John Sandaver Denton





Rank: - Private

Number: - 242076

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (Formerly 5170 King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry) 2/5th Battalion

Missing, presumed Killed in Action: - 03/05/1917 Age: 30 years

Memorial: - Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France Bay 7

Batley News, 6 Oct 1917 (photo), 27 Oct 1917, 16 Mar 1918 (photo)

Family Details

John Sandaver was born in Hunslet, Leeds on 17th March 1887 the son of Joseph Blackburn Denton and his wife Annie Elvia nee Sandaver who had married at St. Mary the Virgin, Hunslet on the 14th April 1884. He was baptised at St. Mary the Virgin Church on the 14th May 1884 when the family address was given as Balm Road and his father's occupation was a beamer and warper.

Joseph had been married prior to this marriage to Rebecca Wilsden in 1876 Joseph Blackburn 1876, George Wilsden 1878 and Thomas Arthur 1880 were their children. Rebecca sadly died in 1882.

Elizabeth Violet was born in 1885followed by Thomas Arthur 1886, John Sandaver, Samuel Garside 1889, Eliza Naomi 1892, William Plant 1894, and Clara Mary 1895. In 1891 the family was living at 1, Ely Street, Hunslet, Leeds and Joseph Blackburn Denton was employed as a woollen warper.

Within the next decade Halifax born Joseph had moved his family to live at 6, Ellerby Avenue, Leeds and John Sandaver were working as an office boy. The family moved again to live at 28, Lady Ann Road, Soothill, Batley before 1911 and John Sandaver became a woollen warper like his father.

Before he enlisted he was employed by Messrs. Chas. Robinson and Co. Ltd. Batley.

Service Details

John enlisted on the 23rd March 1916 and went to France on 13th January 1917, he was abroad 15 weeks when he was posted missing at Bullecourt.

The Battle of Arras began on Easter Monday, 9 April 1917 and the 2/5th were involved with flanking operations in the First Battle of Bullecourt (11 April) and the flanking operations of the German attack on Lagnicourt (15 April) .

The 2/5 KOYLI War Diary for 3 April recorded

"*3.37am Battalion moved forward at Zero hours minus 8 minutes. Early start because tape moved back 100 yards from enemy line."*

Since the original line was 300 yards away from the enemy they had to cover at least 600 yards until they could engage the enemy. They were ordered to have creeping barrage but there was a great deal of confusion and although the British barrage went

down exactly on time they were unprepared for what they were to face. The weather had been dry for several days and the ground was baked hard. When the shells from the British bombardment hit the ground they threw up clouds of choking dust ad together with the smoke from the exploding HE from the enemy and that the attack had been made in darkness presented an almost impenetrable fog through which they had to advance. The 2/5 York and Lancs were ahead of the 2/5 KOYLI and some of them actually crossed the German lines without being aware, however there was a great deal of confusion and the impetus of the attack had been lost. The fighting continued all day and Major Watson of the 2/5, who was wounded, was later awarded the D.S.O.

John went missing on 4th May 1917 and his parents appealed for any news in the Batley News edition of 6th October 1917. Two wounded soldiers believed he had been killed but no official news had been received. Following this request a sergeant wrote to his mother:-

"I have read your appeal in the paper of your wanting to know particulars of your son's death. Well I am pleased to say I had him in my platoon when I was in--------Company. I found him always willing. He would do anything he was told without a murmur. He was cheerful up to the last: and during the attack he was shot by a sniper. His death was instantaneous, he had no pain whatever. We buried him behind the lines but I cannot mention the name of the place ...Your son died a hero's death. It was God's will. "

His parents did not receive official confirmation of his death until March 1918.

John Sandaver was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at St. Paul's Church, Hanging Heaton and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group