Willie Coates





Rank: - Private

Number: - 40092

Regiment: - York and Lancaster, 9th Battalion

Died: - 1st October 1917 aged 23

Cemetery: - Hooge Crater Cemetery V11 H.16 Belgium

"REST IN PEACE"

Batley News, 13 Oct 1917, 20 Oct 1917 (photo)

Family Details.

Willie was born in Batley, in April 1894, to Irish born John William Coates and his Batley born wife Mary (nee Preston). The couple had married at Batley Parish Church on the 4th March 1894. He was the eldest of five children Elsie (1897), James Edward (1900), Margaret (1905) and Stanley (1907). The family lived in Hilberoyd Road, Batley, where in 1901 John William was described as a sewage worker and in 1911 a general labourer for the Borough Council.

Willie attended Park Road School and Cambridge Street Independent Methodist Chapel where he was a member of the choir. He was also a Lieutenant in the Boys' Brigade at the Chapel. After leaving school he worked as a carpet warper, and later as a cloth fuller. Before enrolling in the Forces he worked at Messrs. Taylor, Yielding and Co. College Mills, Birstall.

On 3rd July 1915 he married Annie Doran at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Heckmondwike and the family lived at 17, Parker Street, Woodwell, Batley. A son, Willie, was born on 7th November but died aged 8 months on 31st July 1916 of tuberculosis of the mesenteric glands a month after his dad had rejoined the Forces. The registrar from Heckmondwike claimed 2 shillings and 7 pence for a certificate for the death of Willie (jnr.) claiming that Willie Coates Private 30695 35 D Company 11th Battalion K. O. Y. L. I. a cloth fuller was the father.

Annie married Tom Pearson in 1924 and lived at Littletown.



Service Details

Willie enlisted on 2nd December 1915 and was mobilized from B Reserve on the 14th June 1916 at Batley, being posted on the 16th June. According to his Attestation Papers he was 5 feet 5 inches tall and had good physical development. He was Private 30695 Kings' Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 35 Company 11th Battalion.

On 1st December 1916 at Rugeley Camp he went absent without leave from midnight until 10.15 p.m. on the 4th December and had to forfeit three days pay and seven days confined to camp. He disembarked from Folkestone to Boulogne on 18th December 1916 transferring to the 12th York and Lancaster on 20th December 1916 and yet again posted to the York and Lancaster Regiment 9th Battalion (Service) Regiment on 6th January 1917.

On the 4th July 1917 he was awarded 7 days field punishment No.2.

In 1917 the first battle was that of Messines (7th -14th June) followed by the Battles of Menin Road. At 10a.m. on the 28th September the 9th York and Lancaster's were sent to Bedford House and at 8.30p.m. was ordered to relief 8th KOYLI's on the front line. At 4 am on the 30th there was a very thick mist and by 4.30 a.m. there was intense using flamethrowers and bombs but none reached the British trench. They retaliated with heavy fire from rifles, Lewis and machine guns and bombs were used. A SOS was sent to Battalion H. Q. but they did not receive this because of the heavy mist. The enemy attacked again at 6 a.m. but was driven off. The report says that two prisoners were taken, a flame thrower and a machine gun and there 60 or 70 dead. A wire fire put up the previous night by a pioneer battalion had helped greatly to impede the enemy. During the night of 30th September/ 1st October the battalion was on the Menin Road, the wire was repaired and heavy enemy shelling began about 5 a.m. They were heavily shelled again around 12.30 p.m. with enemy aircraft flying low and firing at them all day and although they fired from the ground it had no effect. The enemy bombarded yet again at 6 30 p.m. but they were put down by the artillery and quashed the attack. The rest of the night was quiet. On the 2nd there was intermittent shelling during the day but they were later relieved by the 1st Royal West Kent's. During this tour the 9th had one officer and

three ordinary ranks killed with one officer and 22 ordinary ranks wounded and another three missing.

Popular Willie was killed by a shell on the 1st October 1917 and sympathetic letters were sent to his widow from his companions at the front.

Annie had moved to 3, Herbert Street, Church Lane, Heckmondwike before his personal effects which were with him at the front were returned to her from the record office on 26th March 1918. They included a pocket book, photos, religious book, mirror, cards and a wallet.

Willie was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Hooge Crater Cemetery, Belgium, Batley War Memorial, Batley Parish Church and Cambridge Street Independent Chapel.

bombardment with flame throwers and smoke bombs. At 5.15a.m. the enemy was discovered in large numbers advancing on their trench, the mist was still very thick and the

enemy was

There is a total of 2,350 soldiers commemorated on Hooge Crater Cemetery many brought from other cemeteries, 33 of which died on the 1st October 1917.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group