Harold Taylor





Rank: - Private

Number: - G/31761

Regiment: - Queen's Own (Royal West Kent) Regiment (formerly 41066 West Yorkshire Regt) 6th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 30th August 1918 aged 19

Memorial: - Vis-en- Artois Memorial, Pas-de- Calais, France Panel 7

Batley News, 14 Sep 1918. Dewsbury District News, 14 Sep 1918 (photo).

Family Details

Harold was born in Ravensthorpe in c1898 the son of Friend and Sarah Jane Taylor (nee Lambley).

In 1901 the family which included Minnie (1896) and Mabel E (1901) was living in Armitage Street, Ravensthorpe.

Friend was admitted to Stanley Royd Hospital, Wakefield on the 11th October 1909 and died on 25th October 1909. He was living in Talbot Street, Batley but was buried at St. Mary's, Mirfield.

In 1911 Sarah Jane, Minnie, Harold and Clifford were living in a 2 roomed home at 54, Albion Street, Batley.

Harold attended Purlwell Council School and later went to work as a spinner at C.W.S. Livingstone Mills, Batley. He was connected with St. Andrew's Church.

Sarah Jane died in the summer of 1915 and Minnie, Harold and Clifford went to reside with Mr. & Mrs. Knowles Hargreaves at 131, Taylor Street, Batley.

Service Details.

Harold joined the Forces in April 1917 and went to France in March 1918.

The 6th (Service) Battalion was attached to 37th Brigade, in 12th (Eastern) Division.

The first battle he could have encountered was the Battle of Bapaume

On the morning of 24 March, the Division arrived in the area of Senlis, Warloy and Bouzincourt. A tiring and confusing day was to follow. That afternoon, 36 and 37 Brigades moved forward to the line Montauban-Bazentin le Grand, on the old 1916 Somme battlefield.

But events were moving fast as the enemy's offensive pressed forward. 35 Brigade after much marching took up a position covering Albert. 37 Brigade, in the area of Ovillers, covered the withdrawal of47th (London) Division and then itself withdrew to Aveluy and by 4.30am on 26 March 36 Brigade had also taken up a position west of the Ancre. There were no prepared trenches or wire defences and natural lines such as the railway embankment north of Albert,

were taken up to await the expected German attack. There was no touch with other Divisions to the right but contact was made with 2nd Division on the left.

This was quickly followed by the 1st Battle of Arras 1918.

Soon after midday on 26 March, Germans were seen advancing down the slopes into the Ancre valley. They were also seen in large numbers to the south of Albert moving on Meaulte and Dernancourt and by 7pm Albert itself was full of them. The 7/Suffolks had to withdraw through the ruined town to west of the railway line. On the northern side too, it seemed that the Division was in great danger of being outflanked, for enemy had got to Grandcourt and Beaumont Hamel. All units came under increasing pressure as the enemy pressed on. Many enemy attacks were repelled with heavy casualties, although the Division suffered 1634 casualties in halting their advance.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was to say in his "British Campaign in France and Flanders, January to July 1918" of the Division's role in March and April that they *"withdrew from the line in glory, for it is no exaggeration to say that they had fought the Germans to an absolute standstill"*. He was right. The enemy offensive in Picardy had finally been defeated.

On 1 July 1918, two years to the day that the British offensive had opened on the Somme, the Division carried out an attack at Bouzincourt. After initial success, counter attack drove the attacking units back at a cost of 680 casualties. The Division was relieved on 10 July and came under orders of XXII Corps. It was moved to the area south of Amiens.

They took part in the Battles of Amiens and Albert (1918).

By the evening of 10 August, the old Amiens defence line had been recaptured: in all the Division had by now advanced almost two miles.

After a brief rest, the Division attacked again on 22 August, pushing right across the wilderness of the old Somme battlefield, capturing Meaulte, Mametz, Carnoy, Hardecourt and Faviere Wood, which was reached after a week's continuous fighting. The Division had made an advance of another 15000 yards. It was relieved on 30 August by 47th (London) Division and moved back to the Carnoy-Briqueterie area.

In a joint letter of Sympathy four of his chums sent information about his death.

"Just as we were sitting together considering whether we should have some Army rations a bit of shell dropped between us and he laughingly remarked that if it had been a bit nearer it would have been a Blighty. Shortly afterwards he got hit. We got a stretcher-bearer at once and had his wounds dressed but owing to the shelling of the road we could not get him down to the dressing station at once. He died as we were taking him down, so we could do no more than bury him decently. He was one of the best and one of the most unselfish boys we have ever met."

Harold was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Broomhill Chapel, Batley War Memorial Addenda and Vis-en-Artois Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group