John William Howard





Rank: - Sapper

Number: -79757

Regiment: - Royal Engineers (formerly 1494 KOYLI 1/4th Bn.) 173rd Tunnelling Coy.

Died of Wounds: -18th October 1915 at Wimeraux General Hospital

Rawal Pindi British Seu Hospital

Cemetery: - Wimereaux Communal Cemetery, Pas-de- Calais, France I.K.15

Batley News, 30 Oct 1915 (photo)

Family Details

John William was born in 1887 in Batley/ Ossett to Martha Ann Howard who came from Oldham/ Bolton.

In 1891 they were living at No7, Yard 2, Dark Lane, Batley as boarders with Mary Ann Buckley. James Alfred was born in April 1897 but sadly died in late July 1897 aged 3 months. They had moved to 11, Spa Field, Batley before the 1901 census with just John William and Martha Ann living together.

In 1911 they were living in a one roomed home at 11, Spa Field, Batley. Martha says she had been married for 25 years and five of her six children have died in infancy. John William worked as a miner at Shaw Cross Colliery and Soothill Wood Colliery. He was associated with St. Mary's, Batley and Westtown Roman Catholic Churches.

Before 1915 they had moved to live at King Street, Batley Carr.

Service Details

He had been in the Territorial's for six and a half years when war broke out and went to France with the 1/4th K.O.Y.L.I. and was later transferred to the Royal Engineers.

He trained with the K.O.Y.L.I. and went to France in April 1915. He would have been transferred to the Tunnelling Company because he was used to mining and would have been used to hard, manual work.

At some point in 1915 he went into hospital because he was ill but returned to duty where he was injured with gunshot wounds in the head in September 1915. Five weeks before his death he was admitted to Wimereaux General Hospital and a telegram was sent to his mother the same day. Later a letter was sent from the superintendent of the hospital saying he was semi- conscious and a second letter said:-

"Your son has asked me to write to you. He was much pleased to get your letter. He is slightly improved and we hope that before long he will be able to come home on one of the hospital ships, if he goes on well. "

A third letter, however, indicated that he was worse and passed away after being nursed for just over a month.

John William was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal

He is remembered with Honour at Holy Trinity Church and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group