Herbert John Anthony Wood





Rank: - Private

Number: - 12138

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 6th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 24th April 1916 aged 23

Cemetery: - Agni Military Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France B. 10

Batley News, 5 May 1916 (photo)

Family Details

Herbert John Anthony was born around 1893 in East Ardsley the son of Herbert and Jennet Ann Wood (nee Williams). Herbert came from Lincolnshire whilst Jennet Ann came from Stockton on Tees. The couple had married at Stockton, Durham in 1892.

Janet Ann was born about 1895 in East Ardsley. When the 1901 census was taken the family was living at the Linwellgate (?), White Hart Lane, East Ardsley where Herbert (snr.) was an inn keeper. Staying with them was Damaris (b1881) Williams a younger sister of Janet Ann.

Before 1911 the family had moved to Batley living in a four roomed house at 11, Bradford Road Central and the census states Herbert (snr.) was working as a coachman for Spedding rag merchants, Herbert John was in the rag trade and sixteen year old Janet Ann was a nurse girl working for Greenwood drapers.

Herbert (snr.) was a well-known figure in Batley being the coachman for Mr. Charles R. Spedding. Mrs. Wood was actively associated with the Batley Women's War Social Club.

Herbert John attended Zion Chapel where he was a member of the Bible Class. He was an old member of the Boys' Brigade and was on the committee of Hanover Street P.S.A.

Before enlisting he was employed by Mr. Arthur Armitage, rag merchant, Dewsbury.

Service Details

Herbert enlisted within a fortnight of the outbreak of war at Dewsbury. The 6th (Service) Battalion was formed at Pontefract in August 1914 and came under the command of 43rd Brigade in 14th (Light) Division. They moved to Woking and on to Witley in November 1914. In February they moved to Aldershot before embarking for Boulogne, landing on 21st May 1915.

They saw action at Hooge in which the Division had the misfortune to be the first to be attacked with the flame thrower. In 1915 they also saw action at the Second Attack of Bellewaarde.

At the beginning of April 1916, the Battalion was at Berneville moving to Agny on the 4th April from this date until about the 21st there was very little action. There was a lot of rain which hindered work for the tunnelling company. The 23rd was Easter Sunday and it was reported as being a peaceful day, the Somersets having finished digging a new line to the hollow road. There was more machine gun fire than usual during the night, one man was killed and one was accidently wounded when he was shot by a NCO's revolver going off when he was getting into the trench on return from patrol.

During the night of the 24th there was considerably more machine gun activity on both sides. One man was killed whilst passing under the railway arch. This may have been Herbert. At 3 pm the battalion carried out a trench mortar attack in conjunction with the howitzers and "C" and "D" batteries. Two howitzers fired on the railway barrier which was considerably damaged. The tunnelling company had arranged for a permanent listening gallery under the railway.

Private John Lister, Wellington Street, Batley wrote under the date Easter Sunday: -

"It is my sad task to have to send the news to you of Herbert's death. He was killed this morning about 9.30. My poor chum! I can't realise it, so please excuse me being so blunt. It is terrible to think about. He was on a working party coming to where I am now and was only 300 yards away when a bullet caught him in the head and he passed away an hour later without regaining consciousness. He suffered no pain. The doctor did all that man could do. It is God's will, not ours. Only this afternoon we were talking of home and what you would all be doing. None of us know when our time has to come, especially out here. Try to bear it bravely as a soldier's mother and father should. Herbert died like a hero, doing his duty and sacrificing his life for others."

Stretcher-Bearer J. Cannon of Well Lane, Batley wrote: -

"I am very sorry to inform you and your family of the death of your son. He was on a working party last night when he was struck by a machine gun bullet in the head and was killed instantly, suffering no pain at all. He will be missed by everyone as he was always cheerful and bright and a very willing fellow. We have lost a good chum. We were the best of friends so I thought I would let you know

as soon as possible. He is buried in a quiet village behind the firing line. May his soul rest in peace. "

The family lived at 11, Bradford Road Central, Batley

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

He is remembered with Honour at Agni Military Cemetery, Zion Methodist Chapel, Batley and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group