Ernest Jessop





Rank: **-** Private

Number: - 240797

Regiment: - Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) 2/5th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 20th November 1917 Near Bourlon Wood by rifle shot aged 20

Memorial: - Cambrai, Louverval. Nord, France

Family History

Ernest was born in Marsden around 1897, the son of Irish born Richard and Emma Jessop (nee Harrison). The couple had married in May 1891 and Elsie was born in 1894. Emma died in 1899 and in 1901 the children were living with their paternal grandparents in Rainhill, Liverpool.

In October 1908 his father married Elizabeth Birkhead at St.Paul's Church, Hanging Heaton and George Arthur was born the following year.

Ernest attended Mill Lane School. He became popular as an all-round athlete and was one of the best-known junior footballers in the Elementary Schools Association League. He not only captained Mill Lane eleven with distinction but he also played as centre forwards in several inter town matches arranged in connection with the elementary schools. Later he played with Taylor Street (Batley) junior team, with Leeds Road Baptists and with Hanging Heaton St. Paul's football teams. He also played cricket with Hanging Heaton Ebenezer Cricket Club. He was a Sunday school teacher at St. Paul's and was also in the Musical and Dramatic Society. When the Vicar asked for alms plates Ernest was one of the first to respond and an oak alms plate bearing his name would be a fitting memorial to him

After leaving school he worked as a presser at Messrs George Jessop's before moving to J.T & J. Taylor's Blakeridge Mills, Batley. He resided at 12, High Street, Hanging Heaton

Service History

Ernest enlisted at Dewsbury in November 1914 when he was only seventeen and disembarked in January 1917.

The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) 2/5th Battalion was part of 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division. The second line Divisions remained at home for quite some time because of lack of equipment and lack of training. This Battalion eventually crossed from Southampton to Le Havre on 5th January 1917 and by the 18th January concentration was completed between the rivers Canche and Authie.

The Division then took part in 1917 in the following ---Operations on the Ancre (15February – 13 March)

German retreat to the Hindenburg Line (14-19 March)

First attack on Bullecourt (11 April)

German attack on Lagnicourt (15 April)

Battle of Bullecourt (near Arras 3-17 May)

Actions on the Hindenburg Line (20-28 May)

Cambrai Operations (Tank attack 20-21 November and the capture of Bourlon Wood 27-28 November)

In early November the Battalion had been at Gouy practising and preparing for an attack. At 7.30 pm on the 16th they marched to Lechelle and on the 19th to Bertincourt and the next day moving to take up their positions at Place Mort Homme, Havrincourt Wood. They moved forward on the 20th finding the strong point of the enemy were the snipers. These were attacked and one officer, 58 other ranks and two machine guns were captured. Later in the day many more Germans soldiers and machine guns were captured and at the end of the day there was a total of 353 prisoners,15 machine guns and 1 trench mortar. There were three officers killed, one wounded, 10 other ranks killed, 55 other ranks wounded and four other ranks missing. Ernest was one of those killed by rifle fire.

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

He is remembered with Honour on Ebenezer Methodist Chapel, Hanging Heaton, St. Paul's Church, Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of Batley History Group