Fred Midgley M. M.





Rank: - Private

Number: - 260114

Regiment: - Prince of Wales' Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) 15th Battalion "B" Company (formerly 22987 K.O.Y.L.I.)

Killed in Action: - 19th July 1918 aged 32

Cemetery: - Le Grand Hasard Military Cemetery, Morbecque, Nord, France.
Plot 1, Row B, Grave 13

Family Details:

Fred was born in Batley in 1886 the youngest son of George Midgley and his wife Emma (nee Appleyard). George came from East Keswick and Emma from Flockton /Hunslet/or Middleton.

In 1871 they were living at Bradford Road, Batley with their children Arthur (1870); Mary aged 3 months and a lodger Charles Jackson who came from Hunslet.

A decade the family had moved to Carlinghow Lane with the additions of Ada (1873), Charlotte (1874) and Charles (1879). Tom born in 1876 had died aged 2 years 6 months in August 1878, James born 1880 died in February 1881, Jane was born in 1881. George was a farm labourer. Sadly, Emma died in 1889.

In 1891 the family was living at Ineson's Buildings, Coal Pit Lane and George was earning a living as a carrier, whilst Ada cared for him and her younger siblings. A decade later the family had moved to Wooller Houses where George was once again working as a farm labourer but his children were working in the mills. Charles was a piecener, Jane a twister and Fred a finisher.

In 1911 George was a "retired farmer "living at 8, Garden Street, Carlinghow with Ada and Fred who was working as a cloth finisher at Messrs. R. Brearley's, Queen Street Mills. It shows that George and Emma had had nine children born alive and two had died during their 21 years of marriage.

Fred had attended Carlinghow School, was a member of Carlinghow Working Men's Club and attended Cross Bank Wesleyan Chapel.

On 11th May 1911 Fred married Mary Blakeley, who came from Beck Lane, at St. John's, Carlinghow. They went to live at 7, Birch Street, Carlinghow.

George was born the following year and Edna in 1914. His father, George, of North Bank Fields, Carlinghow died 17th July 1918, two days before Fred.

Service Details:

He enrolled at Batley in February 1916 and disembarked to France in July 1916. The 15th Battalion (1st Leeds "Leeds Pals") was part of 93rd Brigade, 31st Division. The Division was made up entirely of Pals Battalions. The Battalion fought at the Battle of the Somme and suffered 3,500 casualties without reaching any of their objectives.

In 1917 they took part in operations on the Ancre taking part in the Third Battle of the Scarpe and the capture of Oppy Wood. They joined with the 17th Battalion on 7th December 1917.

In 1918 they fought at the Battles of St. Quentin, Bapaume, First Battle of Arras, Battles of Estaires, Hazebrouck, defence of Nieppe Forest and the attack at La Becque which was a phase of the Battles of Lys, and the Capture of Vieux Berquin.

A Chaplain wrote to tell Mary about his death: -

"He was a splendid man and we can ill afford to lose such but it is a price war demands. He was killed during an attack on the German lines. He was struck by a shell and died immediately on July 19th. His body was brought back and buried in a military cemetery near Hazebrouck."

Towards the end of June 1918, the division was involved in "Operation Borderland" an advance in conjunction with the 5th Division. An attack was made by 92 and 93 Brigades on La Becque Farm on the 28th June. It was preceded by the capture of Ankle Farm, to the north of La Becque, on the 27th.Assembly trenches were dug during the night by the 12th KOYLI's and at 2.30 am the Leeds Pals arrived in their positions. At 6 am, the artillery and trench mortars started their bombardments and the Pals attacked. The assault was a complete success but cost the Leeds Pals 22 killed, four died later of wounds, 143 were injured and one man was missing.

An expected German counter- attack did not materialise and during July the Pals took their turn in holding the new line which on 19th July was advanced to the stream east of La Becque Farm.

This is where Fred would have been killed in action.

He was aware in early July 1918 that he had been recommended for the Military Medal but was killed before official confirmation came through after his death.

A letter from his Colonel to his wife said: -

"I am sending the ribbon of the Military Medal which was awarded to your husband by the Corps Commander for gallantry and devotion to duty on the 28th June last. I am deeply grieved that he did not live to have the honour of wearing the medal he so nobly won. I sympathise with you in your great loss but I trust it will be some consolation to you to know that he died doing his duty bravely and well ".

Fred was awarded the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the Military Medal.

He is remembered on Batley War Memorial, St. John's Carlinghow, Cross Bank Wesleyan Chapel and Le Grand Hazard Military Cemetery.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group