Thomas Clifford Heald





Rank: - Private

Number: - 15389

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 8th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 1st July 1916 aged 31 years

Cemetery: - Blighty Valley Cemetery, Authuille Wood, Somme, France 1V.1.7

Batley Reporter, 21 Jul 1916 (photo)

Family Details

Thomas Clifford was born in Batley in 1884 the son of Thomas and Annie Heald nee Senior who had married on 4th February 1880, at All Saints Church, Batley.

His father Thomas was born in c 1837 in Kilpin Hill, Batley and in 1860 married Mary Sheard at Batley Parish Church. John William was born in 1864, Hannah Jane 1869 and Edgar in 1872

Mary died in 1879 aged 41 years and widowed Thomas married spinster Annie Senior in February 1880.

Thomas Clifford was followed by Henry in 1886 Harold 1887, Nellie 1891 and Eric 1894.Henry died in 1904.

His father died in 1899 and Annie and her family were living at 73, Occupation Lane, Staincliffe in 1901 when the census was taken. Thomas Clifford was working as rag warehouse boy. The family was still at the same address a decade later.

Thomas attended Staincliffe Church School and previous to enlisting he was employed by Mr. J.A. Rowley, rag merchants, Batley.

His mother moved to 241, Healey Lane, Batley before the cwgc asked for details in the 1920's.

Service Details

Clifford enlisted shortly after the outbreak of war. The 8th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry was formed in Pontefract in September 1914 and after training at Frensham, Aldershot, Hythe and Bordon they landed at Boulogne in August 1915 being part of 70th Brigade in 23rd Division.

The Division was holding the Front Line at Bois Grenier for most of the rest of 1915 and were relieved after a lengthy five-month spell by the 34th Division between 26 th January and 8th February 1916.

On 3 March 1916 orders were received to relieve the French 17th Division in the Carency sector. The front to be held was between the Boyau de l'Ersatz and the Souchez River, including the posts on the Notre Dame de Lorette hill behind. Artillery was positioned in the area Carency – Ablain St Nazaire – Bois de Bouvigny, an exposed position in which it was subject to severe shelling. In early March many former miners were withdrawn from the ranks to establish a Tunnelling Company of the Royal Engineers. Mid-March saw 68th Brigade taking over the Calonne front and 69th the

Angres front. Many parties attached to 176 Tunnelling Company RE especially for work in the Noulette sector. Relieved by 2nd Division between 12 and 19 April and withdrew to Bruay area. Moved back into the Souchez-Angres front 10-13 May.

The German Attack on Vimy Ridge.

The enemy attack on 21 May fell most heavily on 47th (London) Division, which was to the 23rd Division's right in the area of Berthonval. Shellfire fell heavily around Aix Noulette from 4.30pm. Divisional artillery was very active in support of the 47th Division until 24 May and again on 1 June when 2nd Division continued operations to recover lost ground. 23rd Division was relieved by 47th (London) Division on 11 June and moved to Bomy, with the artillery going to Chamblain Chatelain ("Charlie Chaplin") and Therouanne. Intensive training commenced.

The Division took part on the Somme at the Battle of Albert in which the Division played a part in the capture of Contalmaison which commenced on Saturday 1st July 1916.

Sergeant C. Hirst a Dewsbury man wrote: -

"Clifford was wounded in the leg shortly after we went over but managed to crawl into a shell hole in No Man's Land between our first line and the Germans first line. Another wounded man was afterwards seen by Clifford to be struggling into the same hole and Clifford got up and stretched both his arms out towards this other man to drag him into the hole when he was struck by a bullet which entered his body under his right arm and came out the other side under his left arm."

Thomas Clifford was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Christ Church, Staincliffe, Staincliffe C. of E. Junior School, Upper Chapel, Heckmondwike and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group