Harry Sowden





Rank: - Private

Number: - 301183

Regiment: - Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment) 2nd Battalion (formerly 1/4th Royal Scots)

Missing, presumed Killed in Action: - 27th September 1918 aged 27 years

Memorial: - Vis-en-Artois Memorial, Pas-de-Calais, France Panel 3

Family Details

Harry was born in Gildersome on the 13th February 1891 the son of Henry and Martha Sowden (nee Greenwood). The couple both came from Gildersome and married at Batley Parish Church on the 6th January 1872.

In 1891 the family was living at New? Yard, Church Street, Gildersome but before the next census had moved to live at 24, Brearley Place, Purlwell Lane, Batley. His siblings were Henry 1875, Oliver 1877 who went to Canada, Mary Alice 1880 and Wilfred 1883,

Harry attended Purlwell Council School and Wellington Street Primitive Methodist Sunday School. After leaving school he served his apprenticeship as a painter and decorator with Mr. Edgar Milnes, painter and decorator of Wellington Street, Batley and afterwards went to work for Mr. Ed. Briggs also of Wellington Street.

In 1911 Harry was living with his parents and brother Wilfred at 24, Brearley Place, Purlwell Lane, Batley giving his occupation as a house painter. The census shows there had been nine children born alive but five had died in infancy.

It is probable his father died in 1912 and his mother, Martha, in 1919.

Service Details

Harry enlisted at Pontefract under the Derby scheme on the 15th February 1916 into the KOYLI and transferred to the Royal Scots on the 15th April 1916. According to his attestation papers he was 5 feet tall weighed 89 lbs and was born on the 13th February 1891. He was admitted to Hamilton Road Hospital, Colchester with an abscess on his face on the 20th July 1916 where he remained for 6 days although on his release it was also reported that the burns on his groin had healed. He was released for farm work on the 1st September 1916.

The 2nd Battalion Royal Scots was attached to 8th Brigade in 3rd Division.

Harry disembarked in France on the 2nd June 1917. He would have taken part in the Battle of the Menin Road 20- 25th September the Battle of Polygon Wood, 26 Sept -3rd October and the Battle of Cambrai 1917.

In 1918 the Division fought at The Battle of St Quentin, the Battle of Bapaume, the First Battle of Arras 1918 which were all on the Somme. The Battle of Estaires 9-11 April, the Battle of Hazebrouck 12-15 April and the Battle of Bethune 18th April which were all near the River Lys.

The Battle of Albert 21-22 August, the Second Battle of Bapaume 21 August -3rd September which were phases of the Second Battles of the Somme 1918 and the Battle of the Canal du Nord on the 27th September 1918.

On the 1st January 1918 Harry was admitted to hospital at Rouen and eventually re-joined his unit in the field on the 2nd March 1918.

During his service in France he was wounded twice and gassed on the 20th May 1918 after which he was sent to the St. John's Ambulance Brigade Hospital at Etaples and then to the War Hospital at Warren Road, Guilford on the 25th May 1918.

Harry returned to France on the 1st September 1918 being posted to the 1/4th Royal Scots. According to a comrade who lived at Cross Bank and was in the same Battalion he received a machine gun bullet during a charge on the 27th September and was killed immediately.

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

Harry is remembered with Honour at Wellington Street Primitive Methodist Chapel and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group