William Kellett





Rank: - Private

Number: - 4990

Regiment/Battalion: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 1st /4th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 7th July 1916 aged 20

Remembered with Honour: - Thiepval, Somme, France Pier and Face 11C and 12A

Family Details:

William was born in White Lee, Carlinghow, Batley on 28th February 1896 the son of Joseph Kellett and his wife Jane Growdon (nee Drabble). They had married at Batley Parish Church on 24th September 1892. Both had "made their mark". Joseph was a miner from Thornhill whilst Jane who came from Attercliffe, Sheffield, gave her occupation as a servant.

Florence was born the following year followed by William, Jane (1898) and John Robert (1900). In 1901 the family was living at 20, Thomson's Buildings, White Lee next door to Joseph's parents. Joseph was a miner underground.

William was baptised at St. Peter's, Birstall on 19th April 1899 on the same day as his sister, Jane born June 1898.

Lilly was born in 1904 followed by George (1906) and May in 1909. Sadly, John Robert had died in 1908 and by 1911 the family had moved to 87, Carlinghow Lane, Batley. Joseph was still a miner; William was a linker on in a coal pit and Florence was a Woollen Rover. Joseph by this time could complete the census form and sign his name.

William attended Healey School and on leaving there went to work at Carlinghow Colliery until the outbreak of war at that time being a bye worker. He attended St. John's Church at Carlinghow and was connected to the Church Lads' Brigade as well as being a member of the Church Institute.

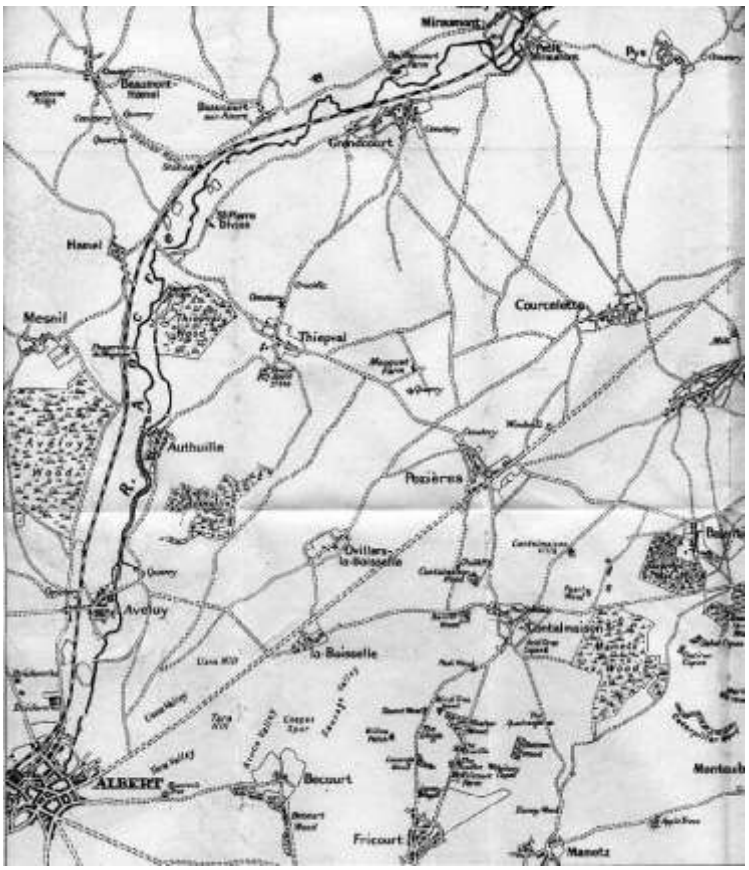
From boyhood he had been a friend of Clement Pogson who also lived in White Lee and he was with William at the Front and was also posted missing at the same time.

Service Details:

William enrolled at Dewsbury in December 1915. The 1/4th K.O.Y.L.I. came under 148th Brigade, 49th (West Riding) Division.

On 1st July, on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, the 1/4th K.O.Y.L.I. arrived at the assembly trenches at Aveluy Wood at 3 a.m. They waited packed together in the assembly trenches and eventually they heard the noise of battle and saw a steady stream of wounded returning, plus some German prisoners. The objectives were Grandcourt and Bapaume and the 1st /4th K.O.Y.L.I. 's was in

reserve. At 6 p.m. the orders were received for the 1/4th and 1/5th KOYLI immediately left Aveluy Wood with the intention of crossing the Ancre by Black Horse Bridge south of Authuille. The 1/4th actually reached North Bluff before they were told their orders had been cancelled. After discussions it was decided that the 1/4th and 1/5th KOYLI would attack at midnight, the orders to take the line east of Thiepval Wood reached them around 11.30 p.m. but once again when the 1/4th reached Thiepval Wood their orders were cancelled because "the 36th Division had evacuated the enemy trenches" so they once again returned to Aveluy Wood.



Shortly after dawn on the 3rd July the 1/4th KOYLI position was bombarded with lachrymatory, and shrapnel shells. They spent most of the day creating strong points, carrying out repairs and attempting to bring order to the chaos created over the previous two days. The next day at about 1.30 p.m. whilst a heavy thunderstorm raged, the Germans made the first of a series of bombing attacks against the forward positions off the 1/5th KOYLI and when the runners reached the 1/4th Capt J.I. Muirhead took two platoons of the York and Lancs and "W" company 1/4th K.O.Y.L.I. forward to counter attack. Major Harry Moorhouse was put in charge of the sector when the 1/4th relieved the 1/5th in the "A" lines during 6th July. At 7.15 pm two party of bombers went up the trenches leading to the German positions to extend the line. They were able to place blocks about 70 yards in advance of the battalion's line, with very few casualties.

At 2 a.m. on 7th July the Germans turned their guns on the 1/4th in the "A" line and 50 minutes later shells began landing in the communications and support

lines as they attempted to choke off the possibility of KOYLI reinforcements reaching the front line. At 2.50 am enemy bombers advanced down the trenches and furious fighting took place until 6.30 am with lots of casualties from bombers and snipers who shot the KOYLI's as they fired and threw bombs out of the trenches. Major H. Moorhouse was wounded and Captain Frazer who had taken over from him ran out of bombs and was forced to retire down the communication trench to the original British front line.

There was 20 killed and 180 wounded.

His parents did not receive official news that he was missing between 1st/8th July until mid-August when it was suggested he had been killed in action on the 7th July.

William was awarded the British War medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour on Batley War Memorial and St.John's Church Carlinghow.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group