Fred Labourn



Rank: - Private

Number: - 5/3790

Regiment: - Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) 1/5th

Died of Wounds: - 17th June 1915 aged 17 years

Cemetery: - Merville Communal Cemetery, Nord, France 111.K.7

Family Details

Fred was born on 10th July 1898 in Chidswell the son of George and Mary Ellen Labourn nee Bollon. He was baptised at St. Paul's Hanging Heaton on the 28th August 1898.His parents had married at Hanging Heaton on the 29th November 1890 when both made their mark.

In 1901 he was living in Soothill Lane, near Gregory Street with his parents and siblings George c. 1884, and Albert 1895. In 1911 the family was living at 81, Co-op Buildings, Soothill Lane, Batley. His father was a coal miner hewer. His service records only give Albert as his sibling.

Service Details

Fred enlisted at Mirfield on the 21st January 1915 into the 2/5th West Riding Regiment. His height was given as being 5ft. 4 ½ inches, with good vision and good physical development. It was reported that he was a well-made lad. His occupation was given as a cloth finisher. His records look as if he gave his age as 19 years. He was transferred to the 1/5th West Riding Regiment and the regiment landed in Boulogne, France on the 14th April 1915. They were part of 2nd West Riding Brigade in West Riding Division. On the 15th May 1915 the formation became 147th Brigade in 49th (West Riding) Division.

On 31 March the Division was warned that it would go on overseas service and entrainment began on 12 April. Divisional infantry went via Folkestone-Boulogne while all other units went from Southampton to Le Havre. By 19 April the Division had concentrated in the area of Estaires – Merville – Neuf Berquin.

The Division took part in the Battle of Aubers Ridge (9 May).

Fred wrote his last letter home on the 15th June 1915.

Lieut. Frank A. Sykes wrote to his mother: -

"Dear Mrs. Labourn, -- I am sorry that I have to tell you that your boy was wounded early yesterday morning. We sent him straight off to hospital and from what I hear he is doing well. I always admired your boy; he is one of the pluckiest lads I have in my platoon and I hope to have him back soon. I will try to let you know how he is going on. "

In a later letter he said: -

"I am sorry to have to inform you that your son passed away yesterday. He died for his King and Country which is a thing which will always be remembered of him. He had a very peaceful end and passed away in his sleep. I feel that I cannot sympathise with you enough because your lad was a "real man" and I am proud to have had him in my platoon. "

Major Norton wrote: -

"I have just received your letter of the 14th instant and at the same time I heard from headquarters that your son had died from wounds received which you have already been notified. I am afraid this will be a hard blow for you to hear, but I trust you will find some consolation in remembering that, although so young, he bore himself like a man and died for his King and Country, in action."

Mr. T.W. Collett, J.P. states in a letter of sympathy: -

"May you draw some consolation from knowing your lad was a hero and died the noblest death which any man can have- that of dying in the defence of his country and his people."

His effects which consisted of letters, photo, knife, wallet and numerals were returned to his parents in November 1915.

Fred was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Soothill Congregational Church, Batley War Memorial and Hanging Heaton Memorial (St. Paul's).



Researched by members of
Batley History Group