# Moses Patrick Stubley





*Photo courtesy of Jane Roberts*

**Rank: -** Private

**Number: -**3/290

**Regiment: -** Kings' Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 2nd Battalion

**Killed in Action: -** 2 April 1915

**Cemetery: -** Blauwepoort Farm Cemetery, Belgium B.B.

Moses Patrick Stubley was born in Batley in the spring of 1889. His parents were Batley-born couple Moses and Mary Elizabeth Stubley (nee Donnelly)

Albert Stubley and Mary Elizabeth Donnelly married in 1886. According to the 1911 census the couple had 1 child during the course of their marriage, nine of whom had died, Including Moses the others identified were Charles Edward (born 1887 died the following year), Grace Ann (born in 1890 died 1892), Maggie (b. 1892), Annie (b. 1895) Mary Elizabeth, who was known as Lizzie (b, 1897), Alice (b. 1899 but who died in 1900), Catherine known as Kitty (b. 1901) Roger (born and died in 1905), Ellen (born and died in 1908). Moses, therefore, was the couple's only surviving son by 1911, along with daughters, Maggie, Annie, Lizzie and Kitty.

Albert worked as a coal miner (hewer) and Mary Elizabeth a woollen cloth weaver. Mary Elizabeth continued with mill work throughout her marriage. The Stubley family had a number of addresses across Batley. In the early years of their marriage, Albert and Mary Elizabeth lived at Mill Lane, but by 1891 they resided at Spa Street, with a move to New Street by 1900 at the time of Alice's death. They were recorded as living in Hume Street in 1905, Goodall Yard in 1908 and by the 1911 census they had a Taylor Street address. However by then Moses had moved out of the family home and was lodging with the Day family at Cross Bank Road, whilst working as a coal miner (hewer).

The following year, on 26 October 1912, Moses married 21 year old Annie Lizzie Kitson at St. John's Carlinghow. The couple gave their address as 2, Birch Street, Batley. Their only child, Daniel Kitson Stubley, was born in July 1913 and baptised at St. Mary's but died the following year just short of his first birthday. This was only months after the death of Moses' mother, who had died at the beginning of 1914. Moses had a few minor brushes with the law but despite this he was greatly esteemed by his colleagues at Soothill Colliery, where he was employed at the outbreak of the war.

It is likely Moses was mobilised in early 1914, within days of the burial of his infant son on 29 July. The 2nd KOYLI moved on mobilisation from Pontefract to Hull.

The 2nd KOYLI were part of the British Expeditionary Force arriving in France from Dublin on 16 August. They suffered losses in the Battle of Mons on 23 August, Le Cateau 26 August where losses were reported as 600. The timing of Moses' arrival in France would fit with the need for reinforcements.

Moses was known as amongst many of his comrades as "*the smartest gunner in his section*" and his photo (above) shows him with his hand on a Vickers machine gun. It is likely he was part of the Battalion's Machine Gun Section.

Moses was killed during the second battle of Ypres. The 2nd KOYLI had moved to the Flanders Front in the autumn of 1914.Preceded by the struggle for Hill 60, 2nd Ypres commenced on 22 April with a surprise German gas attack on French North African forces in the northern sector.

According to the Unit War Diary, on 23 April the 2nd KOYLI were attached at the 1st Canadian Division in operations north east of Ypres. At nightfall they consolidated a newly established trench line before being relieved at dawn when they withdrew to the canal bank. At noon on 24 April they were ordered to assist the 10th Canadians in retake a lost line north east of Wieltje. Approaching St Jean they were subjected to heavy shell fire which followed them until they reached their position. Unfortunately on arrival they were unable to take shelter in the trenches which were already full of troops. Owing to bad staff arrangements by the Canadian Division the line which should have been empty and ready for occupation was so crowded by troops of different regiments that 2nd KOYLI companies were forced to lie in the open, fully exposed to the enemy who rained heavy shrapnel fire on them, killing and wounding many men. St Jean is the death location for Moses noted in his Soldiers' Effects register entry. According to CWGC records he was one of nine men from the Battalion to die that day.

In the first half of May Moses' family began to receive unofficial messages that he had been killed in action. These included news from a Lieutenant serving in the same Regiment.

A further letter dated 10 May from a comrade, Lance Corporal J.H. Johnson, had what seems like particularly blunt opening lines. It read:

*"Just a few lines explaining why I am sending back your letter addressed to Private M. Stubley. Well, I am sorry to inform you that he got killed in action, and it is my orders to open all his letters and return them to the senders. (Of course, they are not read). I and all the other chaps in the section send our deepest sympathy to you and all his relatives in your bereavement. We are all sorry to lose such a good comrade. Anything you wish to know, I will try to the best of my ability to inform you about."*

Official confirmation duly followed towards the end of May simply stating that Moses had been killed in action and expressing sympathy with his relatives. The family were desperate to find out more information, but the censor did not help. Another Carlinghow soldier and St Mary's man, Gunner Walter Waite, wrote to his family about Moses. The censor passed the words "*Dear Mother, about Moses Stubley*" but then crosses out the half dozen words or so following lines regarding the fate of Moses, which his distraught family tried to decipher.

In June 1915 they did learn in a letter from another St Mary's man, Private Patrick Gallagher, who served alongside Moses in 2nd KOYLI. In a postscript of a letter to his wife he wrote:

"I *have been enquiring how Moses Stubley was killed. Tell his wife he was shot through the back and the bullet came out of his neck."*

At around the same time rumours circulated that Moses had been awarded the V.C. No official confirmation followed and these reports ultimately proved to be false.

Moses is buried at Blauwepoort Cemetery. He was awarded the 1914 Star with Clasp, Victory Medal and British War Medal. He is remembered at St Mary's Church and Batley War Memorial.

His cousin John Joseph Stubley died in Gallipoli in 1915. Living in Ossett at the time of his death his details can be found on the Ossett history website.



Researched by Jane Roberts
https://pasttopresentgenealogy.co.uk