John Eastwood





Rank: - Private

Number: - 203613

Regiment/Battalion: - South Staffordshire 4th Battalion

Missing, Presumed Killed in Action: - 24th March 1918 aged 32

Remembered with Honour: - Bancourt British Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France.
Special Mem C 37

"THEIR GLORY SHALL NOT BE BLOTTED OUT"

Batley News, 18 May 1918, 25 May 1918 (photo), 4 Jan 1919, 19 Apr 1919 (photo)

Family Details:

John was born in Holmfirth in 1886, the son of Abraham and Emily Eastwood (nee Marsh). Abraham was a mason who came from New Mill and in 1891 the family was living at Lane Bottom, New Mill with older brother Tom (1884), Emma (1888) and Alice (1890).

A decade later the family had moved to Batley and was living at Blackburn Square, Hilberoyd Road, Batley. Tom had become a stone mason like his father but John was working as a piecener in a woollen mill. On 12th August 1905 Tom married Emma Hirst and they moved to Mount Pleasant.

Abraham died in March 1906 and the family later moved to Carlinghow. In 1911 Emily, Emma and Alice were living in a two roomed house in Crescent Street. John married Mary Elizabeth Pickles on 18th April 1908 at St Thomas's Church. Sarah Hannah was born in June 1908 but sadly died in August aged 2 months.

In 1911 John was working as a finisher in a woollen mill and Mary was a warper, living in a two roomed house at 14, Back Crescent Street, Cross Bank, Batley. Eric was born in 1912 followed by Edna in 1916. The family moved to North Bank Road, Cross Bank and John was employed at Joseph Newsome and Sons, Batley Carr as a miner. He was associated with Moor End Working Men's Club, Staincliffe and Hick Lane Chapel, Batley.

Service Details:

John joined the 4th Battalion South Staffordshire's on 2nd May 1917 and was sent to France the following October as a Lewis Gunner. They landed at Le Havre on the 10th October and came under the orders of 7th Brigade, 25th Division.

The 25th Division took over the Givenchy sector on 4th October and held it for seven weeks. No operations of any significance took place at this time. On 1st December the Division moved by train to Achiet le Grand and moved to relieve 3rd Division south of Bullecourt. It remained in this position carrying out much work in digging a continuous front trench system until relieved on 13th February 1918. They then moved to an area north west of Bapaume becoming reserve Division to 1V Corps. The Battle of St. Quentin started on 21st March 1918. The area about to be attacked was covered in thick fog which began to form from

around 5 p.m. on the 20th.The British infantry and the forward placed artillery were attacked in overwhelming strength in thick fog, wearing gas masks for most of the day, finding that fast moving enemy infantry had broken through gaps in the defences and were rounding them up from behind. Thousands were killed and many were captured.

The 7th Brigade moved up as support and took up position at Fremicourt. From the opening phases of the attack the Division was ordered to reinforce others in piecemeal fashion rather than fight as a Division and from the start until they were withdrawn six days later it fought continuously under strange commanders and staff.

The Battle of Bapaume started on the 24th March, John was reported missing after stiff fighting in the neighbourhood of Bapaume and his comrades, at first, assumed he had been taken prisoner. In all probability he and his gun had been wiped out by shell fire from the enemy. The British Red Cross made exhaustive enquiries without success and in 1919 his wife received notification that he was missing, presumed killed in action.

His brother, Tom, had died in June 1915 as a result of a hand grenade accident.

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

He is remembered with Honour on Batley War Memorial, St. John's Church Carlinghow and Bancourt British Military Cemetery.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group