Eddie Pratt





Rank: - Private

Number: - 52253

Regiment: - Durham Light Infantry (Formerly 34000 KOYLI) 22nd Battalion

Missing, presumed Killed in Action (Working his machine gun when last seen): - 26/03/1918 Age: 20 years

Memorial: - Pozieres Memorial, Somme, France Panel 68 to 72

Batley News, 11 May 1918 (photo)

Researched by members of Batley History Group

Family Details

Eddie was born on the 23rd March 1897 the youngest son of Charles and Christiana Jane Pratt nee Appleton and was baptised at St. Paul's, Hanging Heaton on 6th June 1897 when the family was living at Hanging Heaton and his father was a mill hand. The couple had married on 9th December 1882 at St. Paul's Church, Hanging Heaton. Emma Jane was born in 1883 followed by Faith 1887, Christopher 1890 and Eddie.

In 1901 the family was living at Linwood Terrace, nr. Kirkgate, Hanging Heaton.

Eddie attended the Church Day Schools and also Hanging Heaton Parish Church. After leaving school he worked for Mr. Kalinsky, rag merchant of Batley Carr before working for Messrs. Weiss Bros., rag merchants, Heckmondwike. He was working there when he enlisted on 2nd August 1916.

In 1911 the family was living at 144, Royd View, Hanging Heaton. Charles was a foreman piece mender but later moved to live at 20, Finsdale Street, Lady Ann Road, Soothill, Batley before he enlisted.

Service Details

Eddie enlisted on the 2nd August 1916 at Dewsbury into the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and was sent to France on 24th November 1916 transferring to the Durham Light Infantry. He was wounded in the left arm by shrapnel on the 31st July 1917 but returned to fight. The 22nd Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry was from 2nd July 1916 a Pioneer Battalion in 8th Division.

In 1917 they saw action with the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line and action at the Battles of Pilkem (31 July-2nd August) and Langemarck (16-18th August) which were near Ypres.

In 1918 they were involved with the Battle of St. Quentin (21-23 March) the action of the Somme crossings (24-25 March) and the Battle of Rosieres (26-27th March). He went missing in the Bray sector near Proyart.

His parents did not hear from him and several weeks later they received communication that he was posted missing on 26th March. A friend who was taken prisoner later said that he was last seen working his gun.

Eddie although not able to say where he was in France often wrote to his relatives at home. “From somewhere in France” on March 16th 1917 he wrote: -

“I am fairing fairly well. The only trouble is the mud, of which there is plenty. Things are looking brighter and I think that we shall come to some decision this summer. Try and send me some Horlicks milk tablets in the next parcel and also some currant bread. Please don’t forget to send a few candles and I could also do with a pocket handkerchief or two.”

April 19th 1917

“We are having beautiful weather. It will not be long now before I am at home. We are getting great news every day Fritz is on the run and I hope he keeps running until he gets back to Germany which is the best place for him.”

April 24th 1917

“We have been transferred to the 22nd Division and are now in billets. This is a pioneer battalion and works behind the infantry making new trenches. We live in billets behind the lines and consider ourselves lucky to be transferred as it is much better than being in the infantry.”

Wednesday

“Just a few lines to let you know that your parcel arrived quite safe and in good condition. The currant bread was quite a treat and was enjoyed as much by my pals as myself. There are about 30 of us in the dugout and of course we always share food parcels. Yesterday five came and I can tell you we didn’t half have a bust up. You can send me a pair of socks and a bottle of Horlicks malted milk tablets they are very useful out here. Heard a lark the other day for the first time.”

June 16th 1917

I am glad to hear the strike about them employing women is over .It is much better to think that you at home are working with us instead of against as we have no doubt that with this combination we shall soon win an early victory. I am happy to hear Dewsbury can boast two V.C.’s. I knew that lad from Batley Carr. (Eddie was referring to Private Horace Waller, the other was Sergeant Willie Ormsby)

July 1st 1917

I hear the Dewsbury V.C. got a free reception – he no doubt deserved it.

Somewhere in France July 7th 1917

I am not getting tired of the dates. In fact, I look forward to them they are such a treat. It was not us who had to meet Fritz with a shovel it was 7th Battalion. I don't think I shall get leave for yet a while. When I come home, I want it to be for good. You will be surprised to hear I met Herbert Broadhead the other day, a chap who trained with me in England. He looked in the pink of condition. I paid him a visit the other day and we had a bust up to celebrate the occasion. I think we shall see a big change before long—well at least I am looking forward to having my Christmas

July 17th 1917

Will you send me some more safety razor blades? I think that is all I need at present.

September 18th 1917

I am very sorry you have had my letters returned but if you have not heard from me it is because I have been in hospital with shrapnel wound in my left arm. But I am quite alright now and back with my battalion. You told me in your last letter that you had sold my bike. You did quite right. It was no use letting it go to ruin, but don't part with the motor bike or I shall be very disappointed.

September 23rd 1917

I don't think it will be long before I am with you again. There seems to be a possibility of peace before Christmas according to the papers. Sooner the better. We are having a very quiet time of it at the present.

October 30th 1917

You only sent me one razor blade in the last parcel and that will not last until you send me some more. I could buy some here but that would cost me five francs 4s.2d. in English money for a dozen. What do you pay for them? You can send me a few candles they always come in useful. I shall be having my photo taken

at the first opportunity and I don't think it will be long before I get leave –maybe just after Christmas, or maybe before.

November 21st 1917

Thanks for your parcel. When it arrived, I was trying along with my chums to make our billet as comfortable as possible. It was a dismal looking cellar amongst the ruins of what was once a beautiful city. In the centre is an old fire place and the roof looks as if it has seen better times. It has to be propped up by stout beams to prevent it collapsing on top of us. It is by no means a pleasant place, but it is surprising how welcome it is when we return from the line weary and mud-stained. We have had plenty of rain recently lately but still I cannot grumble because we had a good spell of summer. I am still keeping well and shortly expecting some leave. I miss you all at home.

February 25th 1918

I have not had a letter from you for over a week and I hope there is nothing wrong at home. I have waited for the post to arrive every day, but have met with disappointment. We are miles away from civilisation and you cannot realise what a letter from home means to us out here. Keep having to stop to throw a brick at a blooming big rat. There are hundreds of the brutes out here. Keep smiling.

On May 4th 1918

Eddie's parents received notification from the War Office that their son was missing.

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

He is remembered with Honour at St. Paul's Church, Hanging Heaton, Hanging Heaton War Memorial and Batley War Memorial.

