Joseph Clifford Dixon



Rank: - Private

Number: - 51266

Regiment: - East Yorkshire Regiment (Formerly 53210 KOYLI) 7th Battalion

Missing, presumed Killed in Action: - 18/09/1918 Age: 28 years

Memorial: - Vis-en-Artois Memorial, Pas de Calais, France Panel 4



Family Details

Joseph Clifford was born in Batley on the 10th May 1890 the son of Joseph and Hannah Dixon nee Ward and was baptised at St. Thomas's Church, Batley on the 16th June 1890. His father gave his occupation as a cloth fuller and the family lived at 16, Bradford Road, Batley. The couple had married on 13th December 1884 at St. Thomas's Church, Batley and although Hannah was a spinster Joseph had been widowed. He had previously been married to Hannah Hinchliffe but she died in early 1884.

In 1891 Joseph Clifford was living in Hanover Square, which was situated near the bottom of Well Lane, with his maternal grandfather Watson Ward, Uncle James Ward, mother and half siblings Walter 1874, Ada 1877, Tom 1879 and William Ewart 1881and full siblings, Ethel 1885 and Miranda 1888. James was born in 1886 but sadly died in 1887.

In 1901 the Joseph and Hannah were living with Walter, William, Ethel, Miriam, (Joseph) Clifford and Elsie born 1902 at 15, Purlwell Hall Road, Batley.

Elsie was born on August 1892 but when she was baptised on 11th September 1895 their address was given as 7, Schiitzen-Strauss, Griimberg, Germany.

In late 1910 Joseph Clifford married Elizabeth Ann Hunt and they went to live at 86, Hardy Street, Crackenedge, Hanging Heaton. He worked as a cutter of steel bars for a Patent Glazing Company working on roofs. Nora was born in 1912.

Service Details

He and his wife had moved to New Street, Hanging Heaton before he enlisted.

His service details have not survived but we know from newspaper reports he went to France only one month before he went missing. The 7th Service Battalion was part of 50th Brigade in 17th (Northern) Division from July 1915 it saw action on the Western Front. The Division saw action in 1918 in the German Spring Offensives and then the Battle of Epehy which is where Joseph Clifford went missing.

Very few tanks could be provided for the attack, so artillery would have to be relied upon to prepare the way but in the interests of surprise they would not be able to provide a preliminary bombardment. The 1,488 guns would instead

fire concentration shots at zero hour and support the infantry with a creeping barrage and 300 machine-guns were also made available. All three corps of the Fourth Army were to take part, with V Corps of the Third Army on their left flank and on their right the French First Army. The objective consisted of a fortified zone roughly 3 miles (4.8 km) deep and 20 miles (32 km) long, supported by subsidiary trenches and strong points. The German 2nd and 18th Army defended the area.

On 18 September at 5.20 am, the attack opened and the troops advanced. The promised French assistance did not arrive, resulting in limited success for IX Corps on that flank. On the left flank, 111 Corps also found difficulty when attacking the fortifications erected at "the Knoll", Quennemont and Guillemont farms, which were held determinedly by German troops, the village was however captured by the British 12th Eastern Division [7th Norfolk, 9th Essex and 1st Cambridge]. In the centre, General John Monash's two Australian divisions achieved complete and dramatic success. The 1st Australian Division and the 4th Australian Division, had a strength of some 6,800 men[3] and in the course of the day captured 4,243 prisoners, 76 guns, 300 machine-guns and thirty trench mortars. They took all their objectives and advanced to a distance of about 3 miles (4.8 km) on a 4 miles (6.4 km) front. The Australian casualties were 1,260 officers and men (265 killed, 1,057 wounded, 2 captured). The battle saw the first mutiny of Australian forces, when 119 men of the 1st Australian Battalion refused to conduct an attack to help the neighbouring British unit.

The attack closed as an Allied victory, with 11,750 prisoners and 100 guns captured.

Joseph Clifford went missing during this battle and it was not until September 1919 that his wife received official communication that he was missing, presumed killed in action.

He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

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

Researched by members of
Batley History Group