John Micklethwaite





Rank: - Private

Number: - 42323

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 2nd Battalion

Killed in Action: - 6th July 1917 aged 23

Cemetery: -- Ramscappelle Road Military Cemetery, West Vlaanderen, Belgium. 1V.B.15

"THEIR GLORY SHALL NOT BE BLOTTED OUT"

Batley News, 14, Jul 1917, 21 Jul 1917 (photo)

Family Details

John was born in Batley in 1893 the son of William and Grace Ann Micklethwaite (nee Hemsworth). The couple had married in 1888 several years after the death of William's first wife Ellen, who had died in March 1881.

William had married Ellen Brook at Batley Parish Church on 5th January 1878 John William was born in June 1879 followed by, George, born in 1880. Ellen died in March 1881 followed by George in April 1881 aged 6 months.

On the 4th February 1888 William married Grace Ann Hemsworth at Batley Parish Church. Fred Hemsworth was born in January 1889, followed by William in November 1890 who sadly died when he was 5 hours old. Maggie was born in October 1891 followed by John in 1893, George was born in 1896 but died aged 2 years early 1898 followed by Robert (1898) and Richard in 1901.

The 1911 shows that there had been eight children born to the marriage and 5 were still alive but 3 had died in infancy. At this time the family was living in a three roomed home at 68, Warwick Road, Batley. William was a stationary engine man and John was working as a cloth finisher.

On 29th January 1916 at Holy Trinity Batley Carr John married Irene Victoria Bywater. The couple went to live in Mill Road, Batley Carr and their daughter Alice was born later that year.

John had worked for J.T. & J. Taylor, Cheapside Mills in the finishing department before moving to Messrs. Mark Day's finishing department where he worked before, he enlisted. He was associated with Broomhill United Methodist Church.

Service Details

John enlisted in Pontefract in June 1916 and left for France the following November. This was at the same time as John Booth of Warwick Road Batley.

The 2nd Battalion of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry was in the 32nd Division.

In late 1916 they were involved with the Battle of the Ancre and in 1917 the Operations on the Ancre before becoming involved with the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line.

On the 1st July 1917 the battalion was at Nieuport and the War Diaries tell us that the once beautiful town was shelled daily by the enemy and was now in ruins. On the once very beautiful cathedral only a modicum of the towers remained and these were pitted with shrapnel bullets. The adjoining cemetery contained the graves of numerous French heroes who had paid the ultimate sacrifice.

On the 2nd the day was bright and sunny and A.C and D companies did work on reconstruction and repair of the trenches. The Companies returned to the billets at 2 .45 am on the 3rd and there was a lot of artillery fire near the Church from the enemy. At 9.20 pm the companies returned to work on the same trenches as the night before, they returned at 2.35 am. Later on the 4th they received orders that they were to relieve the 16th Highland Light Infantry in the Lombart –Zyde Section. The relief was complete by 10.55 pm on the 4th July. At 1.45 am the KOYLI's opened covering fire on the enemy trenches to cover the 16th Highland Light Infantry. The enemy retaliated between 3 am to 4.30 am with very heavy fire on the whole Brigade before it fell quiet.

At 3.30 pm the enemy began to use Minnenwoefers, aerial darts and rifle grenades on all three lines. A minnenwoefer landed on a Lewis Gun team and killed a 2nd Lieutenant and five men wounding one other. There was heavy fire until 4.30 pm but at 5 .15 pm a five-minute hurricane bombardment of the enemy's front line was ordered.

A patrol of 1 N.C.O. and six men of "C" Company went into No Man's Land at 11.15pm with the object of preventing the enemy from patrolling and to inspect his wire. The patrol returned at 1 am and reported the enemy was working in his front line and between his first and second line. The wire was thick and in good condition.

"D" Company went into No Man's Land and at 10 am the Brigade Chaplain who was going to bury the dead was wounded in the left arm by shrapnel but was able to carry on his duties once his wound had been dressed. The fighting continued and between 12 noon on the 5th to noon on the 6th 2 Officers were killed, 2 Officers wounded, 5 other ranks killed and 11 wounded.

Unofficial news of his death came from Private John Booth, of the same regiment, whose home was at Warwick Road, Batley Carr. He wrote to Private Micklethwaite's parents of 68, Warwick Road, Batley on July 8th

"*I am very sorry to inform you of the death of your son John, which occurred on Thursday morning (July 5th) at one o'clock. I have waited a day or two for official information before I let you know, as I heard only from some of the boys in the platoon. I was up the line myself when I was told, so it came as a very severe blow to me. You see we are all in the same village as John and I can assure you I shall miss him very much as we have had some good times together since I first met him. He was well liked by all his comrades in his platoon and especially by the sergeant. Please accept my deepest sympathy in your sad bereavement."*

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

He is remembered with Honour at Broomhill Chapel, Warwick Road School, Ramscapelle Road Military Cemetery and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group