John Collins



Rank: - Private

Number: - 7472

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

Died of Wounds: - 31/07/1915 Age: 26 years

Cemetery: - Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium 111.3A.3

Dewsbury District News, 21 Aug 1915

Family Details

John was born in Batley c.1888 the son of James Collins (serving with K.O.Y.L.I.) and Catherine (Kate) Collins (nee Rush) of Batley Carr. They had married 2nd Qtr 1883.

James was a coal miner and Kate a woollen cloth sorter who in 1891 was living with their family at 23, Cooper Street, Batley. Their children were Mary Ellen 1884, Edward 1885, Annie 1886, John, and James 1890. Before 1901 they had moved to live at 23, Amber Street and additions to the family were Joseph 1892, Michael 1894, Thomas 1896, William 1898 and George 1900. In 1901 twelve-year-old John was working as a scale picker at a coal mine.

Catherine was born in 1902 followed by Henry 1904 and Leo1906. The family had moved again to live at 2, Oldroyd Square, Town Street, Batley Carr in a four roomed home and John was employed as a coal miner hewer**.**

In 1912 John married Miriam Sheard registered Dewsbury. Prior to being called to the Colours he was a miner at Normanton and was a respected member of the Irish National League at Batley Carr.

Service Details

John was a Reservist in the West Yorkshire Regiment prior to outbreak of war and had served seven years. In August 1914 the 1st Battalion was in Lichfield and was part of 18th Brigade in 6th Division. They moved on the 7th August to Dunfermline and then six days later to Cambridge, landing at St. Nazaire on the 10th September 1914.

The Division arrived in time to reinforce the hard-pressed BEF on the Aisne, before the whole army was moved north into Flanders:

1914
The actions on the Aisne heights (12th -15th September)
The Battle of Armentières (13th October -2nd November)

1915
The action at Hooge

As the French attack in Artois continued, the British were called upon to continue offensive operations. Minor gains were made at another heavy cost in casualties. A large crater was blown at Hooge in July 1915. This was a relatively quiet period on the British part of the Western Front when few major assaults were made. However, the average casualty rate for the British and Commonwealth forces was around 300 men per day. Hooge, having been earlier lost, had been retaken in May 1915.

Lieutenant Geoffrey Cassels was the officer in charge of tunnelling and laying the mine at Hooge. The 175 Tunnelling Company completed the work in just five and a half weeks. Compared to the months of preparation before the mines used in the Battle of Messines in 1917, this was quick work.
John was injured and taken to a hospital and his wife of 20, Back Lawson Street, Dewsbury received official notification that her husband had died of wounds. A letter arrived from a Roman Catholic priest who was attached to the clearing station to act as an interpreter said: -

"*As much as possible I attend to the spiritual needs of the Catholic soldiers who pass through our hospital. I am sorry to tell you that I met your husband who was wounded in the chest and stomach. He had already been confessed and anointed by a Catholic priest. I spoke to him and asked him to accept the will of God whatever it may be. He had much trouble to breathe, but God wished to receive him in Heaven and to give him the reward which he gives to those who make their duty heroically--. I buried him in the little English cemetery which is near the Hospital. I beg you to accept my sympathies."*

John was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial Addenda.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group