# Ernest Colbeck





**Rank: -** Private

**Number: -** 30104

**Regiment: -** King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 9th Battalion.

**Killed in Action: -** 20th April 1917 aged 19

**Remembered with Honour: -** Arras Memorial, Pas-de-Calais, France Bay 7

Batley News, 12 May 1917 (photo)

**Family Details:**

Ernest was born in 1897 in Batley the son of Batley born James Colbeck and his wife Mary Ann (nee Hodson) who came from Birstall. He was baptised at St. Saviour's, Brownhill on 13th June 1897.

In 1901 the family was living at 18, King Street, Batley and James was employed as a woollen spinner.

In 1911 the family had grown and they were living in a three roomed home at 101, Bradford Road West, Batley. Thirteen-year-old Ernest was working as a piecener. His siblings were Ethel (1901), Annie (1904), Fred (1905), Ada (1908) and Gladys (1910), Margaret (1911-1911) and one other child had died in infancy. Harry was born in 1912.

Ernest attended Carlinghow Council School and was associated with St. John's Church, Carlinghow. Before joining up he was employed by Messrs. Wrigley and Parker Bros. as a piecener.

NOTE: His mother died in 1920 and his father married, in 1924, Mrs. Martha Preston of Loxley Street whose son had been killed in 1916 and whose husband had died in 1919.

**Service Details:**

Ernest was called up on 31st May 1916 and went to France in September 1916.

He joined the 9th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry which had been formed in Pontefract in October 1914 landing in France in September 1915. It was part of 64th Brigade 21st Division.

The first major battle which he would have encountered would have been Flers-Courcelette (15th-22nd September) followed by the Battle of Morval, in which the Division captured Geudecourt (25th-28th September). Having broken through the prepared lines of the German defence, the British now faced a new set of challenges as they approached the slopes of the Transloy ridges. The fighting was severe but the British chipped away and pushed forward.

The weather began to turn autumnal, bringing rain, making the battlefield increasingly difficult and stretching men to limits of their physical endurance. The Battle of Transloy (1st October-18th October 1916) were all phases of the Battle of the Somme 1916.

In 1917 the Division took part in the 1st Battle of Scarpe (9th-14th April 1917) but Ernest was killed before the 2nd Battle of Scarpe took place 23rd-24th April 1917). These were parts of the Battles of Arras.

A letter from a comrade was sent to his parents at 1, Loxley Street, Batley and was received on Sunday 8th May 1917 telling them unofficially of the death of Ernest:-

*"I am sorry to tell you your son Ernest, who was my pal out here, was seriously wounded on April 25th about six o'clock at night. We were under very heavy shell fire at the time, and Ernest was struck trying to get to cover. His wounds were so serious that stretcher bearers were sent to him at once and they bound up his wounds but after that the poor lad passed away at about 6.30 pm. As early as possible the officers gave orders for us to get him out of the trench and he was buried at dead of night. I am sending you his disc."*

The letter was also signed by others who saw him fall.

The Sunday School had a committee which sent letters and gifts to the troops Miss Ada Link of Beck Lane received a letter from T. Humphries of R.G.A. who said :-" *You will write about the lads of the Sunday School but I have not had the pleasure of seeing any of them either in England or abroad. I should like to see some of the old faces again but I think most of them are on active service, or have been. I am sorry to hear one of them has gone under- Ernest Colbeck—but I hope it is not right. Is Fred Jubb wounded? It will be grand when it is all over and we are back at home again in England "*

Ernest was awarded the British War Medal, The Allied Victory Medal. He is remembered with Honour on Batley War Memorial, St. John's Carlinghow, Arras Memorial, and Pas-de-Calais along with another 122 on the same day.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group