John Henry Fox





Rank: - Private

Number: - 12/1001

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 10th Battalion (formerly 12/1001 12th Battalion KOYLI)

Died of wounds: - 28th Sept 1916 aged 32

Cemetery: - Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France X1.C.18A

"OF 28 BANK FOOT PLACE BATLEY REMEMBRANCE"

Batley News, 7 Oct 1916 (photo)

Family Details

John Henry (aka Harry), was born in Batley on 30th July 1884 the son of Simeon, a card cleaner and his wife Ellen (nee Senior). The couple had married at Batley Parish Church on the 25th June 1881.

John Henry was baptised at Batley Parish on the 26th October 1884. His siblings were Blakeley (1881), Charles James (1882-1885), William Bierley (1886-1891), Alice (1888), Mary (1891), Ellen (1894), George (1898), and Annie who was born in January 1902 died aged 3 days and was buried at Batley Cemetery on the 23rd January 1902.

In 1891 the family was living at 7, Fleming Street, Batley and continued to do so for many years. A widow Elizabeth Brook aged 38 was lodging with them. Simeon was a woollen spinner. In the next ten years the family had grown and Simeon was now a card cleaner at a woollen mill and Sarah A. Kershaw is boarding with them in Fleming Street. John Henry was working as a hurrier at a mine, below ground.

On the 6th June 1908 John Henry married Ann Watson daughter of Mark Watson of 28, Bankfoot Place at Batley Parish Church. This marriage did not seem to last because by the 1911 census they were both back home with their parents. John Henry was now a Dray Man at a Railway and his three sisters were all weavers. Simeon was still a card cleaner.

As a boy John Henry attended Batley Parish Church day school and Up Lane Sunday School. He was a member for some time of Batley Parish Lads' Brigade.

Before joining up he had returned to be a miner working for Crawshaw and Warburton's at Shaw Cross Colliery.

Service Details

John enlisted at Dewsbury shortly after the outbreak of war in 1914 and disembarked for Egypt on 22nd December 1915 with the 12th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

The 12th K.O.Y.L.I. was formed in Leeds on 5th September 191 4 by the West Yorkshire Coal Owners' Association. They moved to Otley moving again in May 1915 to Burton Leonard and attached as Pioneer Battalion to 31st Division. They

moved to Favont in October before going to Egypt in December 1915, the last units arriving on 23rd January 1916. The Division took over No.3 Sector of the Suez Canal Defences and Divisional H.Q. moved to Kantara on 23rd January 1916. The stay in Egypt was short lived and they moved to Marseilles between 1st -6th March 1916 for service on the Western Front.

He later transferred to the 10th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

Both the 10th and 12th Battalions fought in the Battle of Albert which was one of the 1st Battles of the Somme between 1st and 13th July 1916. The 10th fought in the Battle of Bazentin Ridge 14th -17th July, Flers - Courcelette 15th- 22nd September.

The Battle of Flers–Courcelette was a battle within the Franco-British Somme Offensive which took place in the summer and autumn of 1916. Launched on 15th September 1916 the battle went on for one week. Flers–Courcelette began with the objective of cutting a hole in the German line by using massed artillery and infantry attacks. This hole would then be exploited with the use of cavalry. It was the third and final general offensive mounted by the British Army during the Battle of the Somme. By its conclusion on 22nd September, the strategic objective of a breakthrough had not been achieved; however tactical gains were made in the capture of the villages of Courcelette, Martinpuich and Flers. In some places, the front lines were advanced by over 2,500 yards (2,300 m) by the Allied attacks.

The battle is significant for the first use of the tank in warfare. It also marked the debut of the Canadian and New Zealand Divisions on the Somme battlefield.

According to the Batley News John Henry was wounded on Saturday 18th September and his parents received a letter dated 20th September but not in his handwriting from Etaples Hospital saying: -

"I have been wounded in the right arm and I have to stay in hospital a day or two until I am fit to travel but I am coming to England. I am feeling very well and being well looked after, so you must not worry. It was just my luck to get wounded on Batley Feast Saturday. "

His wife received notification on Saturday 12th October from the War Office to the effect that he died at Etaples Hospital on 28th September. The cause of death is described as "gunshot *wounds to the right arm and left buttock, and tetanus.*"

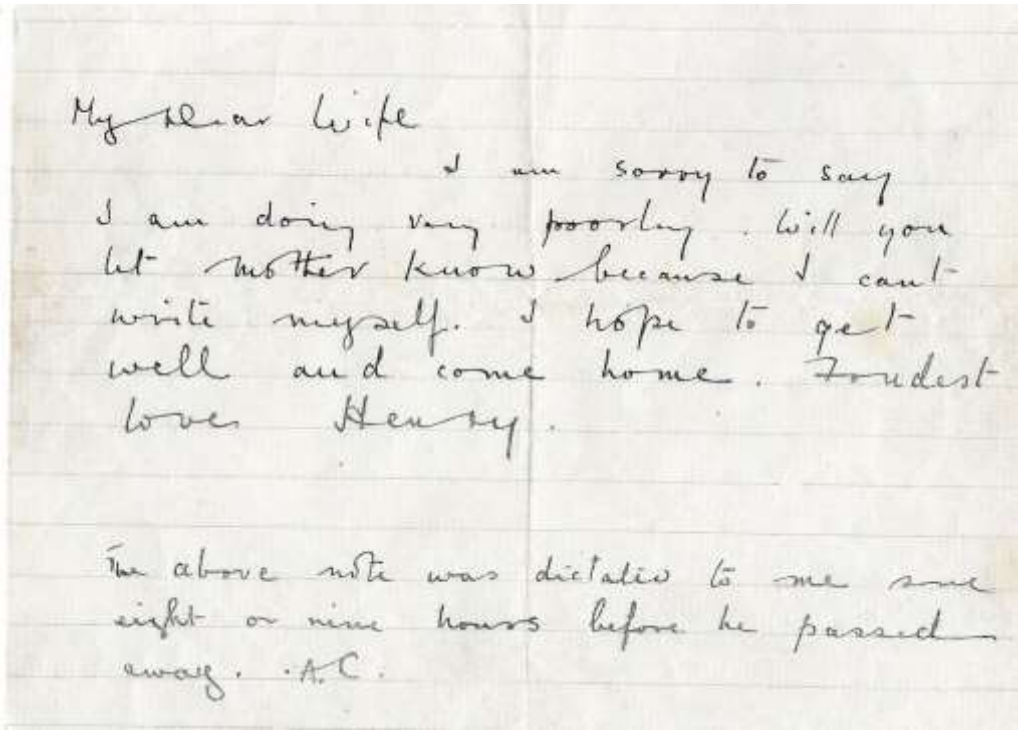
A message of sympathy from the King and Queen were enclosed. His brother George Fox was serving with the Royal Field Artillery.

Etaples is about 27 kilometres from Boulogne. During WW1 the area was the scene of immense concentrations of Commonwealth reinforcement camps and hospitals. It was remote from attack but accessible from both the north and south of the battlefields by railway.

John Henry was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Batley Parish Church, Up Lane Sunday School (as Harry Fox), Batley War Memorial, and Etaples Military Cemetery.

When Batley Borough Council decided to erect a memorial, they asked churches, chapels, working men's clubs and other institutions to send a list of their members who had fallen. Batley Parish Church included the name John Henry Fox but Up Lane Sunday School sent the name of Harry Fox and luckily included his regiment and number. It would appear no-one in authority cross referenced these names and therefore he appears twice on Batley War Memorial.



My dear wife

I am sorry to say I am doing very poorly. Will you let mother know because I can't write myself. I hope to get well and come home. Fondest love Henry.

The above note was dictated to me some eight or nine hours before he passed away. A.C.

20-9.

20
Etaples
France

My Dear Wife

I have been wounded in the right arm & I have to stay in this Hospital a day or so until I am fit to travel but I am coming to England, I am feeling very well, & being well looked after, so you must not worry, it was just my luck to get wounded on Battlefield Saturday, & I am not sorry to get out of it all, hoping this finds you quite well, until I can see you, Myself I am doing grand.
I will write [illegible] I get to the next hospital

Yours Loving Husband
J. H. Fox xxxx

his thoughts were with you and he gave me instructions to see that his bag was sent on to you. (the Authorities will attend to that, and you will receive all his personal belongings in due course) We spent many moments together in prayer, he knew the end was near, and was prepared to go and meet his Saviour.

A true and brave Soldier, he died — as did his Saviour — for his fellowman.

My dear Mrs Fox, may God bless and strengthen you to bear your Cross, and that He may shew through all your sorrow His tender love and Compassion, are my sincere prayers

Believe me
Yours Sincerely
A Clayton
Chaplain

23 General Hospital
A.P.O — S11
B.E.F
Sept 28th/16

Dear Mrs Tot

I wish to extend to you my sincerest sympathy in your bereavement. I know it is a hard blow for your dear; God thought best to call your dear husband away from all pain and suffering, and I am sure it will prove a source of comfort to you that he was taken so soon instead of lingering on, for he suffered considerable pain.
Each time I visited him

