James Arthur Stancliffe





Rank: - Private

Number: - 16461

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 9th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 16th September 1916 aged 21

Remembered with Honour: - Thiepval Memorial, West Vlaanderen, Belgium. Pier and Face11C&12A

Family Details:

James Arthur was born in Batley in early 1895 the son of Fanny Bowman Stancliffe, born Carlton and unknown father. Fanny also had a daughter, Gertrude born in 1892. Fanny was living with her 88-year-old father and five siblings in Balk Street at the time of the 1891 census.

In 1899 her father died and by 1901 the family were living at 29, Branch Road, Batley with 5 siblings and Gertrude and James Arthur.

On the 6th July 1901 Fanny married Herbert Ineson at Batley Parish Church and Nellie was born the following year and Clifford in 1909.

James attended Batley Parish Day School and had a lifelong connection with the Church and Sunday school being a popular member of the Church Institute and the Church Lads' Brigade.

In 1911 he was a baker's assistant but before enlisting he had changed his employment and was working for Messrs. J.B. Jubb & Co. Union Mills.

Service Details:

James enlisted in August 1914.

The 9th Battalion of the Kings' Own Yorkshire Light Infantry was formed in Pontefract in August 1914 and came under command of 64th Brigade in 21st Division.

In October 1914 they moved firstly to Berkhamstead and then to Halton Park (Tring), going to billets in Maidenhead in November. They returned to Halton Park in April 1915. Rifles were received in late June 1915 and after practice with them the infantry moved on the 9 August to Witley Camp. Lord Kitchener inspected the Division on the march on 12thAugust 1915, and they disembarked for France in September 1915.

The Divisions first experience was truly appalling. They had only been in France for a few days when they had lengthy forced marches to assist at the Battle of Loos. They were in reserve on the first day but they were sent into action on 26th September where they suffered 3,800 casualties for very little gain.

On the 27th September James wrote home: -

"Just a few lines to let you know I am safe and sound but I am sorry to say that Arthur Hudson got wounded and I think he is in hospital, but he is not very bad. You talk about "Paradise lost" –good heavens it was awful! We were in the thick of one of biggest battles ever known. We did not lose one officer and our regiment did fine. I was taking supplies of ammunition for the machine guns when I was completely buried by a "Jack Johnson " but luckily I was not hurt and I had a thousand pounds of ammunition on me at the time. We were at it for 48 hours and we have just come out. You will read an account of it in the papers. Now we have come out for a rest which we richly deserve."

In 1916 the Division took part in the Battles of Albert 1st -13th July, Bazentin Ridge14th -17th July, Fleurs- Courcelette 15th - 22nd September, and Morval 25th -28th September, where they captured Geudecourt.

James acted as an orderly for Captain Lancelot D. Spicer and the first his parents knew that he had been killed on September 17th (Batley Feast Sunday) came from the Captain who had been wounded. The letter was addressed from Manor House, Little Marlow, Bucks.

"My mother has just forwarded to me your letter. For the last two days I had been endeavouring to summon up my courage to write to you. It never occurred to me that you would not yet have heard from the War Office. Your son, Jim Stancliffe, was killed by the explosion of a shell on September 17th His death was at any rate instantaneous. How greatly I sympathise with you I am utterly unable to express. His death is a tremendous blow to me personally. For the past 18 months he has been with me as my servant, and he has shown unselfishness and loyalty that was absolutely beyond words. He was always bright and cheery. It seemed impossible to tire him , he always turned up smiling .During the 12 months we were in France he was constantly with me and proved not only a splendid soldier and servant but a cheery companion, He had a great charm of manner which made him many friends .He was quite one of the best known people in the Battalion and was most popular. I was wounded on the 16th inst so when I left, he was all right and it was from a brother officer, who knew him quite well, that I got this sad news. If there is anything, I can do for you please let me know. "

Captain Spicer forwarded a German bayonet and a German gas helmet, two souvenirs Jim was treasuring to bring home.

James was awarded the1914-15 Star, The British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is commemorated on Batley Parish Church, Batley War Memorial and Thiepval Memorial where there were another 1,677 others killed or missing on the same day.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group