Herman Preston M.M.





Rank: - Private

Number: - 50307

Regiment: - Northumberland Fusiliers (Formerly 21st Bn.) 25th (Tyneside Irish) Bn. "Fighting Fifth"

Missing, presumed killed in Action: - 8th April 1918 aged 28 years

Memorial: - Ploegsteert Memorial, Hainaut, Belgium Panel **2**

Batley Reporter, 19 Oct 1917 (photo), 31 May 1918. Batley News, 20 Oct 1917 (photo), 6 Sep 1919 (photo)

Family Details

Herman Preston was born in Batley in c. July 1889 the son of Jeremiah and Sarah Ann Preston nee Hardwick who had married at Batley Parish Church on 13th August 1887.

Sidney was born in 1888 followed by Herman and in 1891 the family was living at 41, White Lee Jail, Batley. Jeremiah gave his occupation as a blanket raiser. Hubert was born in 1892 followed by Herbert 1895 and Alfred 1898. Before 1901 the family had moved to live in Healey Lane, Batley. Jeremiah died in October 1903.

In 1911 Sarah Ann and her children were living at Colbeck Buildings in a 3 roomed home and Herman was working as a spinner for a cloth manufacturing company.

Herman married Nellie Harford in the 2nd Qtr 1916 and Malcolm was born the following year. The couple went to live at 5, Jacob Street, Woodwell, Batley.

Herman was a well-known member of Batley Cricket Club and also played for Healey and Heckmondwike. He was also a member of Batley Working Men's Club and attended Healey Congregational Church. Before enlisting he worked as a willeyer at Messrs. J.T. & J. Taylor's, Cheapside Mills, Batley.

Service Details

Herman enlisted on December 26th 1916 and went to France around August 1917. The 25th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers were attached to 103rd Brigade in 34th Division.

In 1917 they took part in the fighting at Hargicourt (August) and the Third Battles of Ypres (fighting for the Broenbeek, 13-23 October 1917).

Writing home, he said: -" You *say you were a bit bothered at not getting a letter from me for a week. You see we were training day and night for a "stunt" and I had no time to write. When we had done, we went over the top. You see I came out all right and have got the Military Medal. I took a message through a village the Germans were shelling very heavily and was buried twice with the debris of the shells they were sending over. We are now out of the trenches for a rest."*

His wife received this news in October 1917 and the Military Medal was confirmed in the London Gazette on the 19th November 1917. He had been wounded once since arriving in France.

His brothers were serving, Sydney and Herbert with the KOYLI in France, Hubert with the Irish Rifles and Alfred, who was formerly employed in the office of Mr. Henry Whitfield, solicitor, of Commercial Street Batley was in India with the exception of Alfred all the others had been wounded.

On the 3rd February 1918 the Battalion was transferred to the 102nd Brigade in the same Division and they took part in the Battle of St Quentin, a phase of the First Battles of the Somme 1918 (21-23rd March)

The third German offensive Operation Georgette took place in Flanders with the objective of capturing key railway and supply roads and cutting off British Second Army at Ypres. After initial successes the German attack is once again held after British and French reserves are somehow found and deployed. The first Battle was at Estaires from the 9th -11th April 1918.

Herman had gone missing presumed killed in action the day before this battle commenced.

Before 1919 his wife went to live in Ossett.

Herman was awarded the Military Medal, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour on the Irish Memorial, Christ Church, Staincliffe, Healey Congregational Church, Batley Working Men's Club and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group