Herbert Hardy





Rank: - Private

Number: - 11732

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 2nd Battalion

Missing, presumed Killed in Action: - 07/05/1915 Age: 38 years

Memorial: - Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium Panel 47

Dewsbury Reporter, 22 May 1915. Batley News, 14 Aug 1915, 16 Oct 1915, 22 July 1916 (photo), 9 Nov 1918

Family Details

Herbert Hardy was born in 1880 at Commonside, Hanging Heaton, Batley and was christened at Holy Trinity, Batley Carr on 18th August 1880. His parents were William Hardy and Mary Ann Ratcliff who were married in 1871 at Hanging Heaton Parish Church.
His father was a foreman at Messrs. Oates mill for most of his working life. Herbert had two older brothers Alexander (1871) and Harry (1877) and two younger brothers, Gill (1880) and Samuel Easton (1881). The youngest of the family was Elizabeth Oldroyd Hardy (1890).
In 1901 Mary Ann and the four youngest children were living at Pitt Street near Boothroyd Lane, Dewsbury. Mary Ann was a washerwoman. Herbert was a general labourer and the two younger boys worked at a local confectionery establishment.
In 1907 Herbert married Catherine Cunningham (nee McCormack) who was the widow of William Cunningham who had died in 1901 aged 30. In 1911 the family were living in two rooms at 25 Ingham Road, Dewsbury. Herbert was working in the dye-house at Messrs. Midwood Bros., Flock Merchants of Dewsbury.
The family consisted of the Cunningham children, Michael (1893), William (1897), Mary Ann (1899) and Thomas (1902), whilst Herbert and Catherine had three children of their own Herbert (1907) Nora (1909) and James Gilbert (1913).

Service Details

Herbert was called up as a Reservist at the beginning of the war. He had previously served during the Boer War campaign where he had been awarded a medal and he also possessed the coveted cross-guns for marksmanship. He went to France with the 2nd KOYLI in April 1915.
In one of his last letters home he stated, "*You will be surprised at me not writing before but I could not as we have been moving about. The biggest battle of the war is now going on and if we go on as we have been doing, I think the Germans will pack up and move. It is costing both sides a terrible lot of men*."
In his last message he wrote, "*As I write, shells are bursting over me. It is alright but you cannot tell where they are going to burst. However, no-one has been hurt with one yet. There are plenty of spare horses and clothes here – dead horses. The life out here is a bit rough but otherwise it is alright. You cannot expect everything to run smoothly in times like these."*
Herbert was reported missing in May, only one month after arriving in France. Catherine made every effort to find any news and wrote letters to the War Office who concluded that, in considering the time he was now missing, he was killed

in action on the 7th May, 1915. When home on leave a fellow soldier, Private Brehaney, stated that he had been with Herbert when he fell during a bayonet charge but did not know what happened to him after that.
Catherine still did not give up hope and she put his photo in the local paper in October 1915 hoping that someone might recognise him. She said proudly to a Batley News reporter, “He was always one proud of his country but the man who has caused this awful war has something to answer for.” She added that her eldest son Michael Cunningham had given up a good job at Soothill Colliery to also serve King and Country.
Catherine, who now lived at 31 Balk Street, had already lost two boys, James in 1909, William in 1912 and now her husband Herbert.
Michael Cunningham was killed in action in 1918. Thomas died aged 19 in 1921 and Nora died aged 15 in 1925. Catherine never remarried and she died in 1941 aged 67.
Private Herbert Hardy 11732, 2nd Battalion King’s Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, is remembered with Honour at Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial and Batley War Memorial.

Researcher
Susan White, Batley History Group, March 2015

