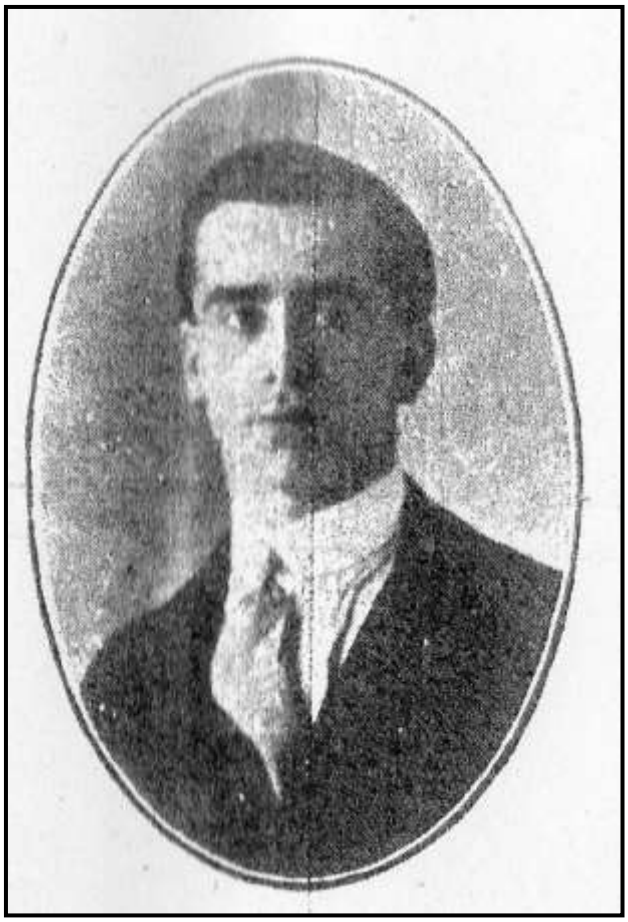
George Roberts



Rank: - Private

Number: - 1931

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 4th Reserve Bn

Died from gunshot wound sustained in an accident whilst billeted at Aldborough. Died Hull Royal Infirmary: - 24/03/1915 Age: 23 years

Cemetery: - Batley, Yorkshire O 208

Batley News, 27 Mar 1915 (photo), 3 Apr 1915

Family Details

George Roberts was born 9th March 1892 and christened at Batley Parish Church, 27th April 1892. His parents were Tom Roberts and Emily Smith who were married at Batley Parish Church, 16th November 1889. George had 2 brothers John William (1890) and Tom (1904). His sisters were Ivy (1893), Bertha (1895), Lily (1897) and Emma (1902). In 1911 the family were living at 16 Harrop Row, near Charles Street, Batley. His father Tom was a well-known miner at Soothill. George was working as a finisher on the night shift at Brearley's Queen Street Mills.

On the 11th April 1914 George married Ellen Hardcastle of Thornhill Lees, Dewsbury at Batley Parish Church. Their son also named George was born later that year. The young couple lived with George's family at 5 Crown Street, Batley.

Service Details

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George had joined the Territorial Army in 1912 and enlisted in Batley at the start of the war. His details are given as Private 1931 4th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

In February 1915 he was sent to Aldborough, a coastal village near Hull, to patrol the coast. At the time Aldborough was quite remote being about 12 miles from Hull and several miles from a railway station. He was billeted to a house in Aldborough with several members of his battalion. On Tuesday 23rd of March, whilst preparing to go on sentry duty, he charged the magazine of his rifle. Another soldier picked up the rifle and it accidently discharged. The bullet passed through George Robert's side and he was taken to Hull Royal Infirmary. His situation became critical and a telegram was sent to his wife Ellen. Together with her mother-in-law Emily she hurried to be with him but he died on the afternoon of the 24th March before they arrived. Only that morning had they received a letter from George saying he was to have a minor operation in Leeds.

He said he was well despite needing surgery and asked that they " Bear brave hearts and keep smiling faces."

His funeral was held with full military honours at Batley Cemetery. The coffin, draped with the Union Jack was borne through the streets from the Market Place along Upper Commercial Street and Blakeridge Lane. Thousands lined the route and attended the service in Batley Cemetery. The Reverend Hugh Jenkins conducted the committal. He had recently moved to Hanover Street Congregational Chapel from Hull and he and his wife were a personal friend of Miss Alice Atkinson who had been George's landlady at the time of the accident in Aldborough and she had come to pay her respects. A firing party of his comrades attended as did Batley Old Band. The Last Post was sounded. His widow Ellen carried young George and laid a wreath of white flowers in the shape of a harp with a broken string.

His friend Ewart Whiteley Mann who had lodged with the Robert's family wrote the following to the Batley News. " I am sure you will believe me when I express my deepest sorrow, for was he not like a brother to me - one of my best friends in the world and now whilst bravely and nobly serving his King and Country he has been called home to the greatest King of all. George was a brave, steadfast and true soldier - aye he was a soldier, every inch of him."

Further heartache came to the family when baby George died in the summer of 1915. Ellen remarried Oliver Wass of Thornhill Lees in 1916 and had 6 more children including a son born in 1922 whom she named George.

Susan White, Batley History Group

December 2014

