Richard Collinson M.M.





Rank: - Private

Number: - 10160

Regiment: -King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 1st Battalion.

Died of wounds: - 9th March 1917 aged 27

Cemetery: - Sarigol Military Cemetery, Kriston, Greece.

Batley Reporter, 16 Mar 1917. M.M. listed in London Gazette, 15 Jun 1917, Supplement: 30135, Page:6019

Family Details:

Richard was born on 14th August 1889 to Batley born Israel Collinson and his wife Sarah Elizabeth (nee Eastwood) who came from Skelmanthorpe. He was baptised at Batley Parish Church on 19th August 1889 and at this time Israel was a rag dealer living in Wellington Street, Batley. Richard was the youngest child of this couple. Israel had originally married Hannah Lobley in 1862 but she died in June 1867and there was one surviving child to this marriage, Ann (1865). Israel married Sarah Elizabeth Eastwood on 11th November1867 at Batley Parish Church.

Mary Alice born (1869) followed by James (1870), Emma (1880), Eleanor (1882), Hannah (1884-1886), and Ruth (1887) were all older siblings of Richard (1889). The family lived in Wellington Street, Batley but Israel is not at home in 1901 and is shown as a boarder living at nearby 5, Crown Street, giving his occupation as a hawker.

Israel died in 1904 and Sarah Elizabeth in 1905. Richard on the C.W.G.C. site is shown as being the adopted son of Mrs Florence Field, of 306, High Street, West Bromwich. We have not managed to find a connection to this lady but he did leave all his effects to her saying she was his adopted mother.

He attended Batley Parish Church.

Service Details

Richard joined the regular army and served in Singapore for 8 years before being brought back to England at the outbreak of war in 1914. They landed in Southampton on the 9th November going first to Hursley Park and then Harwich on the 18th November. On the 17th December they returned to Hursley Park and came under the command of 83rd Brigade 28th Division. They landed in Le Havre on the 16th January 1915 moving to concentrate on the area between Bailleul and Hazebrouck, taking part in the 2nd Battle of Ypres and the Battle of Loos before being given the orders to sail to Alexandria and all units were there by 22nd November 1915.

In October 1915 a combined Franco-British force of some two large brigades was landed at Salonika (today called Thessaloniki) at the request of the Greek Prime Minister. The objective was to help the Serbs in their fight against Bulgarian

aggression. But the expedition arrived too late, the Serbs having been beaten before they landed. It was decided to keep the force in place for future operations, even against Greek opposition. The Greek Chief of the General Staff in Athens had told them "You will be driven into the sea, and you will not have time even to cry for mercy" (Some Greek factions, including King Constantine, were pro-German). The outcome of the Gallipoli campaign was in the balance and most shipping in the area was involved so they really had no choice. In December 1915 the British element fought a battle at Kosturino, north of Lake Doiran, after withdrawing from Serbia. The Division was ordered to go to Salonika disembarking being completed by 4 January 1916. After this there was little action except for occasional air-raids on Salonika.

During the first four months of 1916 the British Salonika Force had enough spadework to last it for the rest of its life. Large amounts of barbed wire were used and a bastion about eight miles north of the city was created connecting with the Vardar marshes to the west, and the lake defences of Langaza and Beshik to the east, and so to the Gulf of Orfano and the Aegean Sea. This area was known as the 'Birdcage' on account of the quantity of wire used. The Bulgarians and Austrians also fortified the heights of the hills surrounding Salonika during the same time which had dire consequences later on. The original two Brigades eventually were reinforced by larger units until 22nd, 26th, 27th and 28th Divisions were there. If the Bulgarians had descended from their Doiran and Struma heights it would have been very difficult to ' push us into the sea', for the force was deployed to fortify an advanced defensive line.

The Salonika Force dug-in until the summer of 1916, by which time the international force had been reinforced and joined by Serbian, Russian and Italian units. The Bulgarian attempt at invasion of Greece in July was repulsed near Lake Doiran. At the beginning of Oct 1916, the British in co-operation with her allies on other parts of the front began operations on the River Struma towards Serres. The campaign was successful with the capture of the Rupell Pass and advances to within a few miles of Serres.

The Occupation of Mazirko 2nd October 1916.

The capture of Karajakois (30th September – 2nd October).

The capture of Yenikoi (3rd -4th October).

The capture of Barakli Jum'a (31st October)

The Battle of Tumbitza Farm (17th November – 7th December).

During 1917 there was comparatively little activity on the British part of the front in Macedonia, due in part to complex political changes in Greece throughout the year. The main fighting took place around Lake Doiran, where the line was adjusted several times by each side early in the year.



In the London Gazette dated 15th June 1917, supplement 30135; page 6019 was the announcement that Richard had been awarded the Military Medal.

We have not managed to discover where Richard was injured or the reasons he was awarded the Military Medal, but we do know that from March to June 1917 the 35th Casualty Clearing Hospital was at Sarigol.

Richard was awarded the Military Medal, the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal

Remembered with Honour: Batley Parish Church, Batley War Memorial and Sarigol Military Cemetery, Greece.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group