Henry Cunningham Massey





Rank: - L/Cpl

Number: - 21406

Regiment: - East Lancashire Regiment 8th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 29/06/1916 Age: 37 years

Cemetery: - Hannescamps New Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France A.19

Batley News, 8 Jul 1916. Batley Reporter, 14 Jul 1916 (photo). Dewsbury Reporter, 15 Jul 1916 (photo)

Family Details

Henry Cunningham was born in Burnley in c.1873 the son of James and Ruth Massey (nee Cunningham married November 1872). James was a cotton weaver in 1881 when he was living at 5, Charlotte Street, Burnley with his wife and children Henry, Alice Ann 1875, Joseph 1877-1891 and Arthur 1879.

Elizabeth Jane was born in 1881. Ruth died in October 1884 and was buried at All Saints Church, Habergham, Burnley.

On the 10th July 1886 James married spinster, Ellen Windle at All Saints Church, Habergham and they both gave their occupations as weavers. John William was born, 1887died in 1887, Ethel 1888-1890, Lilian 1889 and Herbert 1891. In 1891 the family was living at 75, Leyland Road, Burnley and Henry was working as a cotton weaver.

Henry Cunningham became a regular soldier and had 13 years' service in India,

In 1907 he married Batley born Mary Ann Thompson in Burnley and Harriett was born in 4/1908 but sadly died in just a few weeks. In 1911 they were living at Back Colne Road, Burnley and Henry had once more become a cotton weaver. The couple went to live in New Street, Batley and Walter was born in 1913 followed by Ben in late 1914.

Before he enlisted, he was a labourer at Batley Gas Works previously having worked at Mr. S. Clarke's foundry.

Service Details

Henry enlisted in October 1915 and went to France in January 1916.

In 1916 they took part in the Actions of the Bluff and St Eloi Craters (local operations 1916). These were local operations seeking tactical advantage before the start of the Battles of the Somme on the 1st July. It was during this fighting when the Germans first used Phosgene gas.

His wife received a letter from his Commanding Officer: -

"I am afraid I have very bad news to break to you, your husband was killed in action early in the morning of the 29th June. As his platoon commander I need not tell you how grieved I was, especially as he was killed with six of his comrades

during duty in the trenches. The loss of these men is much felt by the whole company. I offer you my deepest sympathy in your bereavement, but I am sure it will lessen it by knowing that they died nobly doing their duty, and that they were killed instantaneously with-out pain."

A letter of condolence was also received from the Chaplain, who says the men were killed by a shell.

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

He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group