Jack Hopkinson





Rank: - Corporal

Number: - 125678

Regiment: - Royal Engineers, 3 Cheshire Field Sqn.

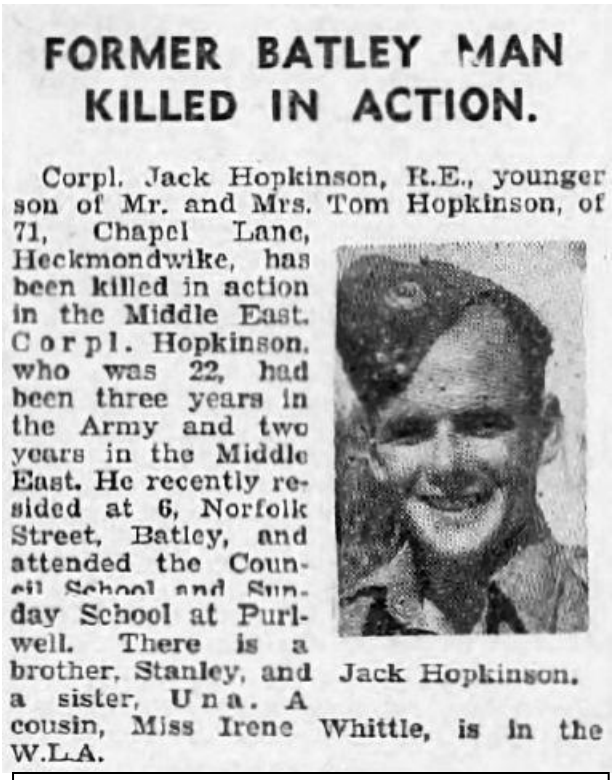
Died: - Killed in Action 15 February 1943 aged 22 years.

Cemetery: - Tripoli War Cemetery, Libya 8.C.12.

Jack was born on the 12 June 1920 the son of Thomas Henry and Sarah Jane Hopkinson nee Sykes who had married in 1911. Stanley was born in 1914 and Una in 1917.

Jack attended Purlwell Council School and Purlwell Sunday School, until shortly before he enlisted, he lived at 6, Norfolk Street, Batley before the family moved to live at 71, Chapel Street, Heckmondwike. His cousin Irene Whittle was in the

Land Army. According to newspaper reports Jack enlisted in 1940 and went to the Middle East in 1941.



FORMER BATLEY MAN KILLED IN ACTION.

Corpl. Jack Hopkinson, R.E., younger son of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Hopkinson, of 71, Chapel Lane, Heckmondwike, has been killed in action in the Middle East. Corpl. Hopkinson, who was 22, had been three years in the Army and two years in the Middle East. He recently resided at 6, Norfolk Street, Batley, and attended the Council School and Sunday School at Purlwell. There is a brother, Stanley, and a sister, Una. A cousin, Miss Irene Whittle, is in the W.L.A.

Jack Hopkinson.

Batley News, 13 Mar 1943

The Western Desert campaign (Desert War) took place in the deserts of Egypt and Libya and was the main theatre in the North African campaign of the Second World War. Military operations began in June 1940 with the Italian declaration of war and the Italian invasion of Egypt from Libya in September. Operation Compass, a five-day British raid in December 1940, led to the destruction of the Italian 10th Army (10ª *Armata*). Benito Mussolini sought help from Adolf Hitler, who sent a small German force to Tripoli under Directive 22 (11 January). The Afrika Korps (Generalleutnant Erwin Rommel) was formally under Italian command, as Italy was the main Axis power in the Mediterranean and North Africa.

On 23 January 1943 the British 8th army marched into Tripoli, later occupying the Libyan capital in this World War Two battle. This was part of a series of battles that initially started with the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. This thrust was eventually supported by the German Africa Corps in the hope that the whole of North Africa would be occupied by the Axis forces, ultimately denying the Allies access to the reserves of labour and raw materials in the North African/ Middle Eastern Region. However, during the British Liberation of Tripoli, Germany was deeply involved on a second war front, with Russia. This meant that a depleted Germany force fought in North Africa, and the manoeuvres by Rommel amounted to slightly more than a series of fighting retreats. Each encounter further diminished the Axis' reserves of men and material, while the Allies received reinforcements every day. This was to lead to the ultimate defeat of the Axis forces in the North Africa. Among the Colonies that fought on the side of the British/Allies, were South Africa, New Zealand, Senegal and Australia.

During the campaign Tripoli was an important Axis base but after the 23 January 1943 it became a hospital centre and the burials in the war cemetery were almost entirely from the hospitals. Tripoli War Cemetery contains 1,369 Commonwealth burials from World War 2.

Jack was killed in action on 15 February 1943.

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN. MUM AND DAD

Jack is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial, Addenda 2021 and Heckmondwike War Memorial. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star and the 1939-1945 War Medal.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group