Fred Ward



Rank: - Sergeant

Number: - 178

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

Died in Batley: - 17th February 1919

Cemetery: - Holy and Undivided Trinity Church, Ossett

Family Details

Fred Ward was born in Emley, Huddersfield in 1877, the second child and second son of George Ward and his wife Ann (nee Auty) who were married in late 1873. By 1881, labourer George Ward, wife Ann and their two sons had moved from Emley to Scunthorpe, but the family, now including five children, moved back to the Huddersfield area in the late 1880s and, by 1891, they were living at Skelmanthorpe where Freddie was working as coal trammer. In the immediate years following 1891, the Ward family moved to live in Ossett. It seems that Fred Ward preferred the name Freddy and this became his sobriquet. His siblings were John Thomas 1874, Arthur 1882, Charles Maw 1884, Hannah Jane 1887.

In Summer 1899, Freddy Ward married Rachel Tyler in the Dewsbury Registration District. By 1901 the couple were living on Radley Street, The Green, Ossett and Freddy Ward was working as a coal miner. Freddy's wife, Rachel, died aged 32 years, in the Spring of 1910 leaving Fred a widower with three young children. By 1911, Freddy and his children had moved back to live with his parents at Church Street, Ossett. He was 34 years of age and working as a coal miner. In the summer of 1911, Freddy Ward married his second wife Edith A. Wood, in the Dewsbury Registration District. Daniel was born in December 1901 followed by Alice in May 1904, Freda Russell 1910 and George in July 1913 according to his attestation papers (found no BMD for youngest two).

Service Details

His records include his Attestation form dated the 1st April 1908 when he enlisted at Ossett for one year and joined the Territorial Force, 4th Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. He was living at Dale Street, Ossett. Fred was 31 years and seven months of age, married and a coal miner working for Messrs. Westwood & Company.

His Attestation also reveals that he was already in the 1st Battalion, KOYLI, and had previously served with the 1st Service Company, KOYLI which he served in between 8th February 1898 to 30th November 1901 and then between 2nd November 1905 to 31st March 1908. During the first term he served in South Africa during the Boer War and took part in the Battle of Wittebergen in July 1900. He also served in Cape Colony and Transvaal. Consequently, the April 1908 Attestation was actually extending his army service for a further year and, in April 1909, he extended his service for four more years, further extending for a year in April 1913 and then again in April 1914. He was promoted to Corporal in 1909 and to Sergeant in June 1910.

Thus, he was in army service when Great Britain declared war with Germany on the 4th August 1914 and he was embodied with the 1st/4th KOYLI on the 5th August 1914. His regimental service number was 178 and he embarked for France on the 13th April 1915. However, he returned to the U.K. on the 3rd November 1915.

The 1/4th Battalion, Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry was a unit of the Territorial Force with HQ in Wakefield, serving with 3rd West Riding Brigade, West Riding Division. When war broke out in August 1914, the units of the Division had just departed for their annual summer camp at Whitby, and they were at once recalled to their home base and mobilised at once for war service, moving to Doncaster. In November they moved to Gainsborough and in February 1915 to York to prepare for service overseas. Those men who had not volunteered for Imperial Service transferred to the newly formed 2/4th Battalion. They proceeded to France, from Folkestone landing at Boulogne on the 12th of April 1915 and the Division concentrated in the area around Estaires. On the 15th of May the formation was renamed 148th Brigade, 49th (West Riding) Division. Their first action was in the Battle of Aubers Ridge in May 1915. In 1916 they were in action in the Battles of the Somme. In 1917 they were involved in the Operations on the Flanders Coast and the Battle of Poelcapelle during the Third Battle of Ypres.

Sergeant (178) Fred Ward was discharged from service on the 6th March 1916 *in consequence of being no longer fit for War Service under King's Regulations para 392 (xvi).*

The report of the Medical Board, dated 11th February 1916, reveals that the cause of discharge was *"chronic nephritis and continued: - Originated October 1915 at Ypres. Was invalided home with considerable oedema (fluid retention), headache and vomiting attacks. Has had epistaxis (nose bleeds) on one occasion, but no haematuria. Cause: - Exposure. Result of active service. Exposure. Permanent. Prevents ¼, duration uncertain – may be permanent or may improve in 6 months."*

Trench nephritis, an inflammation of the kidneys, arose among soldiers in Spring 1915, characterized by breathlessness, swelling of the face or legs, headache, sore throat, and the presence of albumin and renal casts in urine. This was usually caused by exposure to wet and cold conditions in trenches and other external fortifications and was a complaint suffered by almost 2% of WW1 Pensioners. He was living at 68, Dale Street, Ossett on 6th March 1916 when his character was given as exemplary.

Further medical reports were made in August and September 1916, April and October 1917 and the 27th March 1918, by which time Fred Ward's address was 23, Albert Street, Batley. Following his discharge, Sergeant Fred Ward of 1/4 KOYLI was awarded a Silver War Badge in December 1916. The sterling silver war lapel badge was intended to be worn in civilian clothes. It had been the practice of some women to present white feathers to apparently able-bodied men who were not wearing the King's uniform. The badge was to be worn on the right breast while in civilian dress, it was forbidden to wear on a military uniform.

Sergeant Fred Ward was awarded the British and Victory Medals and the 1914/15 Star in recognition of his service overseas in WW1 and the Silver Badge.

He died on 17th February 1919 and was buried 20th February 1919 at Holy and Undivided Trinity, Ossett aged 42 years living at 23, Albert Street, Batley.

He is remembered with Honour at Batley and Ossett War Memorials and Ossett Central Baptist Church.

