Reginald Earl Laxton





Rank: - 2nd Lt.

Number: - Formerly Private 15/577

Regiment: - West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own) 16th Battalion attached to 93rd 1st Trench Mortar Battery**.**

Killed in Action: - 10th June 1916 aged 21

Cemetery: - Bertrancourt Military Cemetery, Somme, France Plot 1 Row Grave 11

"DEARLY LOVED SON OF G. AND E. LAXTON, BATLEY BLESSED ARE THE PURE"

Family Details

Reginald Earl was born in Dewsbury on 17th May 1895 the son of George Wright Laxton and Edith Laxton (nee Thornton). He was baptised at Holy Trinity, Batley Carr on 18th January 1896 when his father's occupation was described as a manufacturer living at Dewsbury.

His parents had married on the 20th September 1889 and in 1891 were living at Howley View, Batley with a general servant, Hannah White.

George Douglas Thornton was born in Batley in 1891 followed by Thomas Ivan (1892), Charles Frazer (1893), Reginald (Rex), and Mary Edith (1898 k/a Queenie). In 1901 the family was living at 64, Alexandra Crescent, Dewsbury.

When the 1911 census was taken Charles and Reginald were at Bridlington Grammar School where Mr. Arthur Thornton was the headmaster. Their parents and siblings were living at Fairview Terrace, Dewsbury in a 12 roomed home and 18-year-old Thomas was still a student whilst George had, like his father, become a manufacturer.

Prior to enlisting, Reginald was with Mr. W.C. Gaunt wool merchant and topmaker of Bradford. It was his intention to learn the business and busying himself with studies did not have much time to participate in social functions. He was exceedingly popular with everybody with whom he came into contact. Of a cheerful disposition he always first thought of doing well to others and his death on active service cut short a very promising career.

His parents at the time of his death were living at Dryfield House, Healey, Batley where in 1911 Louis Joseph Fox who also died during the war lived.

His father was reported to be one of the most revered gentlemen in the Heavy Woollen District. As a Churchman and a Conservative, he was held in the very highest esteem and his good works were manifold.Sir William Laxton, an ancestor, was the Mayor of London in 1544. He was a grandson of Mr Thomas Thornton of Armley, Leeds and a great nephew of General Fraser.

Service Details

Reginald and his brother Charles both enlisted at the beginning of the war and both obtained commissions. The 16th Battalion was the 1st Bradford and was formed in Bradford by the Lord Mayor in September 1914. In June 1915 they came under the orders of 93rd Brigade, 31st Division. In December 1915 they went to Egypt where the Division took over the No.3 Sector of the Suez Canal defences and Divisional H Q moved to Kantara on 23rd January. The stay in Egypt was short and between 1- 6th March 1916 the Division sailed to Marseilles for service on the Western Front. Reginald joined them in France because his records state he only served in France.

Reginald came home for a week's leave which terminated on 15th May two days before his 21st birthday. He enjoyed an early birthday when the flag was flown at his father's, Spafield Mill at Batley Carr. At the time it was reported that Reginald was in the best of health and spirits and so proud of the men under him and expressed the view that they were the best in the Army. After gaining his commission at the Front he was transferred to a trench mortar battery.

His brother Charles, who was in the same regiment, was made an Intelligence Officer and when they left a company where they were beloved by all under them the Commanding Officer wrote to Mr.Laxton to express pleasure with both of the young men, they had done their work remarkably well and he was very sorry to lose them.

His brother Thomas was with the Royal Engineers.

His parents received the news that he had been killed in action on Saturday 10th June from the War Office the following Wednesday. Sympathy from all sections of the community was extended to his parents.

An impressive memorial service was held at Staincliffe Church on Sunday afternoon June 18th in memory of Rex. The Vicar (Rev. A.N.Haynes) conducted the service in the presence of a large congregation, and all classes were represented. The proceedings which were very solemn and affecting were opened with the singing of the hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers". This was followed by part of the burial service and then the Vicar gave a short address.

The organist (Mr. Sykes) played the “Dead March” in Saul and afterwards the following favourite hymns of the deceased officer were sung: - “Fight the good fight” and “Our bless’d Redeemer: ere he breathed “. The “Last Post” was sounded and the service concluded with “God Save the King”.

Amongst those at church were: - Mr. Douglas Laxton, Miss Queenie Laxton, Miss Bramley (Micklefield), Mr.& Mrs. Knowles Hirst, Mr.& Mrs. Fitton (Headingley), Major T.H. Newsome, Dr. Cameron, Mrs. J. E. Greaves, Mrs. Percy Parker, Mr.& Mrs. J.H. Helliwell, Mr.& Mrs. Mark Day, Mr. & Mrs. H. Day and County Councillor Wilfred Auty.

A number of men from Mr. Laxton’s Spafield Mill waited outside the church for the family party and followed them into church where they sat first behind the family ---- an expression of sympathy and kindly thought which was much appreciated.

Reginald is remembered with Honour at Bertrancourt Military Cemetery, Zion Chapel, Batley, Christ Church, Staincliffe and Batley War Memorial.

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



This plaque was unveiled by Colonel Muller who raised the Battalion in which Reginald fought on Sunday 1919 . It was executed by Mr. Williamson, sculptor to the late Queen Victoria, who has worked into it the coat of arms of the Laxton family.



Plaque at Christ Church, Staincliffe.

Researched by members of
Batley History Group