Robert Blakey Firth





Rank: - Private

Number: - M1/ 09340

Battalion: - Army Service Corps 244th Coy.

Died of fever: - 9th July 1916

Cemetery: - Salonika (Lembet Road Military Cemetery) 224

"THY WILL BE DONE"

Batley News, 29 Jul 1916 (photo)

Family Details

Robert Blakey was born in Sunny Bank, Batley in 1882 the eldest son of Abraham Firth (Ambler) and his wife Sarah (nee Blakey) who came from Bramley. He was followed by Annie (1886), Richard (1888-1911), William Sugden (1890-1917), Fred (1892), Harry (1894), Joseph (1897) and Clifford (1899-1903). There were another two children who died in infancy. The couple had married in 1880.

In 1891 the family were living at the Top of Healey Fields where Abraham was described as a butcher. A decade later the family had moved to Towngate Road, Healey and Abraham was working as a miner and Robert was an apprentice wheelwright.

On 6th November 1906 Robert married Violet Ellen Barclay at Batley Parish Church. His occupation was given as a millwright and she was a mill hand. His address was given as Healey Lane, Staincliffe. Abraham's occupation was given as a butcher.

Gladys was born in 1909 and in 1911 the family was living at 26, Belvedere Road, Mount Pleasant and Robert was working as an engineer and millwright. May was born in 1913.

Until early 1915 he worked at Messrs Blakey's, machine works, Batley. He moved to Kirkstall, Leeds to work at Kirkstall Forge. His wife returned to Batley and married Wilfred Sowden on the 19th July 1924 at St. Andrew's Church, Purlwell and lived at 123, Taylor Street, Batley.

Service Details

Shortly after moving to Kirkstall, Robert enlisted in Leeds in mechanical transport and went to Egypt. Around December 1915 he was sent to Salonika. In July 1916 he was taken ill with dysentery and was taken into hospital on the 3rd July but was transferred to the General Hospital on the 7th July where he died two days later.

His Captain wrote to his wife: -

"Before this letter reaches England you will have been notified of your husband's death. Will you please accept my sympathy in your sad bereavement? It may be some consolation to you in your great trouble to know that he was very popular

with all ranks. His death was a great blow to all of us as he was only in hospital eight days. Although he was not actually killed in action his life has been given to his King and Country. Titch, as he was known to all, will be remembered long after the war for his ready and good-humoured wit. He was an extremely good worker and a good soldier. I hope these few remarks will help you to bear your great trouble."

One of his comrades in Salonika wrote: -

"As a great friend of your husband I feel it is part of my duty to write to let you know that he passed away on the 9th July. He came into the hospital to which I am attached on 3rd July suffering from dysentery, and was transferred to the General Hospital on 7th July. During the time he was here I spent as much time as possible with him. He appeared to be going on very well and getting much better. It was a great shock to us when we heard on the Sunday of his death as he was such a great favourite with everyone in his Company of which I am an old member."

Robert Blakey was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour on Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group