Charles Henry Stephenson





Rank: - Private

Number: - 18050

Regiment: - King's Own Scottish Borderers 2nd Battalion

Killed in Action: - 30/07/1916 Age: 23 years

Memorial: - Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France Pier and Face 4 A and 4 D.

Batley News, 12 Aug 1916 (photo), 19 Aug 1916 (photo)

Family Details

Charles Henry was born in Longwood, Yorkshire on 30th January 1893 the son of Ezra and Hannah Mary Stephenson nee Stead who had married on the 16th December 1876 at Batley Parish Church. He was baptised at St. Mark's, Longwood on 2nd December 1893 when his father's occupation was given as a rag grinder.

Arthur was born in 1878 in Batley followed by William Stead in 1883 who sadly died aged 8 months in March 1884 followed by Ethel in 1886. Before 1891 the family had moved to live at Longwood Gate, Huddersfield but within the next decade they had moved back to Batley to live at 10, Stanley Place, Park Road, Batley.

Ezra died in September 1900 and Hannah Mary married Joseph John Dixon at the Primitive Methodist Chapel in 1913.

Charles attended Park Road School and had a lifelong association with Wellington Street Primitive Methodist Chapel and Sunday school. After leaving school he worked for Messrs. Fox of Bank Foot Mills as a warper. He was well known in local intermediate football circles.

The family moved to live at 90, Bromley Street, Hanging Heaton. Charles Henry was the first person from Wellington Street Sunday School to enlist after the outbreak of war and the second to die for his King and Country.

Service Details

The 2nd Battalion was part of 13th Brigade in 5th Division and was in Dublin at the outbreak of war but went to France in August 1914.

Charles Henry enlisted in January 1915 and went to France on 9th May 1915 and joined the battalion.

It saw combat at the Second Battle of Ypres in May 1915 but Charles would just have missed this.

March 1916 saw a move, with 5th Division taking over a section of front line between St Laurent Blangy and the southern edge of Vimy Ridge, in front of Arras. This was a lively time, with many trench raids, sniping and mining

activities in the front lines. When the Franco-British offensive opened on the Somme on 1 July 1916, the 5th Division was enjoying a period of rest and re-fit and was in GHQ Reserve. However, this restful time was not destined to last: The Attacks on High Wood started on the 20th July -25th July.

On the 23rd July the Division was at Pommiers Redoubt and on the 29th they were ordered to relieve the 95th Brigade in Delville Wood. They began the relief at 9.30 pm and it was complete during the night. There was heavy shell fire and sniping all day on the 30th and there were many casualties. Communications were extremely slow and difficult between the front line and the brigade owing to heavy losses of the orderlies. The battalion with other units were ordered to attack to a point north of Orchard. The attack commenced at 6.12 pm but many officers and NCO's had become casualties. Two companies reached their objective only to be pushed back 30 yards when they dug in. The right company (D) suffered very heavily and were forced to pull back. The battalion was relieved under great difficulty the following night.

The casualties from 29th -31st July for the Division was six officers killed, nine officers wounded and 244 other ranks killed, missing or wounded.

Private W. Wright wrote to his mother conveying the sad news of his death: -

"*It is with the deepest sympathy that I on behalf of my friends and I have to inform you of the death of your son Charles. He was killed on the 31st July. We did all in our power to help him, but it was of no use. He did not suffer much pain and he thought of you to the last. I will send on his note-book to you after this letter."*

Charles was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal and is remembered with Honour at Wellington Street Primitive Methodist Chapel, Hanging Heaton War Memorial (St. Paul's) and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group