Harold Crossley





Rank: - Private

Number: - 17975

Regiment: - Kings' Own Scottish Borderers 1st Battalion

Killed in Action: - 30th November 1917 aged 21

Memorial: - Cambrai Memorial, Louverval, Nord, France.

Panel 5

Batley News, 22 Dec 1917 (photo), 29 Dec 1917

Family Details

Harold was born in Batley on 15th January 1896 the son of John Crossley and his wife Martha Ann (nee Waddington). He was baptised at Batley Parish Church on 7th February 1900 on the same day as his sister Lavinia, who was born on 3rd October 1899 when the family was living at Bradford Road, Batley.

John was described as a dyer. Harold's parents had married at Batley Parish Church on Boxing Day 1885.

The couple, in 1891, were living at 57, Ward's Hill, Batley with Martha Ann's widowed mother who was a retail coal dealer and their son, Percy Waddington Crossley, who was born on 15th March 1890. John was described as a cloth finisher on his son's baptism but a cloth raiser on the census.

Gilbert was born in 1904 but sadly died in August 1905.

At some time before 1911 John and his wife went separate ways because in 1911 John and Harold were living at 3, Pearl Street and John was a woollen dyer's labourer whilst Harold worked as a blacksmith and Martha Ann and Lavinia were residing at 4, Off Beck Lane, Carlinghow, Batley.

Harold attended Carlinghow Council School and St.John's Church where he was connected with the Institute.

Before enlisting he had worked at Wilson Bros., Little Orme Mills in the finishing department but previously had worked at G. H.Hirst and Co. Bright's Mill.

Service Details:

Harold enrolled in Batley in January 1915 and embarked for the Balkans on 30th June 1915. The 1st Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers' came under the orders of 87th Brigade 29th Division. He went through the Dardanelles campaign and was transferred to France in March 1916.

Harold would have fought in the Battles of Albert and Transloy Ridges in 1916. In 1917 he would have seen fighting at the First, Second and Third Battles of the Scarpe, Battles of Langemarke, Broodseinde, Poelcapelle and the Battle of Cambrai where he was killed.

The opening of the Battle of Cambrai on 20th November 1917 is often identified as the first demonstration of the sophisticated techniques and technologies required to affect such a battle. On that day, the British attack broke deeply and quickly into apparently impregnable defences with few casualties. This early result was widely regarded as being a great and spectacular achievement, so positive was it in comparison with the recent ghastly slog to Passchendaele. The Daily Mail called it a "Splendid Success" and headlined on 23 rd November with "Haigh through the Hindenburg Line".

On the 20th November they received orders to advance to Marcoing. The battalion fought in the Masnieres sector until the 27th when they were relieved by 2nd Hants. Regiment. They spent the next two days in reserve at Marcoing village before receiving a message at 9 a.m. on the 30th that the enemy had attacked heavily on their right and had broken through part of the line held by 20th Division and at that moment was retiring over the hill on the right. The 1st Battalion of the K.O.S.B. was ordered to take up position forming a defensive flank on the right of the Division with the Battalion resting on the road south of Marcoing Copse. Battalion H. Q. immediately went to reconnoitre and when approaching the corner of the Chapel of the Virgin figures were seen on the hill in front and immediately rifle and machine gun fire was opened on the H.Q. party. It was obvious that the enemy were in possession of the ground which the 1st Battalion was supposed to occupy. The battalion moved south and up a Sunken Road where it was possible to reorganise for a counter attack. At 12.30pm the battalion was reinforced by soldiers from the Worcester Regiment and by 2.30.pm a link was obtained with the 20th Division on the right and the 29th Division on the left thus an offensive and practically continuous line was established.

From this battalion on the 30th November 3 officers and 11 other ranks were killed, 4 officers and 79 other ranks were wounded and 41 soldiers were missing.

On December 7th a comrade wrote to Harold's parents: -

"We have lost your son, Harold. I have been nine months with this battalion and your son was my pal and I have found him a great chap. You can guess how much I miss him and all the other boys do. He did not suffer any pain for he was hit through the head and died at once."

His brother, Percy, who had worked at Critchley's Batley Colliery had lost a hand and was waiting to be discharged and an artificial limb being fitted at the time of his death.

Harold was awarded the BritishWar Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at St. John's Church, Carlinghow,Batley War Memorial and Cambrai Memorial, France.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group