Arthur Smith





Rank: - Private

Number: - 34990

Regiment: - East Yorkshire Regiment 13th Battalion

Missing, presumed Killed in Action: - 3rd May 1917 aged 35

Remembered with Honour: - Arras Memorial Bay 4 &5

"TOO DEARLY LOVED TO BE FORGOTTEN FROM MOTHER &FAMILY"

Batley News, 8 Jun 1918, 15 Jun 1918 (photo)

Family Details:

Arthur was the son of Fred and Emma born on the 19th May 1882.He was baptised at Batley Parish Church on 2nd July 1882. Fred was described as a finisher and both he and Emma (Nee Pickles) were from Batley and they had married at the local church in January 1882.

They settled into married life at 18, Back Crescent Street , Carlinghow , Batley, a one up and one down house, and this was where Herbert, Arthur's brother was born in 1889. In 1901 Arthur was working as a stone mason and still living at the same address. Arthur married Ada Haigh on 8th October 1904 at Purlwell Wesleyan Chapel and moved to 60, Dark Lane , Batley. This was a 3 roomed house . Their son Herbert was born on 30th April 1905.

Arthur was a prominent member of Batley and District Orchestral Society being their secretary at one time and also interested in the Co-operative Movement and served for a time on the Batley Co-operative Society Building Committee. At some stage between 1911 and 1915 he had a career change and became a caretaker.

In 1919, two years after the death of her husband, Ada married Francis J. Mann.

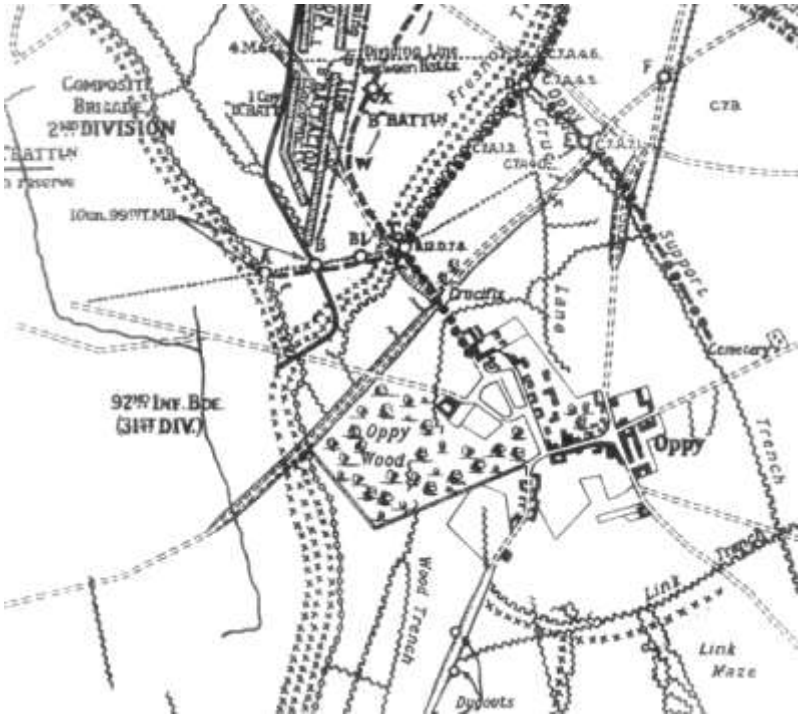
Service Details:

Arthur enrolled in Batley and was Private 41583 Durham Light Infantry moving later to 13th Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment as Private 34990.

The 13th Battalion was commonly known as T'Others and was formed in Hull in 1914. In June 1915 they came under the command of 92nd Brigade 31st Division.

In 1916 the Division took over the No 3 Sector of the Suez Canal defences and Divisional HQ moved to Kantara on 23rd January. The stay in Egypt was short, and between 1st -6th March the Division sailed to Marseilles for service on the Western Front. The 31st Division subsequently remained in France and Flanders and took part in these actions, the Battle of Albert including the attack on Serre, the Battle of the Ancre which were phases of the Battles of the Somme 1916. In 1917 they were involved with Operations on the Ancre, the Third Battle of the Scarpe and the Capture of Oppy Wood.

Despite the flanking operation being only partly successful, the main attack planned for 3 May (known officially as the Third battle of the Scarpe) went in as planned. Once again, part of First Army's objective was the capture of Oppy. It failed, with heavy losses. Amongst the factors was a late change of plan in which the start time was given as 3.45am (in the dark) when previous plans had called for a daylight operation: this change came too late for it to be put properly into effect and therefore "a night attack was carried out, based on dispositions suited to an attack at dawn ... it was impossible to distinguish a line of men at a distance of 50 yards until 4.05am". The advancing British infantry were however shown up in stark silhouette by a setting full moon, and made easy targets. The 63rd Division had been relieved by the 31st Division, which also took over half of the 2nd Division's front for the attack: it would now have the task of taking Oppy. When they attacked, 93rd Brigade on the right made good progress; 92nd Brigade was cut down in the morass of fallen trees, wire and trenches of the wood; and the enemy took advantage of this to counter attack which also forced 93rd Brigade back to their start point. Lieutenant John Harrison of the 11th (Service) Battalion of the East Yorkshire Regiment was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for his part in this.



It was reported that Arthur and another man were last seen in a shell hole.

The Arras Memorial commemorates almost 35.000 service men from the United Kingdom, South Africa and New Zealand who died in the Arras sector between the spring of 1916 and 7 August 1918 the eve of the Advance to Victory and have no known grave .The most conspicuous of this period were the Arras offence of April-May 1917 and the German attack of 1918.

Arthur is commemorated on Batley Parish Church, Batley War Memorial, Wellington Street Wesleyan Church, Batley Working Mens' Club and the Arras Memorial along with another 4,966 missing on the same day.

He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal



Researched by members of
Batley History Group