Joshua Lee



Rank: - Private

Number: - 22534

Regiment: - York and Lancaster 2/5th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 27th November 1917 aged 35

Memorial: - Cambrai Memorial, Louverval, Nord, France panel 9 and 10

Family Details

Joshua was born in Batley in c.1885/8 the son of Holmfirth born Alfred and his Huddersfield born wife, Emily Lee.

In 1891 the family was living at 64, Bradford Road Central which was near the Fleece Inn in Stocks Lane, Batley. They moved to Batley from Huddersfield shortly before the birth of Ellen in 1882. His siblings were Sarah Ann (1875), Joah (1877), Emma (1879), Ellen (1882-1897), Caroline (October 1886-November 1886 aged 6 weeks), Albert (1888), Charles Willie (1889- Dec 1890) and Agnes (1892). The 1911 census shows they did have a total of 12 children but 6 did not survive infancy.

Alfred was a power loom tuner.

By 1901 Joshua was working as a finisher in a woollen mill but within the next decade became a power loom tuner like his father. Before enlisting he had worked for Messrs. W.J.R. Fox & Sons, Batley and was connected to Zion Chapel.

Service Details

Joshua was wounded in December 1916 but returned to his unit. On the 24th November 1917 the 2/5th Battalion was at Havrincourt Woods and moved into the line between Graincourt- Bourlon.

Between 2.30am and 6.20 am the Battalion moved into assembly positions for an attack on Bourlon with tanks in an area heavily shelled by the enemy.

At 6.20am Zero hour the Battalion followed the tanks through enemy barrage and penetrated Bourlon. Machine gun fire was heavy on both flanks and stiff fighting took place in the village. The enemy had erected barriers which prevented progress by the tanks and because of this and the enemy powerful machine gun fire organisation it was hard for the battalion to break through and after suffering heavy casualties the Battalion had to drop back to the Brigade original Front line. Enemy shelling of these positions and the approaches was heavy and methodical throughout the day.

One officer and 17 other ranks were killed, 3 officers and 172 other ranks, were wounded, two officers and 6 other ranks were wounded and missing and one officer and 40 other ranks were missing.

The 3rd Army Commander said the gallantry of the 62nd Division was specially commented on and the attack on Bourlon on the 27th in no way detracted from the reputation of the Division but rather enhanced its glory. Weather conditions during the operations were especially trying, mud and rain, but were cheerfully met by the troops whose spirits throughout have been excellent.

The Batley News of the 5th January 1918 posted Joshua Lee missing although it was believed he could have been a German prisoner. He had not been heard of for 5 weeks. It was also reported at the same time that his lifelong pal, Sam Berry, of Drill Hall Yard, Batley was also missing.

The 18th May edition of the Batley News reported that his parents had received a letter from the Red Cross saying: -

"We deeply regret to inform you that the name of Joshua Lee (also his regimental number) appears in an official list of German dead. We assure you of our deepest sympathy."

His brother, Albert, was in France at the time his family received confirmation of his death.

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

He is remembered with Honour at Zion Chapel and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group