John William Enwright





Rank: - Rifleman

Number: - 26710

Regiment: - West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales' Own 8th Battalion, (Leeds Rifles) (formerly Private 30774 KOYLI).

Killed in Action:- 27th September 1918 aged 26

Remembered with Honour: - Noyelles-sur- L'Escaut Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, France.

Batley News, 19 Oct 1918 (photo)

John William Enwright was born in the Carlinghow area of Batley on 12 February 1892. Baptised at the end of that month at St. Mary's, he was the eldest of Thomas and Mary Enwright's three children. Card cleaner, Thomas, from Heckmondwike, had married woollen weaver Mary Ann Kelly from March, Cambridgeshire at St. Mary's Church two years earlier. Their married life was spent in Woolers Buildings, Coal Pit Lane or Back Coal Pit Lane, Carlinghow. The couple also had two daughters, Mary Ellen, born February 1894, and Margaret Ann, in May 1897.

John William was educated at St. Mary's school and by the time of the 1911 census he was working as a piecer at a woollen mill. His later employees included Messrs. John Blackburn, Old Mill, Batley where he worked in the rag warehouse. Outside of work he was at one time associated with Carlinghow Working Men's Club.

He married Carrie Marshall in May 1914 at St. Patrick's, Heckmondwike (Holy Spirit). Francis was born in Heckmondwike in October 1914 and Thomas was born in the Skelsey Row area of Batley in May 1916. By 1917 they were living in Tillotson Street.

John enlisted in June 1916 and according to some records he was initially with the KOYLI serving as Private 30774. He was transferred to the 1/8th (Leeds Rifles), which by the end of January 1918 was renumbered the 8th Battalion. Some sources indicate he went to Malta in November 1916, but was in hospital in France by the summer of 1917. In October 1917, Carrie received a field card informing her John was wounded and in hospital.

He recovered and returned to the Western Front, but almost a year later Carrie received the official news that John had been killed in action, in France on 27 September 1918. This was the opening day of the Battle of the Canal du Nord, one of the phases in the Battle of the Hindenburg Line.

At 6.15am on 27 September 1918 John's Battalion crossed the Canal du Nord and by 7.30 am were on the eastern bank awaiting orders to advance. Ahead of them, fierce fighting was going on all along the front, the Germans desperately trying to hold their positions.

At 8.15am enemy guns swept the area with heavy shell-fire just as the West Yorkshire's began to move off, inflicting 20 casualties at the start of their advance. Strafed by machine-gun fire they pushed on, progressing slowly down the network of captured trenches. The West Yorkshire men made what was described as a brilliant attempt to

capture Marcoing, with "A" Company leading the way and reaching the western outskirts in face of heavy rifle and machine -gun fire and raked by field-guns firing over open sights. 'A' Company ', reduced to only 18 other ranks, now faced annihilation, so withdrew.

'B' and 'C' Companies were drawn off the correct advance line, and towards heavy machine-gun fire from Premy Chapel (which the Guards Division had not captured as planned), and Nine Wood. Despite losing their officers, discipline was maintained, but their situation was desperate. The enemy had worked their way round their left flank, cutting them off from the rear. They sustained heavy casualties, with those surviving being captured. By 4pm, 'D' Company, who had been in reserve, were called into action to consolidate and successfully push on with clearing a German-held trench. The day had been costly for the Yorkshiremen.

The Regiment's official history goes on to say:

When the morning of 28th dawned the 8th West Yorkshire's were but a remnant. They had lost 11 officers and 341 other ranks, and although their captured numbered 15 field guns, nine machine-guns and many prisoners (one a batch of 70 brought in by a solitary wounded man of 'C' Company), the plight of the battalion was pitiable…

John was awarded the Victory Medal and British War Medal, He is remembered at St. Mary's Church, St. John's Carlinghow and Batley War Memorial.

Carrie Enwright re-married in 1925.



Thanks to Jane Roberts for research from St. Mary of the Angels.