Douglas Holmes





Rank: - Corporal

Number: - 4350986

Regiment: - South Staffordshire Regiment, 1/6th Bn.

Died: - Killed in Action, 17 August 1944 aged 21

Cemetery: - Bayeux War Cemetery, Calvados, France XIX. D. 21.

Batley News, 3 Sep 1944 (photo)

Douglas was born in 1923 the son of Tom and Isabella Holmes nee Smith who had married on 1 November 1919 at Christ the King, Battyeford. George Henry was born in 1920 followed by Douglas, Jeffrey, 1925 and Ervin 1927.

Douglas attended Birstall Church of England School and Dewsbury Technical College and was a member and former choir boy at Birstall Parish Church. Before he enlisted in around February 1942, he worked for Mr. E. Scott, plumber, Birstall. In 1939 the family lived at 41, Bradford Road, Batley and his father worked as a boot repairer.

In late June 1944, the division was assigned to the Second Army and transferred to France to take part in the Battle for Normandy. On 7 July, the division saw action in Operation Charnwood, which resulted in the capture of the German-occupied city of Caen. A week later, the division fought in Operation Pomegranite. The territorial goal of this operation was to capture the town of Noyers, which was not accomplished due to determined German resistance. The fighting played an important role in distracting German forces from the major British offensive, Operation Goodwood, which was launched soon after. By late July, the German frontline was crumbling, and a general offensive was launched. The division advanced and captured a bridgehead over the River Orne, fending off several counter-attacks to maintain its hold; during these actions one member of the division earned the Victoria Cross. The division's final combat was a protracted battle to capture the town of Thury-Harcourt. Historians have praised the effort of the division in these battles, during which it suffered several thousand casualties. By August 1944, the British Army was badly short of manpower. As the division was the most recently established formation serving within the Second Army in France, and not as a result of its performance, it was chosen to be disbanded and its men transferred to other units to bring them up to strength.

Douglas was killed in action on the 17 August 1944, after being in France for six weeks.

Lance-Bomber George was serving with the Royal Artillery and Jeffrey was with the R.A.F.

Douglas was awarded the 1939-45 Star; 1939-1945 War Medal

He is remembered with Honour at Batley and Birstall War Memorials.

On his headstone is written: GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN R.I.P.



Researched by members of Batley History Group