James William Fox





Rank: - Rifleman

Number: - R/16866

Regiment: - King's Royal Rifle Corps 13th Battalion

Missing, Presumed Killed in Action: - 10th April 1917 age 23

Remembered with Honour: - Arras, Pas-de-Calais, France Bay 7

Batley News, 19 May 1917, 30 Jun 1917. Batley Reporter, 18 May 1917 (photo)

Family Details:

James William was born in c1893 in Batley to Edwin (Edward) Wilby Fox and his wife Jane Ann (nee Harren). The couple had married on 4th January 1892 at Batley Parish Church and their son, Walter was born in 1892 followed by James William, Evelyn (1895) and Lilly (1897). In 1901 they were living at 1, Grafton Street, Batley.

Jane died in April 1902 at the same time as her 3-week-old son William and by 1911 Edwin and his family had moved to a three roomed home at Cross Bank Road, Batley.

In 1917 his father was living at 42, Cross Bank Road, Batley.

James worked at Messrs. Brooke, Wilford & Co. as a pattern weaver before joining the Forces.

Service Details:

James William enrolled in Batley in November 1915 and embarked in 1916. He was one of seven pals who joined the King's Rifle Corps at the same time The 13th Battalion was part of the 37th Division.

The Battle of Arras was several small battles in this area which took place between 9th April and 16th May 1917. The aim of the combined operation was to end the war in forty-eight hours. At Arras the Allied objectives were to draw the German troops away from ground chosen for the French attack and to take the German held high ground that dominated the plain of Douai.

The British effort was a relative broad assault from between Vimy in the northwest and Bullecourt in the south-east. Canadian troops advancing in the north were able to capture the strategically significant Vimy Ridge and British divisions in the centre made significant gains near the Scarpe River. In the south British and Australian forces made only small-scale gains. British forces engaged in a series of small-scale operations to consolidate the newly won positions. These battles were generally successful in achieving limited gains but there were a relatively high number of casualties.

Private Redfearn of Beck Lane, Carlinghow, who was in the same battalion, wrote home to say James had not been seen for some time. This was reported in the Batley

News of 19th May 1917. James's father immediately wrote to the War Office who replied that they had no news.

It was not until June 1917 when his father received official notification that his son had last been seen on 10th April and it was assumed, he had been killed in action.

Private Albert Redfearn, son of Sam Redfearn of Beck Lane, confirmed this except for the date. He wrote: -

"I have learnt today that my worst fears have been realised, your son Jim was instantaneously killed on the 11th together with two of his comrades. Since that date I have enquired in vain for news of him, and it was through a fellow re-joining the Battalion that I have learned the facts he being wounded with the same shell that killed your son. According to what he tells me they had dropped into a shell hole for cover and suddenly there was a shock, one of Fritz's 5.9's having pitched on the edge of the hole. Being wounded, the man naturally doesn't remember every detail but he went on to say that undoubtedly the others were killed instantly. As you know Jim and I were the only two left out of the seven who answered the Call together, and I looked on him more of a brother than a pal. Many are the happy hours we have spent together talking about the old town. Now I am the only Batley lad left in the Battalion so you can imagine how much I miss him. I am sorry he did not live to see the crushing defeat we gave the Bosches that day----the forerunner of more to come."

James William is remembered with Honour on Batley War memorial, St.John's Church, Carlinghow and Arras, Pas-de-Calais.

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



Researched by members of
Batley History Group