Percy Sykes Shaw





Rank: - Corporal

Number: - 3/1020

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 2nd Battalion

Killed in Action: - 10th July 1917 aged 26 years

Cemetery: - Coxyde Military Cemetery, West Vlaanderen, Belgium 1.D.3.

"IN THE MIDST OF LIFE, WE ARE IN DEATH"

Batley News, 4 Aug 1917 (photo)

Family Details

Percy Sykes Shaw was born in Batley in early 1891 the son of Albert Edward and Elizabeth Shaw (nee Sykes). When he was 2 months old the census for 1891 was taken and he was living with his parents at 10, Blakeridge Lane, Batley.

His brother Charles James was born in April 1895 followed by Kate in February 1897. They were both baptised at St. Thomas's Church on 10th March 1897 when the family lived in Wilton Street and Albert was employed as a warper.

In 1901 both parents were working, Soothill born Albert was a beamer and Elizabeth, who came from Bedale was a weaver and the family was living at 5, Mill Lane, Batley.

Elizabeth Alice was born in 1902 but died in early December aged 9 months. Benjamin was born in November 1903 but sadly died aged 18 months in May 1905. George William born in August 1906 only lived for 14 days. Albert E was born in 1910.

In 1911 the family was living in a 2 roomed home at 15, Mill Lane, Batley and the census states Percy was a napper in a woollen mill. It also says there were five children of the marriage still alive.

Percy attended Park Road Council School and had a lifelong connection with the Zion Chapel and Sunday school. He was employed before the war by Mr. George Hollies of Batley as a carrier.

Charles James was serving with the Royal Munster Fusiliers at the time of Percy's death. His parents lived at 20, Field Lane, Batley.

Service Details

Percy was in the special reserves for 6 years and was mobilised immediately war broke out. He went to France within six months of the outbreak of war. He was in many heavy engagements and was wounded twice, the first time shortly after his arrival at the Front and the second time in February 1917.

The 2nd Battalion of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry was in Dublin when war broke out on the 4th August 1914. It was part of 13th Brigade, 5th Division. On the 16th August it landed at Le Havre and fought at the Battle of Mons and

subsequent retreat, Battles of Le Cateau, and the affair of Crepy-en-Valois, Marne, Aisne, La Bassee and Messines and the First Battle of Ypres.

In 1915 the regiment fought at the second Battle of Ypres and the Capture of Hill 60. In December 1915 it was transferred to the 97th Brigade, 32nd Division.

In 1916 he would have fought at the Battles of Albert, Bazentin, and the Ancre which were all on the Somme.

In 1917 the Battalion took part in operations on the Ancre and the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line.

On the 1st July 1917 the Battalion was at Nieuport where they remained until moving into the trenches in the Lombart –Zyde Sector, they remained there until around 2 am on the 9th when they returned to Nieuport to be in reserve. The casualties for the previous four days were Officers: - 2 killed, 9 wounded, other ranks: - 31 killed, 104 wounded of which 7 had died after reaching the casualty clearing station.

Just after midnight on the 10th a heavy bombardment of the enemy's lines began and lasted until after 2 am.

Between 4 .30 am and 9.35 am the enemy intermittently shelled Nieuport. At 9.50 am hostile fire became much heavier and the British retaliated with an intensive bombardment of the enemy lines and a fierce Artillery duel was sustained.

At 12.56 pm orders were received from the Brigade to send one company up to the sub sector held by the 16th Highland L.I. to strengthen their position. B company did this going by Putney Bridge. At 1.47 pm orders were received for A company to go and join them and to come under the orders of the commanding officer of the H.L.I. The enemy's artillery fire and their own was then extremely intense and the town of Nieuport was under bombardment from guns of all sizes. At 9.14 pm orders were received to send another company to reinforce the 16th Battalion H.L.I. and another to reinforce the 11th Battalion Border Regiment.

All four companies of the battalion had gone and only Battalion H Q and the staff were left who were organised into making meals and conveying them to the fighting men.

It was reported in the Batley News that he was killed at the same time as Lionel Maurice Newsome of the battalion when a cellar they were in was shelled and the roof fell in killing eight men at around 11am.It was too dangerous to dig them out and a wooden cross was erected over the cellar to mark their grave.

Percy Sykes Shaw was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal

He is remembered with Honour at Coxyde Military Cemetery, Batley War Memorial and the Zion Methodist Church, Batley.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group