Tom Stead





Rank: - L/Cpl

Number: - 47879,

Regiment: - Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own, Yorkshire Regiment (formerly 17052 Royal Engineers) 12th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 11th April 1918 aged 33

Cemetery: - Croix-du-Bac British Cemetery, Steenwerck, France 1V .A.12

Dewsbury Reporter, 4 May 1918 (photo). Batley Reporter, 4 Apr 1919 (classifieds), 11 Apr 1919 (classifieds)

Family Details

Tom was born in Batley Carr in 1884 and baptised at Holy Trinity on the 10th December 1884 the son of Jesse and Ann (nee Kilburn). Jesse was described as a rag merchant. The couple had married at Batley Parish Church on 16th April 1878.

In 1891 the family, consisting of Liversedge born Jesse, Ann, Edith (1879), Bertha (1882), Tom and Lucy (1889) was living at 30 Wood Hill, Batley Carr and Jesse was described as a warehouse manager. His brother, Willie, was born in 1892. Lucy died in 1894 and before 1901 the family had moved to 44, Wood Hill and Tom was working as a Joiner's apprentice.

In 1911 the family was living at 2, Pickles Fields, Batley Carr and Jesse who now says he was born in Robertown was a grocer's warehouseman, Tom was a mill joiner and 16-year-old Willie was an apprentice coachbuilder.

From being a boy, he was deeply involved with Holy Trinity Church and Sunday School where he was a member of the choir and a member of the Church Institute.

On 9th August 1913 Tom married Annie Eliza Dixon. In the few years before his marriage he was often seen at Springfield Congregational Church because her family was connected with the Chapel and he made many friends there. After their marriage the couple went to live at Scissett, because of his work, and he became a sidesman at Scissett Church.

When he joined the Colours, his wife returned to Batley Carr to live with her widowed mother at West View, Salter's Square, Batley Carr.

His father died on the 28th March 1918, Norman Renshaw, (the son of Louisa, illegitimate daughter of Ann Kilburn born1872) his nephew, was killed on 1st July 1916, Willie died of pneumonia in France on 15th November 1918.

Service Details

Tom enlisted in Huddersfield; his service records have not survived but newspaper reports say he went to France in September 1917.

At the beginning of April 1918, the strength of the battalion were 40 Officers and 847 other ranks, at the end of the month it was 27 Officers and 480 other ranks.

The Battle of Estaires was fought between the 9th and 11th April 1918.

Steenwerke is about 5 kilometres north east of Estaires.

At midnight on the 8/9th April the Battalion was in billets and at 4 am on the 9th April the enemy opened a heavy bombardment on all billets occupied by the battalion. The battalion "stood to" in the billets at 6 am before being given the orders from HQ 40th Division for two companies to occupy a line of trenches in front of Bac St. Maur from Sailly S to Rue de Biache. "X" Company were ordered to proceed to Fluebaix but they encountered the enemy at Balette Farm and being heavily pressed fought a rear-guard action to the left bank of the River Lys.

"W" and "Y" companies took up their positions at 11.30 am and within five minutes the enemy attacked in large numbers with light machine guns and they were forced to retire. "W" company got away mainly thanks to 2Lt. Champney who handled his men so well and fired the Lewis Gun himself until the enemy came within 20 yards of him when he was killed.

At 2 am on the 10th the "W" and "Y" companies were in reserve and "Y" company was ordered to protect the right flank. The attack was partially successful and the river was reached but the enemy attacked again and drove them back to the originally positions and eventually into Steenwerck Switch where the battalion came under the orders of Lt. Col. Brown.

On the 11th April the battalion was mixed up with the Misc Battalion 119th Brigade On the night of the 11/12th the battalion was relieved by the 31st Division and was withdrawn from the line and concentrated near Strazeele.

The War Diaries tell us that the casualties for this period were: -

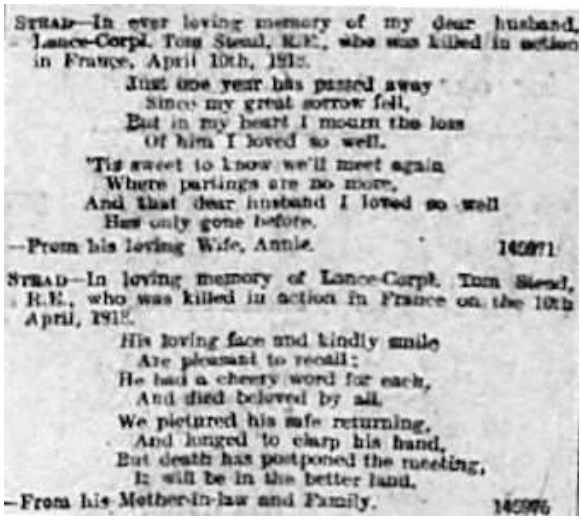
3 Officers 28 other ranks killed.
4 Officers 154 other ranks wounded
1 Officer and 18 other ranks wounded and missing
1 Officer and 117 unaccounted for

H.S. Horne General Commanding the 1st Army wrote on the 16th April:-"

"I wish to express my appreciation of the great bravery and endurance with which all ranks have fought and held out (during the last five days) against overwhelming numbers. It has been necessary to call for great exertions and more must still be asked for, but I am confident that as the critical period when the existence of the British Empire is at stake, all ranks of the 1st Army will do their best."

Major General J. Ponsonby commanding the 40th Division wrote; -

"The Division has once again been engaged in heavy fighting and all battalions have fought the enemy with great courage and determination in spite of having to face overwhelming odds. The same fighting spirit continues and I know will continue in the Divisions. I wish General Officers Commanding Brigades to convey to the troops under their command my sincere congratulations and thanks for their gallant behaviour under trying circumstances. "



STEAD—In ever loving memory of my dear husband, Lance-Corpl. Tom Stead, R.E., who was killed in action in France, April 10th, 1918.

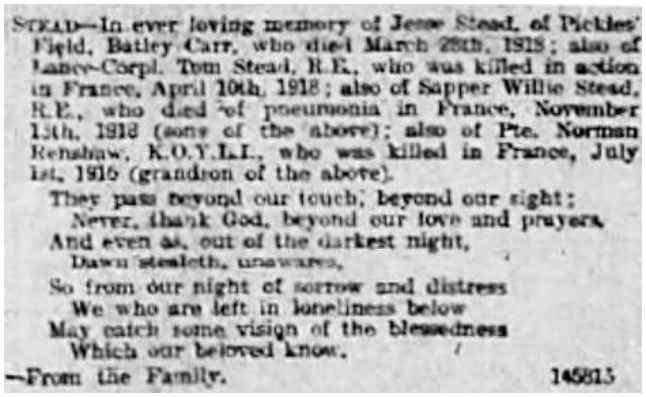
Just one year has passed away
Since my great sorrow fell,
But in my heart I mourn the loss
Of him I loved so well.
'Tis sweet to know we'll meet again
Where partings are no more,
And that dear husband I loved so well
Has only gone before.

—From his loving Wife, Annie. 145871

STEAD—In loving memory of Lance-Corpl. Tom Stead, R.E., who was killed in action in France on the 10th April, 1918.

His loving face and kindly smile
Are pleasant to recall;
He had a cheery word for each,
And died beloved by all.
We pictured his safe returning,
And longed to clasp his hand,
But death has postponed the meeting,
It will be in the better land.

—From his Mother-in-law and Family. 145996



STEAD—In ever loving memory of Jesse Stead, of Pickles' Field, Batley Carr, who died March 28th, 1918; also of Lance-Corpl. Tom Stead, R.E., who was killed in action in France, April 10th, 1918; also of Sapper Willie Stead, R.E., who died of pneumonia in France, November 13th, 1918 (sons of the above); also of Pte. Norman Renshaw, K.O.Y.L.I., who was killed in France, July 1st, 1916 (grandson of the above).

They pass beyond our touch, beyond our sight;
Never, thank God, beyond our love and prayers.
And even as, out of the darkest night,
Dawn stealeth, unawares,
So from our night of sorrow and distress
We who are left in loneliness below
May catch some vision of the blessedness
Which our beloved know.

—From the Family. 145815

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

He is remembered with Honour at Holy Trinity Church, Scissett War Memorial and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group