William Arthur Sheard



Rank: - L/Cpl

Number: - 301772

Regiment: - Durham Light Infantry (Formerly 6114 DLI, 42319 Northumberland Fusiliers, 27162 KOYLI) 1/8th Battalion

Died in captivity at Quedlinburg: - 31/10/1918 Age: 23 years

Cemetery: - Niederzwehren Cemetery, Hessen, Germany V111.G.14

Batley Reporter, 17 Jan 1919, 31 Oct 1919

Family Details

William Arthur was born in Batley in c.1896 the son of Simon and Elizabeth Ann Sheard nee Terry, who had married on the 25th December 1889 at Batley Parish Church.

In 1901 the family was living at 85, Bradford Road, Batley, not far from the bottom of Taylor Street, and Simon was working on his own account as a market gardener. James Henry Ewart was born in 1899 but sadly died in August 1899 aged seven months.

In 1911 the family was living at 177, Bradford Road, Batley and Simon was an employer and worker, being a landscape gardener. William Arthur and his sister Sarah Elizabeth, born 1897, were both still at school.

William Arthur attended Warwick Road School and Batley Grammar School and was intimately connected with the Independent Methodist Church, Batley where he was a member of the choir and a Sunday School teacher. After leaving school he worked for his father as a florist/market gardener. His mother died in December 1920.

Service Details

William Arthur enlisted on the 12th December 1915 into the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and was with several regiments before joining the 1/8th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry on October 20th 1916. He was only a short man being 5 ft 5inches tall.

In 1918they took part in

The Battle of St Quentin (21-23 March),the Actions at the Somme Crossings, the Battle of Rosieres (26-27 March)
which were phases of the First Battles of the Somme 1918
The Battle of Estaires (9-11 April)
The Battle of Hazebrouck (12-15 April)
which were phases of the Battles of the Lys
The Battle of the Aisne (27 May -6 June)

A small and tired British force, sent to the Chemin des Dames in exchange for fresh French divisions that went north, was struck and virtually destroyed as part of another German offensive, Operation Bluecher. Before the German attack, IX Corps held the sector of front between Bouconville and Berméricourt. From west to east this line drops sharply from the heights of the Chemin des Dames ridge near Craonne, down onto flatter ground through La Ville-au-Bois and Berry-au-Bac on the River Aisne. The German attack succeeded in pushing the Allies across the Aisne and down as far as the Marne at Chateau Thierry, capturing the towns of Soissons and La Fere-en-Tardenois as they did so.

Nothing happened until a report came on the evening of the 26th May 1918 that a prisoner had stated that the following a three-hour bombardment the enemy was going to attack at 4 am on the 27th. Everyone was warned to be on alert and at 1 am the enemy barrage began with high explosive shrapnel and gas shells. The report in the war diary reported that "*the enemy attacked at 4.30am from Soissons to Rheims".* The confusion of the days fighting was summed up by the commanding officer, Lt. Colonel Kirkup *"a story of the officers gathering together what men they could and fighting the enemy in a series of individual battles in different localities."*

The casualties for the 8th Durham Light infantry for the day was seven killed, 70 wounded, 371 other ranks missing. It was during this unexpected attack that many prisoners were taken including William Arthur.

William Arthur was posted missing on the first day of this battle but his parents received cards from him because he had been taken prisoner and taken to Germany. A friend from Wakefield informed his parents in January 1919 that he had died. It not known if he died from wounds or the influenza epidemic which was sweeping Europe at this time.

In 1919 his parents put the following in the Batley Reporter: -SHEARD

In loving memory of our dear son, Lance-Cpl W.A. Sheard D.L.I. who lost his life on October 31st 1918, at Quedlinburg, aged 22, the only son of Mr. and Mrs. S. Sheard, Broomhill House, Batley.

Peace—but at a cost. Understood only by those who have loved and lost. From Father, Mother and Sister Sallie.

William Arthur was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal

He is remembered with Honour at Warwick Road J.I. & N. School; Batley Grammar School and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group