Robert Cleasby



Rank: - Private

Number:- 7602

Regiment: - West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own) 1st Bn

Missing, presumed Killed in Action: - 22/09/1914 Age: 26 years

Memorial: - La Ferte-sous-Jouarre Memorial, Seine-et-Marne, France

Batley News, 24 Oct 1914; Batley Reporter, 30 April 1915

Family Details

Robert Cleasby was born in 1886 in Hanging Heaton. He was the son of Charles and Harriet (nee Newsome). In 1891 he is living with his parents, four brothers and one sister Beatrice in Ambler Street, Batley. He had a difficult childhood. His father Charles had a drink problem and served several prison sentences for cruelty to his children and neglecting his family. He was always in debt and the children had to fend for themselves. The oldest boy James Henry was a deserter from the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and was sent to prison twice for debts. Another brother Richard Cleasby was sent to Calder Farm Reformatory in Sands Lane, Mirfield in 1895 aged 14 years. The school was run on a strict military style basis. He had stolen money and food and had been sleeping rough to avoid his drunken father. He was given 4 years in the Reformatory but died there two years later. In 1897 the mother of the family, Harriet died, and the youngest two brothers Robert and Charles Henry were sent to the Boys Industrial School in York where they appear on the 1901 census. The school was associated with the Rowntree Foundation and the boys would have received a good education and taught Quaker values. The routine and regular meals would have been a far cry from their life in Batley.

In 1913 he married Eva Brown at Christchurch, Staincliffe. She too had known much upheaval in her young life as she lost both her parents when she was only 1 years old and lived with several different relatives. At the time of their marriage they were living at Common Road, Staincliffe. Robert was employed at Messrs. John Illingworth and Sons, White Lee.

Service Details

By 1911 Robert was a drummer in the Army stationed in India, having joined in York in 1906 at the age of 19. He served 3 years in India. He reported to York at the outbreak of war on the 8th August. Robert was reported missing after the Battle of Mons and the authorities wrote to Eva fearing that he now must be regarded as killed in action on the 22nd September 1914.

Eva remarried in 1917 at Broomhill Chapel to Newton Lodge but never had any children. Robert's father Charles spent many years in Dewsbury Workhouse where he died in 1919.

Robert was awarded the 1914 Star + Clasp, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group