James Lockwood Preston





Rank: - Gunner

Number: - 186927

Regiment: - Royal Field Artillery "D" Battery 11th Brigade (formerly SE/15156 Royal Army Veterinary Corps)

Missing, presumed killed in Action: - 13th April 1918 aged 30

Remembered with Honour: - Ploegsteert Memorial, Hainaut, Belgium. Panel 1

Batley News, 4 May 1918, 11 May 1918 (photo)

Family Details

James Lockwood Preston was born in Ossett on 13th November 1887 the son of Julius Mortimer and Sarah Jane Preston (nee Lockwood). He was baptised at Christ Church, South Ossett on 4th October 1890, the same day as his sister Gertrude born October 1885 in Aix-le-Chappel, Germany. Their brother John William had been born in Ossett in May 1881.
In 1891 the family were living at Back Lane, Ossett next door to John and Emma Lockwood. Julius, who came from Armley was a cloth drawer.
A decade later the family with the additions of Eleanor (1893) and Arthur (1899) had left Ossett to live at 15, Clerk Green Street, Batley and James worked as a butcher's boy. Charles Henry was born in 1902 and the family moved to live at 106, Commercial Street and James became a butcher, whilst his father still worked as a woollen cloth drawer.
James had attended Batley Parish Church School and was then apprenticed to Mr. Atkinson, butcher of Upper Commercial Street, Batley later going to work at Dewsbury Co-operative Society transferring to the Rotherham Co-op before he enlisted.
His sister, Eleanor, was a nurse at Dewsbury War Hospital.

Service Details

James enlisted at Woolwich and disembarked in France in 1916, at first he was in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps SE/15156., transferring to Royal Field Artillery "D" Battery 11th Brigade.
The 11th Brigade came under the command of the 3rd Canadian Division from 1914 until October 1916 when they transferred to the 4th Canadian Division with which they served until August 1917 when it became an Army Brigade. From February 1918 they were in the 2nd Army Brigade.

The 4th Canadians assembled at Bramshott and crossed to France in August 1916. The lack of artillery was a constraint but they fought at the Battles of Le Transloy, Ancre Heights, and Ancre in 1916. In 1917 they fought at the Battle of Vimy, affairs south of the River Souchez, capture of Avion and the Battle of Hill 70.
At the time of his death Gunner James Preston was serving with the 11th Brigade RFA under the command of the Australian Corps attached to IX Corps. On the day of James's death, 13th April 1918, the German forces were pushing on to the important centre of Hazebrouck, south of Ypres, but were stopped by the Australian 1st Division in what became known as the Battle of Hazebrouck.

James Lockwood Preston was missing presumed, killed in action on the 13th April 1918 most probably in this battle which was one of several which became known as the Battle of the Lys, the Lys Offensive or the Fourth Battle of Ypres. The following report is reproduced from the local newspaper and was published shortly after his death.
Although he sent a field card on April 13th to say he was keeping quite well, his parents received notification that Gunner James Lockwood Preston (30) R.F.A., son of Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Preston, 106, Commercial Street, Batley, is now officially stated as being killed on that date.
He had been in France two years. A younger brother, Pte. Arthur Preston (19) has been in France for a month with the Yorkshires. No news has been received from him during the last three weeks.

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

He is remembered with Honour at Batley Parish Church, Batley War Memorial, Ploegsteert Memorial and Ossett.net.