Percy Atkinson Marshall Whiteley





Rank: - Private

Number: - 18290

Regiment: - King's Own Scottish Borderers 1st Battalion

Missing, Presumed Killed in Action: - 3rd July 1916 aged 23

Remembered with Honour: - Thiepval Memorial Pier & Face 4A &4D

Batley News, 15 Jul 1916, 5 Aug 1916, 31 Mar 1917 (photo)

Family Details:

Percy Atkinson Marshall Whiteley was born in Wilton Street, Batley on 16th April 1892 to John Richard Whiteley and his wife Mary (nee Colbeck). He was baptised at St Thomas's Church on 15th May 1892 and his father's occupation was a coach builder and Mary had been a dress maker. John Richard who came from Dewsbury and Mary, a Batley girl had married at St. Thomas's Church in May 1890 and went to live in Park Road, Batley.

Percy was followed by John Walter (1894-1896), Eva Agnes (1896), Caroline (1899) and Alfred Victor (1901). One child had died in infancy which may have been Richard who sadly died aged 2 years in February 1891.

Before the 1911 census his father had changed his employment and become the caretaker at Batley Parish School moving closer to his job and living at 10, Mayman Lane, Batley. Percy had left school and become a cutter in the finishing department of a mill. By 1916 the family had moved to Holland Street, Batley.

On 14th September 1912 Percy married 19-year-old Annie Preston at Batley Parish Church. They went to live at 4, Back Holland Street, Batley and Edith Ann was born in April 1913, followed by Percy Atkinson in April 1915, sadly both these children died, Percy on 25th November and Edith 26th November 1915 and were buried together.

Percy was actively involved with the Boys' Brigade at Batley Parish Church and also became a member of the Zion Lad's Brigade, and was employed before the war in the finishing department of W. J. R. Fox & Sons.

Service Details:

He enrolled in Batley in 1915 and embarked for the Balkans on 18th July 1915.

Whilst in the Balkans he became ill and spent some time in hospital in Malta, but later served in Egypt.

The Scottish Borderers were in Lucknow, Egypt in August 1914 at the outbreak of war. They returned to England on the 28th December 1914 and came under command of 87th Brigade, 29th Division and moved to Rugby. On the 18th March they sailed from Avon mouth and landed at Cape Helles in Gallipoli on 25th April 1915.Percy followed them in July 1915. On the nights of 7th– 8th January 1916 they were evacuated from Gallipoli and moved to Alexandria in Egypt, arriving in

Marseilles in March 1916 for service in France, moving to concentrate on the area east of Pont-Remy. Between 15th and 29th March 1916. They took part in the Battle of Albert from 1st July to 13th July 1916.

The 1st of July was the first day of the Battle of the Somme where there were around 60, 000 British casualties. Between 2nd - 13th July around 25,000 more was lost.

In this opening phase, the British assault broke into and gradually moved beyond the first of the German defensive complexes on the Somme. Success on the first day in the area between Montauban and Mametz led to a redirection of effort to that area, for the initial attack was defeated with huge losses north. In the 15th July 1916 issue of the Batley News there was a report that Percy's fate was causing concern. A comrade had sent a letter saying he had seen him in the field wounded and when he was able, turned round but could find no further trace of him. It was hoped he would have been picked up by an ambulance. Three weeks later his family received official confirmation that he been posted as "missing" since July 3rd.The newspaper reports that he had transferred to the Highland Light Infantry whilst in France and had only been at the Front barely a month when he was reported missing. A friend said he was beside him in hot action but was hit on the chin by a fragment of shrapnel, and turned away to extract it. When he returned, Whiteley was no - where to be seen nor had he seen or heard of him since.

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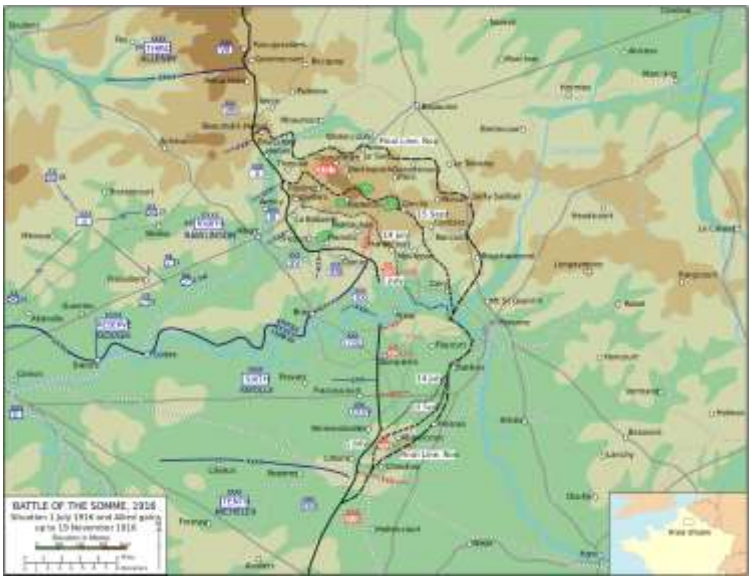

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Percy was awarded 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is commemorated on Batley War Memorial, Batley Parish Church and the Thiepval Memorial. There were 1,350 soldiers killed or missing on the same day on the Thiepval Memorial.



There is a memorial to the 29th Division in Newfoundland Park near Beaumont-Hamel a reminder of the costly attack on this ground on 1st July 1916.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group