George Ridsdale





Rank: - Corporal

Number: - 4459

Regiment/Battalion: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 1st/4th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 18th August 1916 aged 37

Cemetery: - Lonsdale Cemetery, Authuille, V11.H.3

Batley News, 26 Aug 1916 (photo), 2 Sep 1916 (photo)

Family Details:

George was born in Batley on 30th March 1879, the son of George William and his wife Margaret (nee Hall). He was baptised at Batley Parish Church on 9thNovember 1879 when George William gave his occupation as a publican. The couple had married at Batley Parish on 13th February 1864 when he signed and Margaret made her mark. He gave his occupation as a mechanic.

In 1871 they were living in Cross Bank being the occupiers of the Albion Hotel.

Olley had been born in 1869 and they had a servant, Grace Ann Hall who it appears was Margaret's sister. Unfortunately, Olley died in October 1874 aged 5 years and 6 months.

Agnes (1872), Sarah Ann (1874), Oliver (1876) followed and in 1891 the family were living at Cross Bank Street and George William states he is a Master Beer and Porter bottler. Margaret died in December 1891 and Sarah Ann died 5 weeks later, followed by Oliver in February 1895.

George William married Charlotte Lamb, who came from Hanging Heaton, in 1897. George William was still at the same address and described as a Beer Bottler (dealer) and George was helping, being described as a beer bottler in the cellar. George William at some time was the licensee of the *Albion Hotel.*

George William was a local Councillor for Batley and both he and George were well known in local Conservative circles and members of Batley Conservative Club. George was also a prominent member of the Club's Tuesday bowling team. He was interested in sports of all kinds, particularly swimming, for which he had a large number of trophies. He won the quarter mile amateur swimming championship of Yorkshire in 1898 and 1900. George was also a Cross Bank and Carlinghow property owner. Charlotte died in February 1903 and George William, died in December 1905.

George married Ada Ann Riding at Batley Parish Church on 30th December 1901 when his occupation was described as a beer bottler and his father was a wholesale beer bottle merchant. Ada Ann was a weaver from Ward's Hill, Batley.

Their daughter, Margaret was born in 1902 and by 1911 the family was living at 6, North Street, Batley and George had become a grocer with a live in servant

Mary Ellen Riding, who was Ada Ann's sister, but she married in 1914 and gave her occupation as a weaver although still lived at 6, North Street at the time of her marriage. George and Ada had a son George William in the summer of 1911.

Service Details:

George joined the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 1st/4th Battalion in early 1915 and went to the Front in April 1916.The battalion was part of the 49th (West Riding) Division.

He had been fighting near Thiepval since 1st July and fought in the following battles: -

Battle of Albert 1 -13th July 1916

Battle of Bazentin Ridge 14th -17th July 1916

Battle of Pozieres Ridge 23rd July-7th August 1916

George had been made a Lance Corporal shortly after arriving in France and had received his second stripe only a few weeks before he died.

On the last day of July 1916 Lt. Chadwick of the 1/4th wrote home to his mother describing how they were plagued with mosquitoes and "*Haven't had clothes off for a two weeks and things are becoming quite lively. Will you please send me out some scent; the extraordinary mixture of odours in the trenches is becoming almost unbearable."*

The 1/4th moved back to Hedauville for training between 2nd-8th August whilst the 1/5th was in the front-line digging parallels between Thiepval and the River Ancre. On the 9th August the 1/5th were replaced by the 1/4th who continued digging until the 18th when they joined the 1/5th in Forceville.

In letters to his mother and father Lt. Chadwick wrote on the 25th August: -

"I cannot express in word the extraordinary bravery and wonderful endurance of the men. There is one great consolation at these times that is, the excellent example of the fellows who have gone. "

The following day he wrote to his father: -

"How many homes in England have been darkened during the last few weeks Oh! But it is a glorious thing. Men going to certain death with a smile on their faces, the only thought being for those at home. England has something to be justly proud of."

Lt. Cocker wrote home to his wife Mrs. Cocker from the Somme: -

"*You at home see the tragedy of events in a much different sense to us out here. We don't see the weeping bereaved broken hearts out here. Men come and go for ever, and the only expression of grief which is exhibited by any one, is summed up in a remark which I heard the other day by a man who had just lost his best pal ,- with a look of fierce rage he broke out – "Sithee ! Th' first blanking German 'at ah catch 'OD on ah'll murder 'im by inches, ah'll –"then followed such a harrowing description of slow torture as would put hero or Kaiser into shade! "*

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The Colonel of his company wrote to his wife, Mrs Ridsdale: -

"I regret to inform you that your husband Corporal G. Ridsdale of the company under my command was killed on the 17th inst. Please accept my deepest sympathy in this your sad bereavement. There is, however, some consolation in the fact that your husband did his duty and died as a true soldier fighting to uphold the honour and glory of the British Empire."

His Company Sergeant Major also sent a letter: -

"It is with regret I have to inform you of the death of your husband which took place on the 18th inst. He was on a working party during that night and had just finished when a shell came and killed him instantaneously. He suffered no pain and died a soldier. I cannot say how sorry both I and all the officers and sergeants are at losing him. He was always willing and cheerful and always did his work to the best of his ability without a word of complaint. I can honestly say he was one of my best NCO's and would have got on except for this unfortunate business. He

is buried in a small burial ground just behind the line and will be notified to you later."

A further letter arrived from a sergeant to his wife who resided at 6, North Street, Cross Bank: -

"I am about to inform you of some very sad news, and I hope you and your family will take it as lightly as possible. George was killed with a shell along with another lad and God willed that he had to bear no pain, as he was killed instantaneously. I saw him only the day before, he was in the best of health. Up to the last his one thought was of you and home. It feels to me as if I had lost a brother in George, as we always remained the best of pals. I enclose three sets of rosary beads which he was going to send on to you. He is buried at a place near to where he was killed, alongside the other lad, and the service was led by Rev. Capt. Jones of the Division. You must be content that he was put away nicely. I give you my deepest sympathy.

The other lad would probably have been Clifton Spencer of Alverthorpe who was from 1/4th KOYLI and killed on the same day.

He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal

George is remembered with Honour on Batley War Memorial, St. John's Carlinghow, Cross Bank Wesleyan Chapel, Lonsdale Cemetery and Batley Conservative Club.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group