William Sydney Parrington (served as Osborn)



Rank: - Private

Number: - 953

Regiment: - Northumberland Fusiliers 1st Battalion

Killed in Action: - 16/06/1915 Age: 38 years

Memorial: - Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. Panel 8 and 12

Family Details

William Sydney was born in Batley in October 1879 the son of William and Mary Parrington nee Fowler who married in the Garstang area Dec Qtr 1867, of Elder Villa, Batley, Yorkshire. William was a chemist and druggist who came from Dent, Yorkshire and was living at Grosvenor Road, Batley in 1881. William Sydney was the next to the youngest child the others being: - Rupert 1870, Edgar 1871, Margaret Maude 1873, Ernest Milton 1876, Bertram 1881. Thomas was born in March 1869 but sadly died when only nine weeks old. In August 1874 his father was granted a licence to sell wine and sweets? off the premises of his chemists' shop in Commercial Street, Batley. He wanted it for six days a week but this could not be granted. In August 1880 his father had applied for a licence to sell wine at his retail promises in Commercial Street, Batley.

Mary died in the first part of 1886 and William in the latter part of 1886 leaving the children orphans. The family was split up Rupert and Edgar staying in Batley at the home of John Sheard, of Field Hill as boarders, Ernest moved to Leeds and after his marriage to Brighouse. Margaret Maud went to Ossett and married James Edward Halstead at the Gawthorpe Zion Chapel, on the December 11th 1895. Bertram moved to Battersea to be the foster son of Mr.& Mrs. William Linnington, William being a Methodist Minister. William Sydney became the adopted son of Thomas A. and Bessie Shackleton of 43, Talbot Street, Batley before 1891. Thomas was a retail clothier and the couple had also adopted 12-year-old Charlotte Whitley, who was born in Heckmondwike and whose parents had both died. Bessie may have died in 1897.

Service Details

His service number – 953 – and 1st battalion Northumberland Fusiliers indicates he was a regular soldier pre-WWI. The service number suggests he enlisted between February 1905 and January 1906 by which time he would have been 25/26 years of age.

Another (?) William Parrington born Batley living Leeds (44 Woodhouse Lane) and aged 18 years and 7 months, a fitter with Henry Berry Co., when he attested at Leeds on 15 June 1899 suggesting he was born in about October 1880. He joined the 3rd Duke of Wellingtons (West Riding) Regiment, service number 5746. He was 5'4 ¼ "Fair complexion, blue eyes brown hair C of E. Scar on left???

The only William Parrington born Dewsbury (or Leeds) between 1879 and 1881 is William Sidney.

Could this William have lied about his age by a year? His service record is short and states "Completed 76 days drill on enlistment" ie to 30 August 1899. Might this be a reason why he changed his name to re-enlist? Had he deserted the West Yorkshires?

And also (yet another) William Parrington, born Leeds, living & working at Leeds a fitter for Henry Berry Co., (like the "other" William) but born Leeds aged 17 yrs 11 months He enlisted at Leeds on 4th Sept 1899. (5 days after he left the Duke of Wellingtons) which would have him as being born in Sept/Oct 1881. He became Private 8529 William Parrington 3rd bn. York & Lancaster Regt.

He served for 49 days drill in enlistment, his service record revealing that he was then absent from Assembly for Enlistment. On 13th December 1899 he was "struck off as a deserter" This was confirmed on 24 January 1900. He was 5'4 ½ "tall and 112 lb weight. Chest measurement Minimum 31 ½ "Max. 34" Complexion fresh. Eyes Blue grey, Hair Light Brown. C. of E. Mole under right nipple. His attestation stated he had not previously served.

This would be the reason he served as someone else.... William had already deserted from 2 regiments. Don't know why he became James Osborn except there was a felon about at that time with this name. Maybe he read about him.

He embarked for France on 13th August 1914 being the date of a very early wave of the British Expeditionary Force. They came to be known as "The Old Contemptibles"

He was Private 953 James Osborn in 1st battalion Northumberland Fusiliers for the whole of service between 13-8-1914 & his death on 16-16-1915. (and probably since 1905-06). He enlisted at Wakefield claiming to be born in Leeds (Hunslet).

He would have seen hell.

The 1st Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers
August 1914: in Portsmouth and became part of 9th Brigade, 3rd Division. They landed at Le Havre on 14 August 1914. The brigade was attached to 28th Division between 17 February and 2 April 1915.

The 3rd Division was one of the first British formations to move to France as part of the original British Expeditionary Force and one of the first into action, the 3rd Division remained on the Western Front throughout the war. It took part in most of the major actions, including:

1914

The Battle of Mons and the subsequent retreat, including the Rearguard action of Solesmes
The Battle of Le Cateau
The Battle of the Marne
The Battle of the Aisne including participation in the Actions on the Aisne heights
The Battles of La Bassee and Messines 1914
First Battle of Ypres

1915

Winter Operations 1914-15
The First Attack on Bellewaarde (He died in this action)
The Actions of Hooge
The Second Attack on Bellewaarde (in support of the opening attack in the Battle of Loos)

First Attack on Bellewaarde (Taken verbatim from an intro to the book "The Battle of Bellewaarde, June 1915")

It was 2am on the 16th June 1915 and dawn was slowly breaking over Bellewaarde. It was exceptionally quiet, the troops of 3rd Division were situated on the western edge of Railway Wood and shrouded in a thick mist which reduced visibility and gave the illusion of safety. Across the few yards of no man's land, the German troops of Reserve Infantry Regiments (RIR) 248 and 246, and Unter-Elsässisches Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 132 were also blanketed in the thick damp mist. It swirled round their trenches, deadening sound and reinforcing the illusion that all was secure. Fifty minutes later the planned British artillery bombardment began. By the end of the day more than 4,000 men would be casualties on a field approximately half a mile square.

At the close of the 2nd Battles of Ypres, the German trenches between the Menin Road and the Ypres-Roulers railway formed a salient. From Bellewaarde ridge, situated on the eastern side of the lake, they were able to overlook the greater part of the ground east of Ypres. In early June it was decided to attack

the salient, and take possession of Bellewaarde ridge. The attack was to be carried out by the 9th Brigade of the 3rd Division, with 7th Brigade in support"

From the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers Regimental War Diary for 16 June 1915:-

The bombardment of the enemy commenced at 2.50am until 4.15am when the British attack was launched to take the enemy front line trenches. In parts there was enemy resistance and some British losses but many surrendered, pow's were taken and the trench taken. The enemy's second line proved more difficult to overcome and many battalion losses were suffered from rifle and machine gun fire. Attempts to bomb down the enemy failed, all the unit's bombers were killed and the machine guns knocked out.

The British front line retreated under fire to the German trench line taken in the morning. Enemy rifle, machine gun and light and heavy artillery fire was then focused on this line and many more men were killed wounded or missing.

On this day the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers suffered casualties to fifteen officers and 645 other ranks who were killed missing or wounded. Other reports indicate that of the 645 other ranks some 110 were killed in action.

The attachment is from the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers War Diary for 16 June 1915. It includes the name of *953 Osborn Killed*.

William was awarded the 1914Star+clasp, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial Addenda.

Thanks to Alan Howe.

