Ernest Speight Longley Eastwood



Photo courtesy of Mary Elders

Rank: - Private

Number: - 3/1349

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry "A" Company 2nd Battalion

Missing, presumed Killed in Action: - 2nd February 1915 aged 28

Memorial: - Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium Panel 47

Batley Reporter, 26 Feb 1915, 4 Feb 1916 (classifieds)

Family Details

Ernest was born in Ravensthorpe on 2nd December 1886 the son of Hannah (nee Lee) and was baptised privately as Ernest Speight Longley at Ravensthorpe on 23rd February 1888 when they were living at Commercial Street, Ravensthorpe.

Hannah had married Charlesworth Longley on 14 February 1880 at St. Mary's Church, Mirfield. The couple were living at Towngate, Mirfield and Charlesworth was a miner. A daughter Ada Ann was baptised on 7 July 1881 and then Charlesworth disappeared.

In 1891 Ada and Ernest Langley were living with their grandmother, widowed Ann Sheard, aged 44 and 3 of her children at 197, Commercial Street, Ravensthorpe. Hannah is living at 186, Commercial Street, Ravensthorpe stating she was the wife of shoemaker Joe Eastwood born Batley and was employed as a weaver. A daughter, Mary Ann was born later in 1891 but for some reason lived with her Eastwood grandparents, George and Mary in 1901 at 12, Henry Street, Dewsbury and her Aunt Mary Eastwood in 1911 at Dale Street, Batley Carr.

In 1901 the family had moved to Batley living at 8 yard 2, Oxford Street and the census states daughter Emily Maud was born in Mirfield in 1893. By 1911 the family have moved to a two roomed home at 26, Brearley Street, Mount Pleasant, Batley but Ernest had reverted to calling himself Longley (Langley). Ernest is working as a piecener, Joe a spinner, Hannah and Emily Maud are weavers. Joe and Hannah had married in June Qtr. 1903.

Please note Ernest was baptised Ernest Speight L**o**ngley He was known as Ernest Langley, then Ernest S Eastwood, back to Longley. He joined the army as Ernest L Speight but on his Commonwealth War Grave records Ernest Langley Spaight. On Batley Parish Church Memorial, he is listed as Ernest L. Eastwood. It appears he is on Batley War Memorial twice, once as Ernest L Speight and then as Ernest S. Eastwood.

Service Details

Ernest enrolled at Dewsbury in February 1914 under the name of Spaight, so was a regular soldier when war broke out. The 2nd Battalion was formed in 1881 and were in Dublin when war broke out and were part of 13th Brigade in 5th Division.

Ernest disembarked on 1st September and his first battle would have been the Battle of Marne which took place 7th - 10th September 1914 followed by the following, Battle of

Aisne (12th -15th September), Battle of La Bassee (10th October -2nd November 1914) , First Battle of Ypres (19th October- 22nd November1914),

A letter "In *France Friday with 2nd Battalion K.O.Y.L.I. 16th October 1914* "from 5216 Sgt. E.T. Richards 2 K.O.Y.L.I. to Captain H.W.B. T.Thorp says :-

Dear Sir,

The Battalion is still going strong despite casualties. More reinforcements arrived yesterday which included more of your old company at Crete 1904.Young Richards came up with the second reinforcements and was in time to with the battalion to the Aisne. Our brigade was the thin edge of the wedge between the Aisne River and the enemy. The battalion was in support and had 12 killed on the first morning we were there. I was scratched with a piece of brass on the ribs just below the right ribs, but nothing serious. I had a charmed life at Le Cateau , but had to leave everything but my rifle ------"

On Monday 2nd November the battalion was at Neuve Eglise where there had been heavy fighting the previous day with around 150 casualties but on 20th November they marched to Locre where they were in billets until moving to Neuve Eglise again on the 27nd November where they were in the trenches east of Wulverghem until being relieved on 4th December. The then marched to billets at St Jans Cappel acting as corps reserves.

On the 10th December they marched from St. Jans Cappel via Dranantre to the trenches east of Lindenhoeck on the slopes of Hill 15. The trenches here were very close to the enemy only 50 yards away in places. The enemy sniped day and night and there was also shell fire.

On Christmas Day, which had a hard and frosty morning, the Battalion rested in billets at St.Jans Cappel. In the afternoon a 6 aside football match was held which was won by "A" company. They moved back to the trenches near the River Douve on the 29th December. It was reported that 3 men were killed and 3 wounded on the 30th December.

On the first day of 1915 they were back in billets at Neuve Eglise but on the 5th January a shell fell in the street and killed 14 men and wounded about 25 others. The next day they marched to Wulverghem to relieve the West Riding Regiment in "B" Section and had a very wet night with strong winds. The river overflowed and flooded the trenches. They were in reserve at Bailleul from the 10th to 16th January when they marched to Dranoutre before moving back yet again to Bailleul on the 24th. On the 1st February

they returned to the trenches in Section "D" which was near Neuve Eglise. There was fire all day on 2nd February which was when Ernest was last seen.

Ernest had regularly written home and in his last letter he had rather a cheerful tone with anticipation of a joyful reunion "*when I come home, we will have a "big do." We will have all our friends there.*

When there had been no news of him for 5 weeks, his brother-in-law, John William Pickles, wrote to the War Office and received this reply: -

"With *reference to your inquiry passed on to the office from the War Office, I regret to have to inform you that Private 1349 E.L.Spaight 2nd K.O.Y.L.I. reported killed in action at Wulverghem the 2nd February 1915"*

In the Batley News the following year: -

Eastwood *in memory of Ernest the beloved son of Mr. and Mrs. Eastwood of 26, Brearley Street, Mount Pleasant, Batley who was killed in action February 2nd, 1915.*

Ernest was awarded the 1914 Star and Clasp, British 1914 -1920 Medal and the Victory Medal. He is commemorated on Batley Parish Church Memorial, Batley War Memorial, Gospel Hall and Ypres (Menin Gate) along with another 9 men from the K.O.Y.L.I.'s killed or missing on the same day.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group