George Harford





Rank: - Private

Number: - 24783

Regiment: - Alexandra, Princess of Wales Own (Yorkshire Regt) 2nd Battalion

Died of Wounds: - 11th May 1918 aged 20

Cemetery: - Esquelbecq Military, Nord, France. 11. C.28

Family Details:

George was born in 1898 in Batley, the son of Mary Ann Harford. She also had been born in Batley in 1878 the eldest surviving child of James and Ann Harford who was followed by Rachel in 1881 and Mark in 1883.

In 1901 Mary Ann was living as the wife of William Brook aged 35 at 69, Carlinghow Lane, Batley with George Brook aged 3 years (this is George Harford) and her sister Rachel Harford. Her mother had died in 1889.

In 1911 brother, Mark, was married and living at 37, Peel Street, Dewsbury. Rachel had married in 1903 and was also living in Dewsbury with her family. Mary Ann died just before the 1911 census was taken and George was recorded as being adopted by the Kellett family of Thompson's Buildings, White Lee. John Kellett had married the next-door neighbour of the Brook's.

After leaving school George worked at White Lee Colliery as a hurrier. He went to lodge with his Uncle Mark and his wife at 37, Peel Street, Dewsbury and later at 1, Carlton Road, Dewsbury.

Service Details:

George enlisted in Bradford in October 1915 and left for France in May 1917.

The Yorkshire Regiment is better known as the Green Howards. At the outbreak of war, the 2nd Battalion returned from Guernsey to Southampton coming under the orders of 21st Brigade, 7th Division and landed in Zeebrugge on 6th October 1914. On the 20th December 1915 they transferred with the Brigade to 30th Division.

He would have taken part in the Battles of Scarpe followed by the Battle of Pilckem Ridge in 1917.



Battle of Pilckelm Ridge 1917

The army reorganisation in February 1918 after the Battles of the Somme and Lys completely changed the 30th Division, largely gone were the "Pals" Battalions to be partly replaced by the London Regiment. In 1918 he would have seen action at the Battle of St. Quentin (21st - 23rd March), Battle of Rosieres (26th -27th March).

In April the Battle of Lys was fought because the Germans knew that since the Americans had declared war large numbers were arriving on the Western Front and they needed to defeat the Allies before they arrived. The aim of the Germans was to capture Ypres and the surrounding high ground around Messines. The River Lys formed a barrier between the two Allied armies.

The Germans attacked on the 9th April after two days of artillery bombardment. The fighting continued until the 29th April and there were many losses on both sides. The 30th Division had fought in West Flanders at Kemmel Hill, which was 156 metres high, with fighting between 17th-19th and again between 25th -26th when the ridge was taken by the Germans. The 30th Division then went to fight at the Battle of Scherpenberg which was a hill north west of Kemmelburg which the Germans also took. George would have been wounded in one of these battles but no records have been found to identify which one.

On the day of his death the 2nd Battalion was transferred to the 32nd Brigade, 11th (Northern) Division. His effects were left to Mark Harford (platelayer).

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

He is remembered with Honour at St. John's Church Carlinghow, Batley War Memorial, Dewsbury War Memorial and Esquelbecq Military Cemetery.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group