Frank Robinson





Rank: - Private

Number: - 202113

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (Formerly 4889) 2/5th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 27/11/1917 Age: 35 years

Cemetery: - Hermies Hill British Cemetery, France 11.D.5

Batley News, 9 Feb 1918 (photo)

Family Details

Frank was born in Carlinghow, Batley in c.1882 the son of James and Hannah Robinson nee Barratt, who had married on 30th Nov 1872 at Dewsbury Parish Church.

He had an older sister, Rachel Ann, born in December 1877 in Carlinghow and in 1891 the family was living at 22, Lidgate Lane, Batley Carr. His father was a firer at a mill and his mother worked as a woollen weaver.

Other siblings were, Mary Annie 1891-March 1895 and Margaret Nance 1895. James died in March 1900 and in 1901 his mother, who had tried to keep the family together by working as a weaver, was in the Union Workhouse at Dewsbury. James had for many years worked as an engineer for the late firm of Messrs. Hayes and Richardson, Well Lane, Batley.

On Christmas Day 1897 Rachel Ann married Harry Windle at Batley Parish Church and Frank was living with this family when the census was taken in 1901 at Melton Street, Dewsbury. His mother died in April 1905.

On the 19th March 1905 at St. Matthew's Church, West Town, Dewsbury Frank married Rose Butcher. Rose already had a son Arthur Butcher born c.1904.

Tom was born on 11th November 1905 and was baptised privately at Dewsbury Parish Church on 12th April 1909 but sadly died shortly afterwards when the family was living at 20, Back Belgrave Street, Dewsbury, Edith Annie was born in 1908 followed by Willie 1910.

In 1911 Rose, with Arthur, Edith Annie and Willie were living in a one roomed home at 19, Pitt Street, Dewsbury with her widowed mother Caroline Butcher. She states that five children had been born to the marriage but two had died and she was working as a twister at a woollen mill.

Frank was five feet 3 inches tall and had brown hair and seems to have spent some time at Wakefield for either assault or neglecting his children.

Frank had worked at Bullock's sweet factory at Dewsbury as a firer before working Messrs. J. Turner & Co., yarn spinners at Savile Town prior to enlisting.

Rose married Reginald Clegg on 27th September 1919 at St. Matthew's Church, West Town, Dewsbury. Neither parent must have cared a great deal for the children because according to Frank's records George Riley was the guardian of Edith Annie and Willie. Edith received news of her father's death on the eve of her tenth birthday and was in the care of neighbours. Frank lived at Spafield Yard, Batley Carr.

Service Details

Frank had served four years in the Regular Army and eight years as a Reservist. He was called up as a Reservist at the outbreak of war and had served for two years in France being wounded twice before he was killed. This is according to newspaper reports but we can find no record of him receiving the 1915 Star so he must not have gone to France before 1916.

After being wounded he would have changed to the 2/5th Battalion but it is not known when he joined them, but they did not go to France until January 1917.

The 2/5th Battalion was attached to 187th Brigade in 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division. They returned to the line in June 1917 after a rest and reorganisation after fighting from February to the end of May 1917 where they began several months of trench holding.

On October 1917 they moved into hutments at Beaulencourt , where it trained for open warfare in preparation for the forthcoming Battle of Cambrai, including training with the Tank Corps at Wailly.

The surprise attack was launched at dawn on 20 November, with no preceding bombardment; the artillery crashed down on its targets at zero hour.

The divisional objective for the second day of the attack (21 November) was Bourlon Wood, for which 187th Bde was in reserve. However, there were fewer tanks available and progress was slower than on the first day. Anneux was taken but Bourlon Wood remained out of reach. A dawn counter-attack by the Germans on 22nd November ended any further advances. 62nd Division was relieved by 40th Division in a tricky operation that night.

The division was back in Bourlon Wood on 27th November for another attempt to complete its capture. 187 Brigade led on the left at 06.20 with 16 of the

remaining tanks to take Bourlon Village. 2/5th KOYLI and 2/5th York & Lancasters followed 11 tanks of F Battalion Tank Corps. Four tanks and a KOYLI company were to cover the left flank by dealing with machine gun posts in the Marcoing Line. It was dark and snowing: the infantry had difficulty keeping up with the creeping barrage and when the tanks and infantry entered Bourlon they found the village a network of formidable defences hardly touched by the shellfire. The flanking party lost its direction and failed, so that the rest of the battalion was badly hit by enfilade fire from the left. After two hours' fighting the battalion was driven out of Bourlon. It was relieved at the end of the day. The division had however succeeded in taking the last of Bourlon Ridge, which had been fought over for a week. The exhausted West Riding division was then relieved (under a hail of German gas shells) before the German counter-attack took back all the hard-won ground a few days later.

Frank was killed during this battle. He left his effects to his sister Rachel Windle.

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

He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group