Joshua Walker Wilson





Rank: - Private

Number: - 203560

Regiment: - South Staffs 4th Special Reserve Battalion

Died of Wounds: -14th April 1918

Cemetery: - Haringhe (Bandagnem) Military Cemetery 11.C.9 Belgium

Batley News 27th April 1918 (photo)

Family Details

Joshua Walker aka Walker was born in Staincliffe on the 17th November 1896 the son of Joshua and Sophia Wilson nee Webster and was baptised at Christ Church on the 17th February 1897 when the family lived at Hillary Street, Staincliffe.

His parents had married in 1888 and John was born in 1890 followed by William 1891, Mary Emily 1893, Joshua, Frank 1898.

In 1901 the family lived at 4, Staincliffe Hall Road and His father was working as a millwright on his own account. Before 1911 the family had moved to a five roomed home at 57, Chapel Fold and Walker was working as a mill hand.

Walker attended the parish church, was a playing member of the Church cricket team and was also a member of Staincliffe Conservative Club. He was in business with his father as a millwright in Staincliffe Mill Yard.

Service Details

Joshua Walker enlisted at Heckmondwike in 1917 at the same time as his brother Willie. He went to France in October 1917.

The 4th (Extra Reserve) Battalion was formed in August 1914 in Lichfield. They moved on mobilisation to Jersey and in September 1916 to Marske (Redcar), moving to Canterbury in June 1917.

On the 10th October 1917 they landed at Le Havre and came under orders of 7th Brigade in 25th Division.

In 1918 the Division moved to the area north west of Bapaume on 13th February, becoming reserve Division to IV Corps. As rumours of an impending enemy attack grew, 74th and 75th Brigades moved up closer to the front, at Fremicourt and Biefvillers respectively, where manual work in cable laying was undertaken.

The Battle of St Quentin (a phase of the First Battles of the Somme 1918)
In this battle, the units of the Division were ordered to reinforce other sorely pressed formations in a piecemeal fashion. From the opening phases of the attack until the Division was withdrawn six days later, it fought continuously under strange commanders and staffs, and not as a Division. 74th Brigade was ordered to support 51st (Highland) Division on the Bapaume-Cambrai road; 75th Brigade moved up to Favreuil to reinforce 6th Division. 7th Brigade moved up as support and took up position at Fremicourt.

The First Battle of Bapaume (a phase of the First Battles of the Somme 1918)
The defensive fight was continuous and confusing, as enemy units pushed forward on all sides. Carrying out a fighting withdrawal, by 26 March the Division found itself on the 1916 Somme battlefield. On that date, the Division was finally relieved and moved to Pommier and thence to Couin. Bty 28 March, the Brigades were south of Doullens and out – for the moment – of harm's way. The Division was desperately tired, having been in continuous action and covering on 27 and 28 March a considerable distance on foot (36 miles in 36 hours). It had also lost more than half its fighting strength: 318 officers and men dead, 1496 wounded and 1588 missing, many taken prisoner.

On 30 and 31 March, the Division entrained and moved to Caestre. (The Divisional artillery remained behind, supporting the New Zealand Division, until 7 April). Here, many reinforcements arrived, bringing the Division back up to full strength, although of course with many newly trained recruits and large numbers of 19 year-olds. The absence of experienced NCOs and troops who had worked together for a lengthy period would soon be keenly felt. In addition, many senior officer positions in the Division changed hands: the 25th Division of 9 April was a very different one to that which had been ordered forward on 21 March. The Division was once again holding the front line near Ploegsteert when the enemy struck again.

The Battle of Estaires (a phase of the Battles of the Lys)
74th Brigade was in Divisional Reserve when the enemy attacked the British positions to the south (between Armentieres and Givenchy) on 9 April 1918. It was ordered to join the defence south of Steenwerck and held on only with difficulty.

At the time of his death his brother, Willie, had been in hospital three times with illness and his brother Frank was at the Front with the Lincolnshire Regiment.

Joshua Walker was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and is remembered with Honour at Staincliffe Church of England School.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group