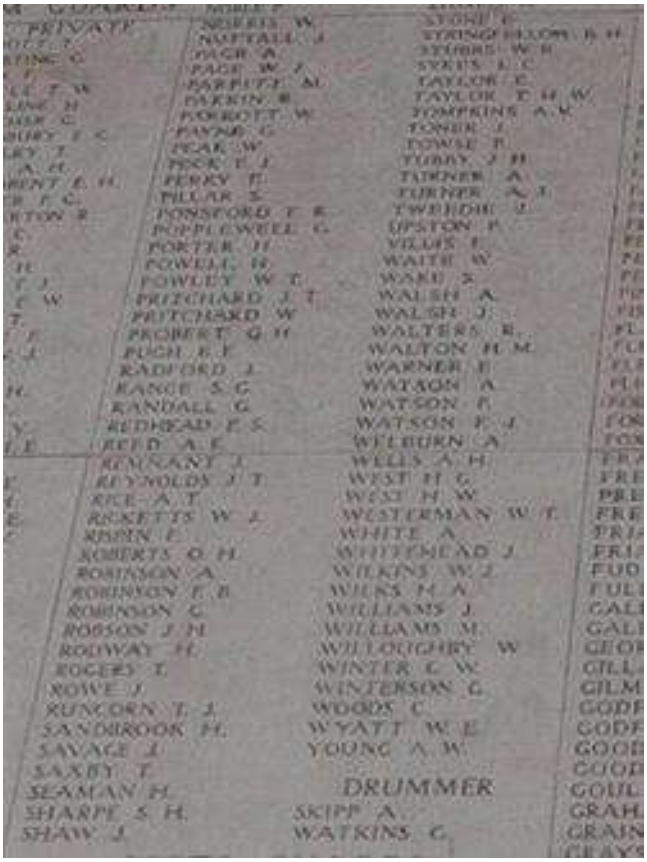
Robert Kelsick Parkin





Rank: - Private

Number: - 18727

Regiment: - Coldstream Guards 1st Battalion

Killed in Action: - 23rd July 1917 aged 23

Memorial: - Ypres (Menin Gate), West Vlaanderen, Belgium. Panel 1

Family Details:

Robert Kelsick Parkin was the twin brother of Clifford Ernest born in December 1893 at White Lee, Batley, the son of William Samuel (born Knottingley) and Mary (Nee Lister) born Whitley Bridge. He was baptised with his brother at White Lee on 29th July 1894. They had two 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 two elder boys had left home and the family were living at 247, Bradford Road, Batley and William was an Inspector for the Tramway Company. Robert was a cloth finisher whilst his twin was a woollen warper. They were educated at Batley Parish Church School, and also attended Batley Parish Church. All the family were well known in Carlinghow, although Robert worked at the Queen Street Mills of Messrs. Robert Brearley & Sons, Batley where he was well respected. He became engaged to Miss Walker of 8 Russell Street, Batley, daughter of John William and Fanny Walker.

Service details:

Robert joined up in 1916 in Batley and disembarked for France in February 1917. He would have joined the Fourth Army under Rawlinson 2nd Division of the Coldstream Guards on the Somme where in March 1917 the Germans started retreating known as Operation Alberich. They destroyed everything on the ground that they left, poisoning wells, flattening villages, cutting down trees, blowing craters on roads and cross roads, booby trapping ruins and dugouts. A cautious pursuit began. It was an extremely cold winter, and anything received from home to help the troops were welcomed. Mrs. John Stewart of Grove House, Soothill, Batley, a doctors' wife, was a member of the Batley Habitation of the Primrose League who sent letters and parcels to the lads at the Front. On the 14th July 1917 Robert wrote to her to say thanks for the letter and parcel received and was in good health and said: -

"*Keeping as cheerful as possible under trying circumstances. It makes one feel pleased to know someone is thinking of us whilst we are out here, and I hope your work is crowned with success. May God help you in your chosen work for making the Tommies happy I am sure you would be rewarded if you saw the smiling faces of the lads out here when we get anything from the dear Homeland you would be pleased that you had chosen work of this sort as doing your bit.*

We are all longing for the day peace is declared and we are all coming back to dear old Blighty. But we find that joking amidst all these trying ordeals makes things easier, so we smile and keep on in our jocular manner, "

Robert continued to say that he supposed all the lads had vanished from Batley and before "ringing off" suggested a motto for the Primrose league *"Carry on and make the lads happy and comfy "*

Unofficial reports of the death of Robert were received by Miss Brooke of the Bridge Hotel, Carlinghow in a letter from her fiancé Private Stanley Bowden of Richmond Street, Cross Bank

"*I am sorry to tell you that Sgt. Brewer and Private Parkin were killed here this week. I was in the front line and saw the poor fellows. They were both hit by shells but on two different days. Parkin came to see me the morning before he met his death. I myself have been lucky to come through this. They were both good lads and it upset me I can tell you."*

This was confirmed when a letter was received by Miss Walker from a soldier enclosing a photograph of herself which belonged to Robert and was found in the pocket of a soldier who had been killed and he promises if she will acknowledge receipt, he would forward the wallet and its contents. Robert was fighting very near several of his friends from Batley. Sergeant Stanley Bowden of Richmond Street was also in the Coldstream Guards. Sergeant Brewer who had been a driver on the tramways was killed in the same area two days later along with six others including one who had saved him in 1915.

Robert was awarded the British War Medal 1914-1920 and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour on Batley War Memorial. Batley Parish Church, St. John's, Carlinghow and Ypres (Menin Gate), along with another 81 killed on the same day.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group