Sam Heaps





Rank: - Private

Number: - 12/1018

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 12th Battalion (t'owd twelfth)

Missing, presumed Killed in Action: - 01/07/1916 Age: 29 years

Memorial: - Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France Pier and Face 11 C and 12 **A.**

Batley Reporter, 4 Aug 1916. Batley News, 26 May 1917, 2 Jun 1917 (photo)

Family Details

Sam was born in Batley on the 15th July 1887 the son of Thomas and Mary Ann Heaps nee Shaw. The couple had married at St. Paul's, Hanging Heaton on 29th May 1882. Sam was baptised at St. John the Baptist Church, Daw Green on 14th May 1890 on the same day as his sisters Elizabeth Alice born August 7th 1885 and Sarah born January 30th 1890. Thomas was a miner.

Harry was born in 1883 but sadly died in 1887.

In 1891 the family was living at 20, High Street, Cravens Row, Batley Carr and with them were two boarders.

Edwin was born in 1892 followed by Thomas (Tom) 1894, Elsie 1897and Arthur (born in Accrington, Lancs.), Ivy 1901, Ernest 1903, Mary Ann (Polly) 1905 (born Ossett) but sadly died when only a few weeks old and Willie in 1908.

In 1901 the family was living in Soothill Lane but a decade later was living in a three bed-roomed home at 17, Spurr Street, Soothill, Batley.

On the 21st December 1912 Sam married Emma Rhodes at Batley Parish Church.

Willie was born in April 1913 but died when he was only 8 hours old. Herbert died in September 1914 when he was only 4 months old. Pollie was born in 1916. Sam and his family went to live at 12, Whitaker Square, Batley, his parents moved to live at 16, Primrose Hill, Batley.

Sam had followed his father to become a miner and before the war had worked at Shaw Cross Colliery (Crawshaw and Warburton's).

Service Details

Sam began service in September 1914.

The battalion's history dates from 5th September 1914 when the War Office authorised the West Yorkshire Coal owners Association to raise a Miners Battalion for the King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry). After beginning its life at Leeds, the battalion trained first at Farnley Park, Otley and then at Burton Leonard, near Ripon. By this time, it had been allocated to 31st Division as its pioneer battalion. After completing its training in Yorkshire, the battalion moved to Fovant, Salisbury in October 1915 before embarking for Egypt on 6th

December. After little more than two months in Egypt, the 12th K.O.Y.L.I. was ordered to France to take part in the planned summer offensive on the Somme.

Sam served in France from 8th March 1916. They took part in the Battle of Albert on the 1st July 1916 including the attack on Serre.

On the extreme left of the main British attack, the plan for the opening day of the Somme offensive required 94th and 93rd Brigades of 31st Division to capture the hill-top fortress village of Serre. Prior to the attack, five saps (A, B, C, D and E) were dug at intervals along the divisional front, each running from the front line to within 30 or 40 yards of the German lines; one hour before the assault, all the saps were to be opened up. As soon as the infantry were through their first objectives, "B" and "C" Companies of the 12th K.O.Y.L.I. were to start constructing communication trenches leading from the sap heads to the captured German lines. "A" and "C" Companies had been allocated to 94th and 93rd Brigades respectively, their task being to establish strong points at selected positions in the captured German trenches.

The pioneers went into the attack equipped similarly to the assault infantry, the chief difference being that the pioneers also carried a pick or a shovel but only 170 - rather than 220 - rounds of ammunition.

The failure of 31st Division's attack at Serre in the face of overwhelming enemy artillery and machine gun fire is well-known. On the 94th Brigade front, two platoons from "A" Company of the 12th K.O.Y.L.I. followed the 12th York &Lancaster's (Sheffield City Battalion and 11th East Lancashire's (Accrington Pals) into the attack; as many as four out of every five men from these two platoons were wounded or killed. Lt. James Stanley Lightfoot Welch lost his life while leading his platoon forward across No Man's Land.

On the front of 93rd Brigade, at least one platoon of "D" Company of the 12th K.O.Y.L.I. suffered heavy casualties on following the 15th West Yorkshires (Leeds Pals) into the attack. Sgt.-Maj. George Cussins, moving forward some minutes later with "B" Coy. of the 16th West Yorkshires (1st Bradford Pals) reported afterwards: "I found in the front line, a good many of the 15th W. York's, what was left of the D.L.I. Co. attached to us, also a few of the K.O.Y.L.I."

In the hours that followed, "B" and "C" Companies of the 12th K.O.Y.L.I., together with the remaining platoons of "A" and "D" Companies "had to rebuild trenches that were crumbling under heavy gunfire, forward supplies of

ammunition, dig new trenches, and help in the later hours to save some of the wounded."

The pioneers reassembled at their assembly posts at 4.30 in the afternoon. 197 officers and men were reported as killed, wounded or missing, though the return of eight missing men on 4th July brought the number of casualties down to 189.

Sam was one of those reported missing but it was another year before the War Office officially told his wife that there had been no further news of him since July 1st 1916 and they had come to the conclusion that he was dead.

At the time that it was reported he was missing, in August 1816, his brother Edwin,who was in the same battalion and together until the start of the recent fighting had been severely wounded in the right leg and was in hospital in Bath. He was also married in lived in Upper Commercial Street, Batley and they had worked together at Crawshaw and Warburton's. His brother Tom was in training with the K.O.Y.L.I. in Suffolk at this time.

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

He is remembered with Honour at St. Paul's Church Hanging Heaton, Hanging Heaton War Memorial, Crawshaw and Warburton's Ltd. and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group