Wilfred Morgan





Rank: - Private

Number:-21/286

Regiment: - West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own) 21st Battalion

Killed in Action: - 28th March 1918 aged 30 years

Cemetery: - Mindel Trench British Cemetery, St. Laurent-Blagny, France D.1

Family Details

Wilfred was born in Batley on the 9th September 1887 the son of Edward and Annie Jane Morgan nee Bryant and was baptised at St. Thomas's Church on 7th October 1888 when the family was living at Back Taylor Street, Batley. His father was a tailor.

His father was born in Sheffield whilst his mother came from Salisbury, Wiltshire.

Hedley Gilbert was born in Bradford in 1879 followed by Emma Dickinson 1880 who was also born in Bradford but the family had moved to live in Batley before the birth of Harry Bryant in 1883-November 1901. Annie Miriam followed in 1884 but sadly died aged 7 months in October 1884, Wilfred and Fred Herbert in March 1889 but who sadly died aged 11 months in February 1890 Lily in 1890 and Ellen (Nelly) in 1892.

In 1891 the family was living in France Street, Soothill but within the next decade the family had moved to live at 8, Brunswick Place, Morley where Edward was a tailor working on his own account and thirteen year old Wilfred was an apprentice electrical engineer.

In 1911 Wilfred was a boarder in Thurnscoe, Rotherham working as a grocer's assistant whilst his parents and two younger sisters were living in a three roomed home at 46. Bradford Road West, Batley but before the marriage of Ellen in 1915 they had moved to live in Princess Street, Batley. The 1911 census shows that there had been ten children born alive to the couple but only five were still living.

Wilfred attended Mill Lane Council School and was a former choir boy at St. Luke's Church but latterly attended St. Thomas's.

Wilfred moved back to Batley and before he enlisted was the manager at Slater's grocery stores, Commercial Street, Batley where he been for several years.

Service Details

Wilfred enlisted in November 1915. The 21st (Service) Battalion (Wool Textile Pioneers) were formed in Halifax on 24 September 1915. They

moved to Skipton in February 1916 and to France in June 1916. From the 2nd June 1916 they came under orders of 4th Division as a Pioneer Battalion.

In 1916 the Division took part in the Battles of Albert and Le Transloy both on the Somme.

In 1917 they fought in April near Arras at the first and third Battles of the Scarpe moving later in the year near Ypres and fought at: -

The Battle of Polygon Wood (26th Sept.-3rd October)
The Battle of Broodseinde (4th October)
The Battle of Poelcapelle (9th -12th October)
The First Battle of Passchendaele

It was reported in the Batley News of 27th October 1917 that Wilfred had been wounded in the face, neck and right arm and was being treated in a Canadian hospital in France where he was making satisfactory progress.

He came home on leave in February 1918 for two weeks and had been back with his unit for a fortnight when they fought at the First Battle of Arras on the 28th March.

His parents appealed in the local press asking if any local soldier could provide more details after they had received a letter of sympathy from a Second-Lieutenant who said:-

"*I was exceedingly sorry to hear of the loss of your son, who was always one of the very best in my platoon. I have been away from the Battalion and I had not seen him since he was wounded at Ypres. He was willing to help in any work, and was the most cheerful man under any circumstances that it has ever been my pleasure to meet. His loss is very much felt by us all."*

During the following week his parents received a letter from his Captain:-

"*He was killed by a shell which fell on his dug-out, death being instantaneous. We had busy times for a few days following repelling enemy attacks and I had no time for writing letters. From a long Army acquaintance with your son I have formed the highest opinions of him and*

his excellent spirits made him the life of the platoon. Please accept my deepest sympathy at his loss, which we in his company as well as you at home could so ill afford."

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

He is remembered with Honour at St. Thomas's Church and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group