L/Cpl Albert H HOULBROOK (1886 - 1915)

(King's Own Scottish Borderers)



Family Details

Albert Henry Houlbrook was born in Monk Bretton, Yorkshire in 1886 and christened there at St. Paul's Church on the 5th of December 1886. His parents were Walter Houlbrook and Emma Welsh who married in 1885. Walter was born in Huddersfield and Emma was born in Liskeard, Cornwall. Albert Henry was their eldest and the other 6 children were Edith Mary (1889), John Walter (1890), William (1891), Alice (1894), Walter (1898) and Alethea (1906). John Walter died in 1891 and Alethea died in 1911 aged 5 years. In 1891 the family were living at Worsborough Common, Yorkshire and Walter was a Coal Miner.

The 1901 census shows the family now living at Temple Newsam, Nr Leeds and Walter is still a Coal Miner. By 1911 the couple and their children had moved to 12 Beck Lane, Carlinghow, Batley living in 2 rooms. Walter was now a Clogger, making clogs and fitting new clog irons. Edith Mary had married Joe Pollard in January 1911, William was a Private in the Army, based in Aldershot and later married Elizabeth Ellen Davies in 1914 in Beverley. Albert Henry was now in the Military stationed in India.

Service Details

Albert Henry Houlbrook was already in the 1st Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borderers in Lucknow, India when war broke out in August 1914. As soon as a territorial unit arrived to take over the garrison, they departed for England, arriving on the 28th of December 1914 to join 87th Brigade, 29th Division at Rugby. They were training for France when orders arrived to prepare to depart for Gallipoli. They embarked from Avonmouth on the 18th of March, 1915 sailing via Malta to Alexandria then on to Mudros in April. They landed at Cape Helles, Gallipoli on the 25 April 1915 and were involved in heavy fighting. Lack of sufficient intelligence and knowledge of the terrain, along with fierce Turkish resistance hampered the success of the invasion. On the 28th of June an attack was planned along Gully Spur, Gully Ravine and neighbouring Fir Tree Spur. The terrain around Gully Ravine was closer to the wild and rough terrain at Anzac Cove than to the ground elsewhere at Helles.

The battle began at 10.45 on the 28th June, 1915 with a preliminary raid to capture Gully Spur. The general advance commenced shortly afterwards. In the ravine the 1st Battalion, The King's Own Scottish Borderers did not advance as far as those troops on the Spur since the Ottomans there were somewhat sheltered from the deadly bombardment from the sea. Their final position was fortified with rocks and boulders and became known as the " Border Barricade". However, despite the opposition they were ordered to press the attack but no progress was realised. The British Force suffered 1400 casualties on the 28th of June, 1915 of which 800 had been killed. Alfred Henry Houlbrook was Killed in Action that day.

Emma Houlbrook had lost her husband, Walter in the Spring of 1915. Her second son William had joined the 3rd East Yorkshire Regiment and had been wounded.

He recovered and had recently returned to his duties and now The Hamilton Record Office in Scotland had informed her that she had lost her eldest son, Alfred Henry. Her youngest son, Walter had joined the Navy.

Further tragedy came to the family when William was Killed in Action on the 27th of October, 1917. His name is not on the Batley War Memorial as his wife Elizabeth was living in Aberystwyth, Wales at the time of his death. Walter did however return safely.

Lance Corporal Albert Henry Houlbrook 10631, 1st Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borderers is Remembered with Honour at the Helles Memorial, Gallipoli, Turkey and Batley War Memorial.

Researcher

Susan White, Batley History Group, April 2015.

