Walter Richardson





Rank: - Private

Number: - 78706

Regiment: - Durham Light Infantry 1/6th Battalion

Died from tuberculosis in captivity: - 1st October 1918 aged 18

Cemetery: - Grand-Seracourt British Cemetery, Picardy, France V11. C. 12

Batley Reporter, 2 Aug 1918. Batley News, 6 Jul 1918, 4 Jan 1919, 8 Feb 1919, 3 May 1919 (photo)

Family Details

Walter was born in Batley in 1898 the son of Arthur and Ada Richardson (nee Smith) who had married at Batley Parish on 26th November 1892.

Sarah Hannah was born in 1893 and died in 1905 followed by Sam 1894, Harry 1897, Walter and Ada 1903. The 1911 census shows there was another child who had died in infancy.

Walter attended Hanging Heaton Church and was a pupil at the Church Day School. Before he enlisted, he worked with his father at G.H. Hirst & Co., Alexandra Mills in the tentering department. The family lived at 31, Bromley Road, Hanging Heaton.

Service Details

Walter enlisted on 1st March 1917and went to France 1st January 1918.

The 1/6th Durham Light Infantry was part of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division and on 21st March -5th April 1918 Walter would have fought at the Battle of St. Quentin which was one of the Battles of the Somme 1918.



He would also have seen action at the Somme Crossings, Battle of Rosieres, Battle of Estaires (9-11th April 1918), and Battle of Hazebrouck 12th -15th April and the Battle of the Aisne which began around the 26th May1918.

The Third Battle of the Aisne was a battle of the German Spring Offensive that focused on capturing the Chemin des Dames Ridge before the American Expeditionary Forces arrived completely in France. It was one of a series of

offensives, known as the Kaiserschlacht, launched by the Germans in the spring and summer of 1918.

On the morning of 27 May 1918, the Germans began a bombardment of the Allied front lines with over 4,000 artillery pieces. The British suffered heavy losses, because Duchene was reluctant to abandon the Chemin des Dames ridge, after it had been captured at such cost the previous year, and had ordered them to mass together in the front trenches, in defiance of instructions from the French Commander-in-Chief Henri-Philippe Petain. Huddled together, they made easy artillery targets.

The bombardment was followed by a poison gas drop. Once the gas had lifted, the main infantry assault by 17 German Sturmtruppen divisions commenced, part of an Army Group nominally commanded by Crown Prince Wilhelm, , the eldest son of Kaiser Wilhelm . The Kaiser came to inspect the progress of the battle. He interviewed captured British Brigadier-General Hubert Rees (GOC 150th Brigade, part of 50th Division). The Kaiser was amused to learn that he was Welsh, the same nationality as Lloyd George.

Taken completely by surprise and with their defences spread thin, the Allies were unable to stop the attack and the German army advanced through 40 kilometres (25 mi) gap in the Allied lines. Reaching the Aisne in under six hours, the Germans smashed through eight Allied divisions on a line between Reims and Soissons, pushing the Allies back to the river Vesle and gaining an extra 15 km of territory by nightfall.

Victory seemed near for the Germans, who had captured just over 50,000 Allied soldiers and over 800 guns by 30 May 1918. But advancing within 56 kilometres (35 mi) of Paris on 3 June, the German armies were beset by numerous problems, including supply shortages, fatigue, lack of reserves and many casualties.

Walter was captured by the Germans on 27th May 1918 and sent a postcard home from Limburg in June. When his parents heard nothing else from him they appealed for any information. He was working behind the German lines in August 1918 with Private Edgar Blakeley of 19, Field Lane, Batley but he had to go to hospital and he lost contact with him.

They made inquiries to the Central Prisoners of War Committee and they replied on the 29th January 1919: -

"You must indeed be terribly anxious about him, and we feel there is cause for anxiety, as it is so long since you heard from him. A very great number of

prisoners who were made to work behind the lines did not survive the treatment and we receive hundreds of reports of death daily. On the other hand, prisoners are returning who have not been heard of for a very long time and there are still some men on their way home who was working in outlying districts and who did not immediately come into the main camps on the signing of the Armistice. The authorities assure us that these will be home in the next ten days. Lists will then come through of the men who have been kept in hospital in Germany because they are not yet fit to travel and these are well looked after by the British medical staff who are out there for this purpose. Very careful search will be made in Germany, France and Belgium for every prisoner who is unaccounted for and we would like to assure you we will let you know at once if we receive any more information."

Eventually they received news that he had been captured on 27th May 1918, he had been sick in a German hospital in Marle, Germany and had died on 1st October 1918 of tuberculosis.

His brother Harry had been killed on 20th November 1917

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

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



Researched by members of
Batley History Group