Lieutenants and Major Chadwick, Capt. Greenough and 2Lt J W Stroud were wounded, 24 men were killed a further two died of their wounds and an unknown number were missing. The 1/4th KOYLI War Diary reported 17 prisoners were captured by this Battalion in the YMCA. Lt. Col. Fraser took charge of the battalion after Major Chadwick was injured.

During the night of the 13/14th April what reserve troops were available moved forward and by noon were dug into supporting positions on the right flank of the line along the Corduroy Road. The Germans, during the hours of darkness, had penetrated Neuve Eglise up to the church and a nearby mill. The Germans attacked the front-line positions at 10a.m. and were successful at penetrating on both flanks. They attacked with grenades up the hastily dug front line trench. The KOYLI's attempted to stop them but sufficient bombs were not available and they had to pull back. The whole village was subjected to heavy shelling and one bomb which exploded in the house next door to battalion HQ killed Capt. Burrows and wounded the RSM. A little respite was gained when a company of Sherwood Foresters arrived but at 3 pm the enemy attacked again. There followed a trench mortar bombardment and they inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy but by about 6 pm the survivors were almost surrounded and had to withdraw to a position 500 yards to the rear. One officer had been killed, two wounded and 38 men killed, two dying of wounds and an unknown number wounded and missing.

Ernest was awarded the British War medal and the Victory Medal.

He is Remembered with Honour on St. John's Carlinghow, St.Polycarps Church, Wisewood, Sheffield, St. Bartholomew's Church, Langsett Road, Sheffield, Sheffield Council Roll of Honour, Sheffield Telegraph Roll of Honour and Tyne Cot Memorial and Batley War Memorial Addenda 2019.

The battles of the Ypres Salient claimed many lives on both sides and it quickly became clear that the commemoration of members of the Commonwealth forces with no known grave would have to be divided between several different sites.

The site of the Menin Gate was chosen because of the hundreds of thousands of men who passed through it on their way to the battlefields. It commemorates

those of all Commonwealth nations, except New Zealand, who died in the Salient, in the case of United Kingdom casualties before 16 August 1917 (with some exceptions). Those United Kingdom and New Zealand servicemen who died after that date are named on the memorial at Tyne Cot, a site which marks the furthest point reached by Commonwealth forces in Belgium until nearly the end of the war. Other New Zealand casualties are commemorated on memorials at Buttes New British Cemetery and Messines Ridge British Cemetery.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group