Clifford Ernest Parkin





Rank: - Lance Sgt.

Number: - 1507

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 1st /4th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 2nd August 1915 aged 21

Cemetery: - Talana Farm Cemetery, West Vlaanderen, Belgium 11.E.8

Family Details:

Clifford Ernest was born Dec 1893 in White Lee, Batley the son of William Samuel, born Knottingley and Mary Parkin (nee Lister) born Whitley Bridge.

He and his twin brother Robert Kelsick (Killed in Action 23/7/1917) were baptised at White Lee Chapel on 29th July 1894 aged 7 months. They had 2 older brothers John William (1882) and Charles Lister (1884).

In 1901 the family were living at 8, Scout Hill Street, Dewsbury and William was a railway goods porter. By 1911 the elder 2 boys had left home and the family were living at 247, Bradford Road, Batley. By this time William was an Inspector for the Tramway Company, whilst Robert worked as a cloth finisher Clifford was a woollen warper at Messrs. R. Talbot & Sons, Bulrush Mills although around 1911 he had joined the Territorial's.

As a scholar Clifford had attended Batley Parish Church School, where amongst his friends was Walter Gibson. They were both members of the Church Lads' Brigade and they were both killed by the same shell, Clifford died instantly and Walter died 2 days later at a base hospital. In the Church Brigade, Clifford won many laurels and was awarded a certificate for stretcher bearing.

From the memorials in the Batley News it appears he was engaged to Hilda Taylor of Raikes Lane, Birstall.

Service Details:

He enlisted at Batley with the 1st/4th Btn of the Kings' Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. At first, they were stationed at Wakefield as a part of the 3rd West Riding Brigade of the West Riding Division and then moved to Doncaster and Gainsborough. In February 1915 they moved to York until they disembarked for France. On the 13th April 1915 the 1st /4th and 1st /5th K.O.Y.L.I. boarded trains at York about midday reaching Liverpool Street Station, London at 6 .20 pm for a night crossing to Boulogne. These two K.O.Y.L.I. battalions together with the 1st /4th and 1st /5th York and Lancs. Made up the 3rd West Riding Division Brigade commanded by Brig. Gen. R. Dawson.

By the 19th April the Division had concentrated in the area of Estaires –Merville-Neuf Berquin.

The Second Battle of Ypres opened on 22nd April, a little over a week after they had landed in France, when the Germans released a cloud of poisonous chlorine gas over the front line between Steenstraat and Poelcappelle. The two French Divisions, who held this sector, fled back over the Yser Canal with streaming eyes and burning throats, where many were to die a horrible death as a result of inhaling the gas.

The Battalion had their first combat at Whitsuntide 1915. It started on the Friday and Clifford wrote home to his parents after the fighting on Whit Sunday.

Whit Sunday:-I am on my holidays and spending them in the trenches. We came in last night and were working all night up to our knees in mud. It was glorious! Walter Gibson of Co-op Street, Batley has had to go in hospital suffering from neurasthenia.

May 26th – Many thanks for the "Batley News" which I received last night. We only came out of the trenches at eight yesterday morning after the liveliest time we have had. We went in at 4 p.m. Whit Monday and at 6 o'clock the artillery started a fierce bombardment of the German trenches and continued for three quarters of an hour. After five minutes our battalion simply bounced over the parapet and advanced about 60 yards and then commenced digging like fury, completing a line of trenches before daybreak. When we were going over the Huns didn't half pepper us, and they rapped it out all night. At daybreak, having completed the trenches and made them quite bullet proof, we realised the fact that we were only 150 yards from the German line. It has been a fairly big thing, and we did remarkably well. The Divisional Staff have sent hearty congratulations, to our colonel, on the way we did our bit. Of course, we had a fair number of casualties but I am thankful to say all our old Church Lads' Brigade lads are alright but Fred Moody of Victoria Street, Carlinghow, was killed by a piece of shrapnel.

During the afternoon of 9th July 1st /4th and 1st /5th Battalions left Watou and marched eastwards towards the front line. The 1st/4th moved into reserve positions around Modder and Hull's Farms to the west of the Yser Canal with battalion H. Q. at Saragossa Farm.

Clifford wrote home to his parents and brother and details were printed in the Batley News of 17th July 1915.

"I was pleased to receive your parcel which arrived quite safely. We had a rare good tea party as it just arrived in time for tea. You will be pleased to hear that Albert Greenhalgh (another Batley Terrier) has come back from hospital. You seem to have had a real recruiting show. How nice it would be if it had been the 1st/4th instead of 2nd /4th K.O.Y.L.I .However with a bit of luck I don't think it will be long before we are in Batley again. We still have glorious weather, but it is awfully hot. Excuse short letter but long ones are out of fashion.

To his brother John William of Ravensthorpe, he wrote: -

"You must excuse the delay in answering your letter. The heat here is terrific. Sweat even drops off me whilst I write these lines. I just feel like popping into A---'s for a few dainties – how delightful that would be.

At the end of July, the major activity on the Salient was again centred on the Menin road. The poor weather at the end of July created appalling conditions for the men on the front line.

2 Lt Robinson from the 1st /5th wrote that the weather was very broken and the trenches were in a horrible state and if they tried to dig to improve them you almost always came across human remains either in the floor or parapet. The trench was alive with maggots and flies, and the stench awful. They were continually shelled during the day.

On the night of 29th / 30th July the Germans introduced an ancient weapon- liquid fire. The 8th Rifle Brigade was at the front line when hosepipes from the German trenches opposite sprayed liquid fire over the Rifle Brigade's front line. Few in the trench survived, and those that did withdrew as the enemy, in overwhelming numbers, raced towards the British front line. Most over the men in this Division had enlisted less than a year before but over the next three days they displayed tremendous courage in halting the Germans and stabilising the front.

His father, who lived at Tramway Cottage, Carlinghow received the news of his son's death in a letter from Lieut/Col. Haselgrave dated 2nd August 1915.

"It is with extreme regret I have to write this letter to inform you of the death of your son 1507 L /Sgt. Clifford Parkin of the Battalion under my command who was killed this morning by shrapnel shell. Please accept my heartfelt sympathy in your sad bereavement and your consolation must be in the fact his death was

instantaneous and he suffered no pain but died like a soldier fighting for his King and Country His place of burial is a military cemetery just behind the firing line ,and his marked with a cross. No doubt in time to come his place of burial will be notified to you "

Another close friend was Albert Greenhalgh whose parents lived in King Street Batley He was also in the same battalion and wrote home to his parents: -

"I am lonely now. My pal (or rather my "brother") has got killed. Poor Clifford. He got hit with a shell, the same shell that wounded Walter Gibson. My heart is broken. I have no one to confide in now like I had with Cliff. It is the biggest miracle on earth that I was not killed. We had been sleeping together and I had just left when it happened .Nobody knows what it is like to see your dearest friend killed .I thank God with all my heart I was saved .You must comfort Mr& Mrs. Parkin for they will feel it very much. We shall bury him tonight. He was the flower of the Company and everyone mourns his death"

A year later in the memoriam of the Batley News

Parkin In ever loving memory of Clifford Parkin Platoon Sergeant 1/4th K.O.Y.L.I. who died in Belgium August 4th 1915

One-year passed, our hearts still sore,
As each day goes, we miss him more,
His sweet smile and his loving face,
No one on earth can fill his place,
But Christ will clasp the loving chain,
Closer when we meet again.

From his sorrowing Father, Mother and Brothers- Tramway Cottage, Carlinghow.

Parkin In ever loving memory of Clifford Parkin, Platoon Sergeant 1/4th K.O.Y.L.I. who died in Belgium August 4th 1915

In foreign land somewhere his grave,
Far from his home and kin;
He shed his blood England to save,
Knowing the right must win.

Into Thy care, O Christ above, we leave our blessed dead,
Upon the cross Thou still art love,
Comfort our hearts and lead.
From his sorrowing fiancée Miss Hilda Taylor, Raikes Lane, Birstall.

Parkin –In loving memory of Clifford Parkin, Platoon Sergeant
1st/4thK.O.Y.L.I.who died in Belgium August 4th 1915
A British hero to the heart,
Your precious life you gave,
And silently we mourn for you,
You we're so young and brave;
But when the heroes all return,
For us it will harder be,
For amongst the valiant crowd,
Your dear face we shall not see.

From your sorrowing Father, Mother and Brothers, Tramway Cottages,

Parkin— In loving remembrance of Sgt. Clifford Parkin K.O.Y.L.I. Regiment who fell in action in France August 4th 1915

Ever remembered
From Ida, Raikes Lane, Birstall

Clifford is commemorated on Batley War Memorial, St. John's, Carlinghow and Batley Parish Church and Talana Farm Cemetery where William Marton and W.E.Briggs from Yorkshire were buried on the same day.

There were two others buried on the same day at Talana Farm Cemetery

He was awarded 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-1920 and the Victory Medal.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group