Thomas Walton





Rank: - Private

Number: - 11420

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

Killed in Action: - 8th July 1917 aged 35 years

Cemetery: - Coxide Military Cemetery, West Vlaanderen, Belgium I.D.22

Batley News, 21 Jul 1917 (photo). Batley Reporter, 3 Aug 1917

Family Details

Thomas was born in Batley in c 1880 the youngest son of Samuel and Elizabeth Walton (nee Woodhead). The couple had married in Batley Parish Church on 14th September 1863 and older children were Martha 1863, Jane1865, Ellen 1868-1908, John 1873, Joseph 1876 and Sarah 1879.

In 1881 the family was living at Bromley Road, Hanging Heaton and Samuel was employed as a miner.

Before the next census was taken the family had moved to 14, Scargill's Fold, Batley with the additions of Ann and George.

Samuel died in November 1897 at Harrison's Yard, Dark Lane, Batley and Elizabeth died in March 1901 at Back Beaumont Street, Batley

Thomas married Minnie Parker on 12th November 1904 at St. Paul's, Hanging Heaton. Thomas made his mark on his marriage certificate although Minnie signed.

In 1911 they lived at 5, Quarry Street, Soothill Lane, Batley and their two children were Ivy, born June 1907 and Annie born 1909. Phyllis was born in 1911 followed by Albert 1913 and Alice in 1915.

Thomas prior to enlisting was employed at Soothill Wood Colliery as a miner.

He was a popular member of Soothill Working Men's Club and connected with Soothill, St. Luke's Church.

Service Details.

Thomas was a reservist and enlisted on 16th August 1914 going to France on 19/ 21st January 1915. At this time the 2nd Battalion was attached to 13th Brigade in 5th Division.

In 1915 they fought at the Second Battle of Ypres and the Capture of Hill 60. In late 1915 many units were switched for those of 32nd Division, a newly arrived volunteer formation. The idea was to strengthen ("stiffen" in the jargon of the time) the inexperienced Division by mixing in some regular army troops; even

though by now many of the pre-war regulars had gone and the regular battalions themselves were often largely composed of new recruits.

In 1916 the 32nd Division took part in the Battles of Albert, Bazentin and Ancre which were all fought on the Somme.

In 1917 they took part in operations on the Ancre (11th January -13th March) and the pursuit of the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line.

On the 1st July 1917 the battalion was at Nieuport in France. The men were all accommodated in cellars because the once beautiful town was reduced to being shelled every day. Candles provided the only sort of illumination. At the east side of the town flowed the Canal du Dunkerque and the effluvium from it was far from salubrious, reported the War Diary. Along the centre of several cobbled street trenches had been dug for communications and passage of troops. The trenches were covered over with sandbags and covered over with earth with grass growing as a camouflage.

Orders were received on the 4th July that the 2nd Battalion KOYLI were to relieve the Highland Light Infantry in the Lombartzyde Right Sub- Sector that evening.
Just after 8 am on the 7th July the enemy began to bombard the battalion's lines with Minnenwoefers, aerial darts and rifle grenades. At 8.50 am the KOYLI strongly retaliated on the enemy's first and second lines for 20 minutes. The total casualties from 12 noon the previous day was 2 Officers wounded, 3 other ranks killed and 24 other ranks wounded.
The afternoon and early evening passed away fairly quietly with just a small amount of shelling.

Early on the 8th "D" Company under Sergeant Rayne went to examine the enemy wires which were found to be very strong and a large number of the enemy could be heard working on their front trench.

At 6.15 am it rained very hard and all morning the artillery fire was lively. Casualties at noon were 3 other ranks killed, 7 wounded. The enemy artillery became very active in the afternoon and the battalion suffered very heavy shelling from whiz-bangs to 9.4s. Retaliation was carried out at about 3 pm but

the enemy continued to strafe the trenches so at 5.20 pm they were bombarded with shells of all calibres which appeared to have the desired effect and ceased before evening. That evening the battalion was relieved by the 16th Highland Light Infantry, the relief being complete at 9.40pm. The battalion remained working on the lines until 2 am on the 9th when they returned to NIeuport. Casualties from 12 noon on the 8th were 1 Officer wounded, 5 other ranks killed and 14 wounded.

A Batley soldier who lived in Spa Street and worked with Tom at Soothill Wood Colliery wrote home to say he had been killed by a shell whilst coming out of the trenches on July 7th and an Earlsheaton soldier wrote to Mrs. Walton conveying the same news.

The C.W.G.C. states he was killed on the 8th July.

Thomas had been at the Front for two and a half years and had been wounded on five occasions, three of them seriously.

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

Thomas is remembered with Honour at St. Luke's Church, Soothill Working Men's Club, St. Paul's Hanging Heaton, Hanging Heaton War Memorial and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group