James Wood





Rank: - Private

Number: - 14747

Regiment /Battalion: - Coldstream Guards No3 Company 4th Battalion

Died: - 27th September 1916 aged 36

Cemetery: - Dantzig Alley British Cemetery,Mametz, Somme, France 1.D.7

"GOD GAVE HIS BELOVED SLEEP"

Batley News, 14 Oct 1916 (photo)

Family Details

James (aka Jimmy) was born on 8th February 1880 at Greenfield, Saddleworth the son of William and Sarah Ann (nee Schofield).

In 1881 the family was living at Hey Top next door to Sarah Ann's family. William was described as a worsted cloth loom tuner. Edith (1874) and Mary Maria (1876) were also born in Greenfield, Saddleworth.

Isadora (1881) and John Frederick (1886) were both born in Greenfield before the family moved to Batley sometime before 1901. In 1901 the family was living at 143, Taylor Street, Batley and William was working on his own account as Jimmy and Dora had become assistant school teachers. In 1911 William and Sarah Ann were living at Crabtree Farm, White Lee with Dora and John Frederick and the men are described as farmers. The census shows that there had been seven children born alive but only five were still living.

James became a certified teacher from Leeds University and worked as an assistant master at St. John's School, Dewsbury Moor before enlisting. He was extremely popular at the school and organised the football team. On 2nd December 1905 at St. Thomas's Church Batley he married Lilian Colbeck the daughter of Abraham Senior Colbeck.

Edyth Irene was born in Ravensthorpe in May 1906 and John Foster (1910) in Batley where the family was living in 1911 at 43, Purlwell Hall Road, Batley. Maureen was born on 11th May 1913. At the time of his death the family was living at Oxford Road, Mount Pleasant, Batley.

He was a well-known member of Batley Conservative Club and was for some time the secretary of the Batley Conservative Association.

Service Details

James enlisted at Dewsbury in December 1914 and disembarked on the 15th August 1915.The 4th Battalion of the Coldstream Guards was formed at Windsor on the 17th July 1915 as the Guards Pioneer Battalion, but soon became the 4th Battalion. It became the Pioneer Battalion to the Guards Division. The Guards Division has the unusual distinction of being formed in France in August 1915. From the 26th September 1915 they fought at the Battle of Loos.

In 1916 the battalion fought at the Battle of Flers-Courcelette which was launched on the 15th September and lasted a week. Its objective was to cut a hole in the German line by using massed artillery and infantry attacks. This hole would then be exploited with the use of cavalry. It was the third and final offensive of the Battle of the Somme. When it finished on 22nd September the strategic objective had not been achieved but the villages of Courcelette, Martinpuich and Flers had been captured and in places the front line had been advanced by 2,500 yards by the Allied attacks.

This was followed by the Battle of Morval, 25th-28 September. The villages of Combles, Morval, Lesboefs and Gueudecourt were captured and many casualties conflicted upon the Germans. The Guards Division captured Lesboefs.

Having broken through the prepared lines of German defence, the British force now faced a new set of challenges as it was now fighting in much flatter, open ground and approached the distant gentle slopes of the Transloy Ridges. Fighting was, as before, severe but gradually the British chipped away and pushed forward.

Deteriorating weather and the shorter days, greatly increased French and British transport difficulties, rain and fog grounded aircraft and impeded artillery observation. Mud reduced the blast effect of shells and immobilised infantry, which was an advantage to the defenders. The men were stretched to limits of their physical endurance.

James was killed on the 27th September on the third day of the Battle of Morval.

James is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial, St. Andrew's Church Purlwell, Batley Conservative Club, Dantiz Alley British Cemetery, Mametz and the Guards Memorial.

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



Researched by members of
Batley History Group