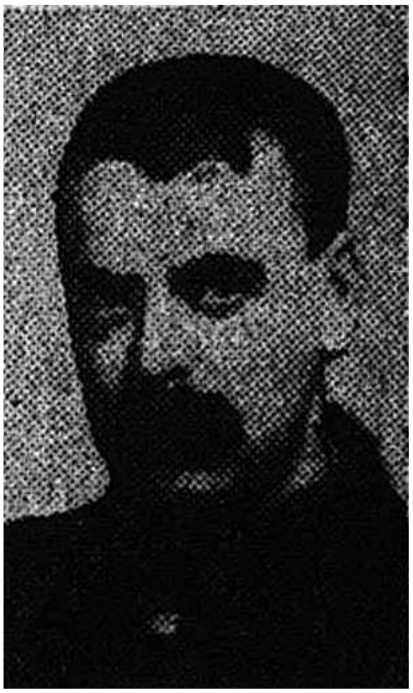
Joseph Sykes





Rank: - Lance Corporal

Number: - 41348

Regiment/Battalion: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry "D" Coy 5th Battalion

Died of Wounds: - 29th March 1918 aged 36

Cemetery: - Doullens Communal Cemetery Extension 1, Somme V.C.28

Batley News, 6 Apr 1918 (photo)

Family Details:

Joseph was born in Morley in 1882, the son of James and Honor (nee Allatt).

The couple had married at St. Peter's, Birstall in 1866. James, who was a coal miner, came from Batley and Honor from Gomersal and he must have travelled looking for work. Emily was born in 1870 at Howden Clough but in 1871 they were living at Featherstone. Albert was born in Featherstone in 1872 followed by William (1874) and Ada (1875) both born in Pontefract, but the family returned to Howden Clough Road, Morley before the birth of Luther (1878) and Alfred (1880). Joseph was born in Morley before the family returned to Batley and the birth of Harold in 1886.

In 1901 the family was living at 34, Bradford Road West, Carlinghow and were still there a decade later. The 1911 census shows that James and Honor had 14 children born alive but only 7 were still living.

Joseph attended Carlinghow Council School and was apprenticed to William Poulter, Station Road, Batley as a cabinet maker, but before enlisting worked for Mr Tom Senior, Top of Heckmondwike.



As a boy he attended Cross Bank Wesleyan School but later went to Norristhorpe, Church of England Mission as their organist.

Joseph married Lucy Newsome on 5th April 1913 at Batley Parish Church and a son, George, was born the following year. They went to live at 22, Pynate Road, Carlinghow, and Batley. Honor died in 1914 a year before he enlisted.

Service Details

Joseph enlisted in November 1915 in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 2/5th Battalion "C" company. He disembarked in February 1917.

The 2/5th Battalion was formed in September 1914 as a second line unit and came under the orders of 187th Brigade, 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division. In January 1916 they were training at Larkhill, moving to Flixton Park near Bungay

in June and to Wellingborough in October 1916 before leaving for France in January 1917.

The first action they would have encountered would have been the operations on the Ancre which took place between 15th February and 13th March 1917.

The German retreat to the Hindenburg Line (14th-19th March) would have followed, first attack on Bullecourt (11th April), German attack on Lagnicourt (15th April), Battle of Bullecourt (3rd-17th May), which was part of flanking operations round Arras, actions on the Hindenburg Line (20th-28th May), the Cambrai Operations (Tank attack 20th-21st November) and the capture of Bourlon Wood (27th-28th November) were all battles which he would have played a part in 1917 with the 5th Battalion K.O.Y.L.I.

Joseph returned home on leave in early 1918 and after returning to his unit sent a pretty Easter card home with a letter saying that he was "just going up the line". He was injured and taken to 3rd Canadian Stationary Hospital where he died from his wounds on 29th March 1918.

He was buried at Doullens Communal Cemetery Extension 1. In March and April 1918, the German advance and the desperate fighting in this area threw a severe strain on the Canadian Stationary Hospital.

His brother, Harold, was also serving with the K.O.Y.L.I. in France.

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

Joseph is remembered with Honour on Batley War Memorial, Carlinghow St. John's, Cross Bank Wesleyan Chapel, Birstall Temperance Hall and Doulens Communal Cemetery.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group