John Smith





Rank: - Private

Number: - 12/1063

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 12th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 01/07/1916 cwgc Age: 37 years (Some sources say 15 July 1916)

Cemetery: - Euston Road Cemetery, Colincamps, Somme, France 1.D.15

Batley Reporter, 4 Aug 1916. Batley News, 12 Aug 1916 (photo)

Family Details

John was born in Hulme, Manchester in c1880 the son of William and Elizabeth Smith nee Littlewood.

In 1881 he was living with his parents and older siblings Ada Agnes 1876 and William 1877 at 15, Robinson Street, Hulme. His father gave his employment as iron filler at an art metal works. A decade later all the children were still at school but the family had moved to live at 120, Garden Street, Hulme.

In 1901 John married Lilian Brown, in the Prestwich area and they continued to live in this area until after the birth of Arthur in 1907. In 1911 the family which included John, Lilian, Amy born c.1902, Edith 1905 and Arthur 1907, were living at 7, Chancery Lane, Ossett. The census shows the couple had lost two of their children in infancy.

John and his family were living at 116, Linwood Terrace, High Street, Hanging Heaton and worked at Shaw Cross Colliery (Crawshaw and Warburton's) before he enlisted.

Service Details

Immediately at the outbreak of war John joined a Miners Battalion and had been in France some considerable time before he was killed.

The 12th Battalion of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry was a Service Miners, Pioneers Battalion known as t'owd 12th.

The 12th (Service) Battalion (Miners) (Pioneers) was formed in Leeds on 5th September 1914 by the West Yorkshire Coal Owners Association.

They moved to Farnley Park (Otley). In May 1915 they moved to Burton Leonard (Ripon) and attached as Pioneer Battalion to 31st Division. Moving to Fovant in October 1915 and in December 1915 to Egypt. They went on to France in March 1916.

The headquarters for the Fifth Army on 22nd May 1916 was at Regnières-Ecluse on 12th June 1916 at Daours and on 2nd July 1916 at Toutencourt.

On the 1st July the Battalion assembled at Mollingham at 5.50 am and re-assembled after fighting at the assembly points at 4.30 pm where it was

approximately reported that 197 all ranks including one officer killed and three wounded. On 15th July the Battalion was at Epinette and marched to their billets at Regnier Le Clerc.

It is not known for certain if John was killed on the 1st or 15th July 1916. His wife received a letter from a comrade saying her husband had been killed. She hoped this was incorrect and it was not until the second week in August that she received official news from the War Office stating it was true. It seems most probable that with reading the War Diaries of the 12th Battalion he was killed on the 1st July.

John was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at St. Paul's Church, Hanging Heaton and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group