Clifford Sykes D.C.M.



Rank: - Lance Corporal

Number: - 311326

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 2nd Battalion

Killed in Action: - 14th April 1917 aged 24

Remembered with Honour: - Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France. Pier and Face 11C and 12 A

Family Details:

Clifford was born in Carlinghow on 7th February 1893 the son of Batley born Henry and Matilda Sykes (nee Gomersal), who came from West Ardsley. He was baptised at Batley Parish Church on 19th March 1893. In 1901 he was living at 7, Carlinghow Hill with his parents and siblings, Percy (1891), Hannah (1895) and nine-month-old Ernest. Henry worked as a dyer.

By 1911 the family had moved to 9, Victoria Street, Carlinghow and Harry had changed his occupation to become a rag grinder, Clifford was a piecener and Hannah was a tier on. The census shows that the couple had lost one of their five children in infancy.

Clifford worked as a piecener at J.T & J. Taylor's, Cheapside Mills, Batley and was associated with St. John's, Carlinghow.

Service Details:

Clifford joined the 2nd Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in August 1914 shortly after the outbreak of war and went to France in March 1915. The 2nd Battalion came under the orders of 13th Brigade, 5th Division. On the 28thDecember 1915 they were transferred to 97th Brigade, 32nd Division.

After only a few weeks in France he was slightly wounded but after a brief spell he rejoined his unit.

Operations on the Ancre 1917.



In 1917 the division took part in operations on the Ancre which was the retreat of the Germans to the Hindenburg line.

Clifford, on the 7th April, showed conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in the successful attack by his company on three cottages east of Holnon. He successfully carried a message some 200 yards over ground swept by machine gun fire. Later, by his coolness and courage, he three times caused patrols, which were held up by machine gun fire, to push forward and accomplish this task. (11.3.20). For this he received the D.C.M. which was listed in the London Gazette on 3rd June 1919.

His parents had not heard from him for several weeks until a letter came in late May from the York Record Office to say he had not been seen since 14th April and was missing, presumed killed in action.

In October 1919 Mrs Sykes received a letter to say that Lance-Corporal Clifford Sykes, K.Y.O.L.I. who had posthumously received the Distinguished Conduct Medal. If she wished to collect the medal publicly on behalf of her son she would have to go to Pontefract where it had been sent from York. This she did with her husband. There was no notification as to how or why he had won the medal.

Clifford's older brother, Percy who had been an able seaman, had also died and was interred in Holland.

Clifford was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered at St. John's Church Carlinghow, Carlinghow Working Men's Club, Batley War Memorial and the Thiepval Memorial along with another 132 missing or killed on the same day.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group