Ambrose Goodwill Preston





Rank: - L/Sgt

Number: - 120

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry "D" Coy 1/4th Battalion

Killed by Sniper: - 29/05/1915 Age: 29 years

Cemetery: - Bois-Grenier Communal Cemetery, Nord, France H.6

"THY WILL BE DONE"

Batley News, 18 May 1915 (letter home), 5 Jun 1915 (photo)

Family Details

Ambrose Goodwill was born in Hanging Heaton in October 1885 the son of Edward and Fanny Preston nee Lawson who had married at Holy Trinity Church, Batley Carr on 4th October 1884. Edward was a flour miller when they married. Goodwill was his paternal grandmother's maiden name.

Myra was born in 1889 and in 1891 the family was living in Rouse Mill Lane, Soothill, Batley. Edward died in August 1896 and the family went to live at Commonside, Hanging Heaton where Fanny became a laundress to provide for her family.

Ambrose was a choir boy at St. Paul's and was an earnest worker for the church being especially associated with Young Men's Class and the Musical and Dramatic Society.

On the 22nd September 1906 Ambrose married Emily Loadsman from Bridle Street, Soothill at St. Paul's Church, Hanging Heaton. Phyllis was born on the 9th March 1907 followed by Ivy on 29th September 1908 but who sadly died aged 10 months in August 1909 and May in 1910. Ambrose was a rag warehouseman and the family in 1911 lived at Nursery Wood Road, Hanging Heaton.

Before going on active service he worked for Messrs. Henry Sykes, Bond Street, Dewsbury.

Service Details

Ambrose was a reservist at the outbreak of war and joined the unit on August 12th 1914 although he would probably have been with them at their annual camp which was at Whitby when war broke out. The Territorial Force immediately returned home and went to Wakefield as 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 embarked 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.

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. Clifford Parkin of Batley wrote home to his parents describing the action.

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.

A few days later Mrs Francis of Commonside, Hanging Heaton received a letter from her husband Private W. Francis (cousin of Ambrose): -

"I have just heard some bad news. Ambrose has been killed. Do your best to cheer his wife up. Mistakes do occur but I'm afraid the news is only too true. "

The following day another letter arrived from Private Francis: -

"You will have heard the sad news long before this reaches you. I got special permission to be at the graveside when they laid poor Ambrose to rest. The

parson was there and read the burial service over him, and he was buried in a proper cemetery. We are close to a village where a lot of our fellows are billeted. It was a sniper that shot him. I understand Ambrose was getting his teas when it occurred so he must have had his head above the parapet. Well, he died a soldier's death and we don't know whose turn it will be next. Still, always look on the Brightside we shan't all get shot. I expect the news will cause a sensation in Hanging Heaton as he was so well known and popular. The affair has made me a bit depressed but it wouldn't do for us all to study over everything. We need good spirits for the job we are in."

For twelve years before his death he had been a strong advocate of the Territorial force and had been a member of the old Volunteers.

His mother and sister lived at 158, Greenwood Buildings, Hanging Heaton, Batley.

Ambrose was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

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



Researched by members of
Batley History Group