Willie Tillotson





Rank: - Private

Number: -15855

Regiment: - Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) 8th Bn. Roll: Stretcher Bearer (formerly 21088 York and Lancaster Regiment)

Died of Wounds: - 4th November 1915 Age: 18 years

Cemetery: - Hill 10 Cemetery, Turkey 11.H.8

Batley News, 27 Nov 1915 (photo)

Family Details

Willie was born in Batley on 9th February 1897 the youngest son of Walter and Jane Tillotson (nee Tolson). The couple had married at Dewsbury Parish Church on 18th September 1886. The couple went to live in Grace Leather Lane, Soothill, Batley.

Agnes May was born in 1887 followed by Amy 1890, Herbert 1891, Adelaide 1892, Charles Edward 1894, Willie and Emily 1901. In 1901, Garforth born Walter, who was a coal hewer, and his family lived at Yard 7, Wellington Street, Batley. Hannah had died in September 1899 aged 4 months and another child had died in infancy probably before the family had moved from Dewsbury to Batley. Evelyn was born in early 1905.

Willie attended Mr. James Gladwin's classes at Batley Town Mission from boyhood and before enlisting worked at West End Colliery, Batley.

Service Details

Willie enlisted in the York and Lancaster's in January 1915 when he was only 17 years old but was transferred to the Duke of Wellington's when they were asking for volunteers to go to the Front. Final training was given at Witley before they sailed from Liverpool to Gallipoli via Mudros, landing at Lala Baba in Sulva Bay on the 6th and 7th August 1915.

Willie wrote bright letters home and one of the last letters home said that he was keeping his spirits up as much as he could do but when it was hard and difficult, he felt he was doing his duty. He referred to the dangers of trench life and the fearful scenes of death.

A letter to Mr. Gladwin at the Mission said: -

"I am trying to do my best for King and Country. I have been in action three days now as a stretcher-bearer. The first day when we landed, we were shelled by the enemy for 10 hours, some shells bursting a few yards away. But my faith is in God and I intend to continue in that as long as I live. All the time I am writing here in the trench, shells are bursting all around us and over our heads. I have still the Bible you gave me at the Mission Sunday School and I read a portion of the Book every day."

Private Fred Mitton one of Willie's comrades wrote to his parents: -

"I am very sorry to have to inform you that your son, Willie has been very seriously wounded and there is very little hope of his recovery. He was in his dug-out when the regrettable thing happened. He was hit on the head by part of a shell and was also hit on the arm. You have my heartfelt sympathy in your hour of trial. I saw them set off with him to the hospital. He was still breathing then but I am sorry to tell you that the report came through that he died on the way. I have lost a good chum. We have been good chums since he came from the York and Lancasters."

Willie was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Hill 10 Cemetery, Turkey, Batley War Memorial and the Batley Town Mission.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group