Willie Taylor





Rank: - Private

Number: - 202013

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry Battalion 1/4th

Killed in Action: - 10th April 1917 aged 32 years

Cemetery: - Rue-du-Bacquerot No.1 Military Cemetery, Laventie, France 111.A.10

"LOVING REMEMBRNCE OF DEAR DADDY AND HUSBAND"

Batley News, 21 Apr 1917 (photo)

Family Details

Willie was born in Batley in 1885 the son of Joseph and Mary Taylor (nee Schofield). His father was a card cleaner from Wooldale and in 1891 the family was living at 21, Back Richmond Street, Carlinghow, Batley. The couple had married at Batley Parish Church on 8th April 1877and Elizabeth was born later the same year.

His siblings were: - Elizabeth (1877), John Thorp (1879), Clara (1881), Willie Joseph (1887) Twins Jeanette (1889) and Grace 1889-March 1890.

In 1901 the family was still at the same address and Willie was working as a hurrier at a coal mine although all his elder siblings were working in woollen mills.

The family had moved to 67, North Street, Cross Bank before Mary died in late December 1908.

Willie married Kate Annie Atkinson on 18th September 1908 at Brownhill Parish Church.

His son Harry was born was born on the 10th February 1909 and baptised at Cross Bank Wesleyan Chapel on 24th March 1909 when the couple was living at 13, Geldard Road, Birstall.

They had moved to 1, Quarry Road, Brownhill before the birth of Reggie on 20th May 1912 who was also baptised at Cross Bank on 11th July 1912. Sadly, Reggie died in 1916 and was buried at St. Peter's Church, Birstall. Grace was born c 1915.

Willie was well known in Batley and Birstall. Prior to joining the Forces, he worked at Messrs. Critchley's, Howden Clough Colliery. He attended Cross Bank Wesleyan Chapel and was greatly interested in workpeople's football matches which were held locally. He played with several colliery teams and was the Captain of the Bruntcliffe Colliery team when it won the Workpeople's Cup.

Service Details

Willie enlisted at Wakefield in May 1915 and went to France on 11th December 1915. The 1/4th Battalion was part of 148th Brigade, 49th West Riding Infantry Division.

It is not certain if Willie had arrived in France when the battalion took part in the defence of the first phosgene attack on the 19th December 1915.

In 1916 the battalion took part in the Battles of Albert, Bazentin Ridge, Pozieres Ridge and Flers-Courcelette which were all phases of the Battles of the Somme.

In 1917 they took part in operations on the Flanders Coast (Hush).

On the 10th April the KOYLI prepared for a raid on the enemies trenches with the objectives 1) to obtain identification 2) to inflict casualties 3) to bring back machine gun and destroy emplacement. The raiding party was commanded by Capt. R.W. Moorhouse with three officers and 87 men divided into nine groups. With blackened faces the scouts moved into No Man's Land at 8.45 pm returning at 9.15 pm to lead the various parties to their assembly points. At 10 pm 18 enemy shells passed over but the British barrage did not commence until 10.25 pm when the scouts guided the R E sappers across the enemy wire. Unfortunately, some of the KOYLI had been seen and the SOS signal flare rising from the German positions was soon taken up all along the line. In less than five minutes enemy trench mortars and 4.2's opened up in No Man's Land while the Germans showered rifle grenades and bombs on their own front line. With explosions all around the sappers placed the torpedoes under the wire. Unfortunately, the waiting troops were not informed that only one gap had been blown but without hesitating they tried to get through with some congestion and towards the enemy parapet but found it was water logged and had new barbed wire which must have been placed there recently.

The whole of the enemy trench appeared to be filled with water and wire but it was noticed there was a path on the top of the trench that led from the front line to the supervision trench which had been recently used

.Later it was concluded that the Germans used this path to visit the front line at night and fire flares to give the impression their line was permanently held.

Captain Moorhouse gave the orders for the parties to return and the objectives had been achieved except for identification but he and 2nd Lt. Scholefield had been injured along with 11 men but six men had been killed. Valuable lessons had been learned but it had cost lives.

His captain wrote to his family "*He died last evening and it will be some consolation that he suffered no pain. He was interred in a cemetery here just behind the line and his grave will be tended. Private Taylor was an excellent soldier and his loss will be very much felt by all his comrades. You have the deepest sympathy of the officers, NCO's and men of his Company in your bereavement."*

Mrs. Taylor had a brother at the Front who also wrote to tell her the sad news.

Willie was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Cross Bank Wesleyan Chapel, St. Saviour's Brownhill, Howden Clough Methodist Church, Batley War Memorial and Rue-du-Bacquerot No.1 Military Cemetery.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group