George William Horne



Rank: - Private

Number: - 36195

Regiment: - York and Lancaster Regiment 13th Battalion

Died of Wounds: - 31st March 1918 aged 26 years

Cemetery: - Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas-de- Calais, France XXX111.B.22

Batley Reporter, 5 Apr 1918

Family Details

George William was born in Batley on 28th January 1891 the son of Senior and Maggie Horne (nee Thomson). He was baptised at Batley Parish Church on 15th March 1891.

In 1891 the family including his elder brother Douglas Ernest (1889) was living at 3, Yard 10 Dark Lane, Batley. Nellie was born in 1893 followed by Fred Senior in 1900. The family had moved to live at 25, Victoria Street, Batley before 1901. They moved again to 31, North King Street before the death of Maggie in May 1909.

The family was still living in these 2 roomed homes when the 1911 census was taken and we learn Senior was a woollen waste puller whilst George William was a piecener at a woollen mill and Nellie was a weaver.

On the 26th December 1912 his father, Senior, married Blanche Winstanley (nee Howroyd), who was 16 years his junior, at St. Thomas's Church, Batley and George William married Ruth Wood daughter of Riley Wood of Hightown in 1913.

George William was well known at Broomhill Methodist Church where he was connected with the Sunday school for many years. At the time he enlisted he was working at Liversedge but had previously worked as a spinner at Messrs. G. & J. Stubley, Batley.

Service Details

George William enrolled in Heckmondwike in September 1916 and went to France in December 1916. The 13th Battalion from May 1915 came under the orders of 94th Brigade in 31st Division and were often known under their original name of *Barnsley Pals.*

In 1917 they took part in Operations on the Ancre and the Third Battle of the Scarpe and the Capture of Oppy Wood, the last two being part of the Arras Offensive 1917.

The German army adopted an approach that had succeeded on the Eastern Front, particularly at the Battle of Riga. Their infantry attack would be preceded by an intense barrage concentrated not on the British infantry holding the forward posts, but on the artillery and machine-gun positions, headquarters, telephone exchanges, railways and other important centres of communications. In other words it was a very deep barrage designed to knock out the British ability to respond – but lasting only a few hours before the infantry went in. When the German infantry attacked, they would operate

in small groups, specially trained to “infiltrate” – exploiting gaps and moving forward, not worrying about areas that were held up: they would be dealt with by follow-up units. For the British, unused to a discontinuous line and the idea of a deep zone of defended hotspots, such a tactic would spell chaos, uncertainty and disaster. It very nearly worked.

British intelligence had come to the conclusion that a German attack was to be expected, as early as November 1917. It was known to all by March 1918 and only the precise date, time and place was to be determined. Forecasts made by the “E” (Enemy) Group of the British military staff at the Supreme War Council proved to be reasonably accurate but were largely dismissed by GHQ as a result of politics between the two.

At the same time as German strength was growing, the British Army was depleted, having to face up to a manpower crisis and resultant reorganisation, and at a low point of morale after enduring the conditions of Passchendaele and the disappointment after early success at Cambrai. They were also coming to terms with the need to fight a defensive battle for the first time since 1915 and the adoption of a deep defensive zone rather than a continuous trench line system.

On 11th March 1918 the battalion arrived at Vieux-Berquin and moved into the line North of Le Verrier. The Battle of St. Quentin took place between 21st and 23rd March followed by the Battle of Bapaume 24-25th March and the First Battle of Arras, 28th March 1918. John William was severely wounded in the chest on the 28th in the First Battle of Arras and died three days later of his wounds. His brother Driver Douglas Horne was serving with the Motor Transport, A.S.C. George William was awarded British War Medal and the Victory Medal. He is remembered with Honour at Broomhill United Methodist Church, Batley War Memorial and Etaples Military Cemetery.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group