Joseph Edgar Illingworth



Rank: - Private

Number: - 205111

Regiment: - West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own) 1/5th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 25th April 1918 at Wytschaete, Belgium aged 24 years

Memorial: - Tyne Cot Memorial Panels 42 to 47 and 162

Family Details

Joseph Edgar was born in c.1894 the son of Thomas and Emily Illingworth formerly Booth nee Smith. The couple married at St. John's Carlinghow on Christmas Day 1890 when they both gave their address as White Lea. Emily had previously married Allan Booth in 1879 and they had two sons Harry 1881 and Arnold 1884 who were both born in Heckmondwike or as the 1901 census states Batley.

In 1891 the couple with her two sons were living at 51, White Lea Jail, Batley and Thomas was employed as a joiner. Elsie was born in Cleckheaton in 1892 followed by Joe in 1894.

In 1901 the family was living at 41, Jail Road, Batley with Thomas working as a joiner on his own account "at home" with his two stepsons working with him.

Harry married in 1902, Arnold in 1908 and Thomas died in January 1907 aged 60 years.

In 1911 Emily was living at 40, Healey Street, Batley with her two younger children, Elsie was employed as a rag sorter and Joe as an assistant in a rag warehouse.

Before Joe was killed Emily and Elsie had moved to live at 11, Sykes Street, Healey, Batley.

Service Details

It is not known when Joe enlisted but he did not serve abroad before 1917 because he did not receive the 1915 Star. The 1/5th Regiment came under the orders of the 146th Brigade in 49th (West Riding) Division.

In 1916 they fought at the Battles of the Somme namely: -

The Battle of Albert
The Battle of Bazentin Ridge
The Battle of Pozieres Ridge
The Battle of Flers-Courcelette

In 1917 they saw action at: -

Operations on the Flanders Coast (Hush)
The Battle of Poelcapelle near Ypres (9-12 October)

In 1918 they were in Flanders and saw action at: -

The Battle of Estaires (9-11 April)
The Battle of Messines (10-11 April)
The Battle of Bailleul in which the Division defended Neuve Eglise (13-15 April)
The First Battle of Kemmel Ridge (17-19 April)

The Second Battle of Kemmel Ridge (25-26 April)

The 24th April 1918 seemed a fairly quiet day but just after dusk there appeared to be quite a lot of activity in the enemy lines.

At 2.45 am the enemy put down a gas barrage and some H.E. on the battalion and also on the back areas. There was also a large amount of smoke shells. This lasted for about an hour. At 5 am the enemy put down a very heavy barrage on the battalion making movement almost impossible. Telephone wires were soon cut making communications impossible with other companies and a S.O.S. signal was sent out.

At 6.40 am a message was received from the 1/6th West Yorkshire's that one of their companies were fighting a rearguard action near Zero Wood and two reserve platoons from "D" company were sent to form a defensive flank to the north of Grande Bois.

The enemy appeared to have come round the right flank of the battalion front and were working their way along the valley of Wytschaete in a northerly direction in rear of the Battalion H.Q. It was decided to withdraw. The 1/6th West Yorkshire's and the 1st East Yorkshire Regiment took up defensive positions in a crater and the 1/5th in Chinese Trench. These positions were held until about 10 am when a message was received that 1/6th West Yorkshire's were evacuating their positions which they did with the 1st East Yorkshire's followed by the 1/5th and was complete by 11.50 am.

Renewed attacks started again in the afternoon but the enemy did not come forward down the Wytschaete Valley until 9.30 pm or about 4 hours after the attack had commenced.

Casualties suffered by the battalion were 18 officers and 548 other ranks killed, wounded or missing.

Joe was one of the missing.

He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Healey Congregational Church and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group