George Whittaker





Rank: - Private

Number: - 10952

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

Killed in Action: - 28th October 1914 aged 19

Memorial: - Le Touret, Pas-de- Calais, France

Family Details

George was born in Ravensthorpe on 8th June 1895 the son of John and Zillah Whittaker (nee Wood) and baptised at St. Saviour's, Ravensthorpe on 11th July 1895. The family was living at Albion Street and John was described as being a firer. The couple had married on 28th December 1891 at St. Anne's Church, Wrenthorpe.

In 1901 the family was living at Glover's Buildings, Alverthorpe and John was working as a wool scourer.

Clara was born in 1893 followed by George, Lily (1901), Harry (1908), and Nellie (1911). The 1911 census shows that the two eldest children were born in Ravensthorpe, Lily in Alverthorpe and the two youngest in Batley Carr. Two children had died in infancy. The family was living in a two roomed home at 8, Back High Street, Batley Carr and George was working as a woollen piecener.

He worked for Messrs. R. Wilson and Sons, Warwick Road, Batley before enlisting.

His sister Clara married Albert James Roberts who was killed on 10th March 1915.

Service Details

The 2nd Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry was in Dublin before the outbreak of war in 1914 and was sent to France on the 10th August 1914 being in 13th Brigade in 5th Division.

George enlisted in the Regular Army in October 1913 was with the British Expeditionary Force where he fought at the Battle of Mons.

The British Expeditionary Force started the retreat of Mons on 23rd August and on the evening of the 25th they were being closely followed by the German 1st Army.

For long hours during the morning of 26 August, the British force, notably the field artillery, held overwhelming numbers of the enemy at bay. British tactics were similar to those at Mons. The infantry produced intensive and accurate rifle fire, while the field artillery fired air-bursting shrapnel rounds on the unprotected advancing enemy infantry. Many field guns were fired at point-

blank range over open sights. The British artillery was also exposed and came in for heavy punishment from the German guns. Some were withdrawn just as the enemy infantry closed in. For the second time in three days, the British force engaged withdrew just in time. Miraculously, the exhausted II Corps disengaged and withdrew towards the south during the afternoon. Smith-Dorrien's decision to turn II Corps around from retreat and to stand against the German advance at Le Cateau paid off handsomely. Heavy casualties were inflicted on the Germans and another delay imposed on their Schlieffen timetable. To the east, I Corps was able to move further away from the advance parties of the Germans. However, a rift grew between Sir John French (who had initially ordered a continuation of the retreat) and Smith-Dorrien as a result of this action. It was to have serious consequences in 1915.

The Battle of Cateau was actually fought to the west of the town. The British casualties at Le Cateau of killed; wounded and missing soldiers totalled 7,812.

They were involved in the Battle of Marne (7th-10th September), Battle of Aisne *(12th-15th September),*

10 October – 2 November 1914: The Battles of La Messines**.** Bassée, Armentieres and *the whole British Expeditionary Force is moved to Flanders from the Aisne, as part of an effort to outflank the Germans in France. On arrival it encounters German forces moving to outflank the Allies. These battles form part of a phase often, but incorrectly, referred to as the "Race to the Sea". The battle extends northwards as further forces arrive, with the First Battle of Ypres and the Battle of the Yser taking place at the same time.*

The 5th Division took part in the Battle of La Bassee which took place between 10th October 1914 and 2nd November 1914.

George was killed in action on the 28th October 1914

Before his death the family had moved to live at Court 4, King Street, and Batley Carr.

John William Firth, aged 20, who lived at nearby Dale Street was killed on the 1st November 1914 and his name also appears on the Le Touret Memorial, Batley War Memorial, and Salvation Army Memorial.

George was awarded the 1914 Star and Clasp, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Holy Trinity Church, Batley Carr, Warwick Road School, Batley War Memorial and the Le Touret Memorial.

The Le Touret Memorial.

The Le Touret Memorial commemorates over 13,400 British soldiers who were killed in this sector of the Western Front from the beginning of October 1914 to the eve of the Battle of Loos in late September 1915 and who have no known grave. The Memorial takes the form of a loggia surrounding an open rectangular court. The names of those commemorated are listed on panels set into the walls of the court and the gallery, arranged by regiment, rank and alphabetically by surname within the rank. The memorial was designed by John Reginald Truelove, who had served as an officer with the London Regiment during the war, and unveiled, by the British ambassador to France, Lord Tyrrell, on 22 March 1930.

Almost all of the men commemorated on the Memorial served with regular or territorial regiments from across the United Kingdom and were killed in actions that took place along a section of the front line that stretched from Estaires in the north to Grenay in the south. This part of the Western Front was the scene of some of the heaviest fighting of the first year of the war, including the battles of La Bassée (10 October – 2 November 1914.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group