Arthur Sheard





Rank: - Private

Number: - 30529

Regiment: - Highland Light Infantry 17th (Service) Battalion 3rd Glasgow

Killed in Action: - 18th November 1916 aged 19

Cemetery: - New Munich Trench British Cemetery, Beaumont –Hamel, Picardie, France. F 18

"YOUNGEST SON OF W. J. AND A. E. SHEARD BATLEY, YORKSHIRE, ENGLAND"

Batley News, 2 Dec 1916 (photo)

Family Details:

Arthur Sheard was born on 4th September 1897 the youngest son of William James and Anne Elizabeth (Nee Ward) both born Batley. He was baptised at Batley Parish on the 4th October 1897, where his parents had married in 1873.

William, a butcher, started married life in Batley where his first three children were born Elizabeth Ann (1874), John Ward (1875), Frank (1878). The family then moved to Staincliffe and a further two children were born, Henry Ward (1879) and Charles William (1881). They were living at 15, Hanover Street for the birth of William James (1887) and Arthur (1897). Arthur's elder brothers joined William in the butchery trade. Their father had become a master butcher before 1911 and was able to employ a domestic servant living with them.

Arthur attended Batley Parish Day School and Batley Grammar School before going to Glasgow to work at the Clydesdale Bank. He worked there for about 3 years before joining the Forces under the Derby Scheme.

Service Details:

Arthur joined the Forces under the Derby Scheme. He enlisted in Glasgow when living at 34, Trefoil Avenue, Glasgow, and was sent to the Front in October 1917. By the spring of 1915 the men joining the Forces were dwindling and something needed to be done. National registration started on 15th July to see how many men between the ages of 15 and 65 were employed in what trade. It showed almost 5 million who were not of military age was not in the forces and only 1.6 million were in protected jobs or trades. In October 1915 Lord Derby became Director General of Recruiting Men aged between 18 and 40 were informed they could either volunteer or attest with an obligation to say they would come if called up later on .Men who attested were in Band "A" and those who agreed to immediate service were in Band "B". Arthur would have been called up no later than late January 1916

The 17th Highland Light Infantry was on the Somme in France. On the 4th October the Battalion took over "Village Trench" in the Cambrin Sector (Maison Rouge) taking over the front from the Border Regiment. They left Beuvry proceeding to Labeauvriere on the 16th October Hardinval 18th to Rubempre 21st Bouzincourt 23rd back to Rubempre and on to Canaples on the 31st via Talmas and Navurs. This trekking was usually done in wet weather with cold nights and they were living under canvas. On the 1st November they moved to Val-de-Maison and then to

Vadencourt, followed by Martinsart Valley on the 15th November, where they were ordered to go into action at Beaumont Hamel.

The attack against the Germans commenced at 6 .10 am on the morning of 18th November, a day of ice-covered slushiness and intense cold. It was held up owing to the inefficiency of the artillery barrage and the heavy enemy machine gun fire. At 7.42 a.m. the message came into the Battalion from the right-hand Company that the Company Commander was wounded and that a Sergeant and about ten men were holding the right flank. The jumping off trench known as New Munich Trench was manned by the Battalion machine gunners with a view to concentrating some of the Companies in it back across "no man's land "to form a rallying point. At 8.30 a.m. the following message was received by the 17th Highland Light Infantry from 2nd Lieut. Macbeth of the right Company.

"*Am holding old front line with remainder of Battalion, and have established bombing post on the right. There are only Lieut. Martin and myself in the trench. "*

The left Company was also being hard pressed. It was reported by one of the Battalion officers that when the barrage opened a great number of shells fell just in front of New Munich Trench where the attacking companies were lying out, killing and a large number of the Battalion. When the barrage lifted, and the first wave of the men attempted to go forward, their dark forms showed up against the snow .They were met by machine gun fire, by rapid fire from the enemy trenches and by snipers hidden in skilfully chosen holes .The bombardment had failed. Many men were killed in action others by trying to bring in the wounded.

The war diary gives an account of the fight from Lieutenant Martin: -

"When barrage opened, a great number of shells fell just short in front of New Munich trench where our companies were out, killing and wounding a large number of men. When the barrage lifted on to Munich trench for four minutes it was still short and when the leading waves came up to about 50 or 60 yards from Munich trench following the barrage, I saw the Germans lying in the trench in force. So near was I that I opened fire with my revolver."

A letter was received from his officer to his father: -

"I am sorry to inform you that your son, 30529 Pvte. A. Sheard was killed this morning of the 18th inst when we were in action. He was one of the finest boys I had in my platoon, and I must say in all occasions, I have found him a very obliging lad.

If there is any information, I can give you, I shall be very pleased to do so. I send you my sympathy."

On the headstone for Arthur it bears the words: -

Youngest son of W.J. and A.E. Sheard, Batley, Yorkshire

On the 17th November 1917 a Memorial was in the Batley News: -

Sheard: *In loving memory of Private Arthur Sheard aged 19, who were killed in action, November 18th 1916 whilst serving with the Highland Light Infantry in France. Sixth and youngest son of William James and Annie E. Sheard of 15, Hanover Street, Batley, Yorks.*

The Path of Duty was the Way to Glory.

On 22nd November 1919 a Roll of Honour in the Batley News said: -

Sheard: *In loving memory of Arthur Sheard, 17th Highland Light Infantry, who was killed in action at Beaumont Hamel, November 18th 1916, aged 19years, and was interred at New Munich Cemetery 5 1/2 miles North of Albert, youngest son of William James and Annie E. Sheard, Hanover Street, Batley, and brother and brother-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. Porteous, Trefoil Avenue, Glasgow.*

Arthur is commemorated on Batley War Memorial, Batley Grammar School, Batley Parish Church and New Munich Trench Military Cemetery along with another 87 killed on the same day.

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



Researched by members of
Batley History Group