

Willie Wray Hall



Rank: - Private

Number: - 29588

Regiment: - East Yorkshire Regiment (Formerly 266579 West Riding Regiment)
4th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 08/10/1918 Age: 33 years

Cemetery: - Glageon Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, France 11.D.8

Family Details

Willie Ray was born in Heckmondwike in 1884 the son of John and Harriet Emma Hall nee Lee who had married on the 5th July 1868 at St. Peter's Church, Birstall. John who was a carpet weaver who came from Barnard Castle and in 1891 was living at Omar Street, Heckmondwike with his family, Harriett born Meltham, Mary Lydia 1877, Betty Ann 1882-1897, Willie and Emmeline 1887. In 1901 the family was still at this address.

On the 18th April 1908 he married Emma Jane Norcliffe at Meltham Mills having moved previously to live in that area at Shady Row. He gave his occupation as a cotton operative.

Before 1911 his parents had moved to live at 9, Shady Row and Willie and his family were living with them. John Thomas Norcliffe had been born in Heckmondwike on 15th March 1904. The census shows that from the eight children born to John and Harriett only two were still alive. Matthew had been born in 1869 Alfred 1875 Lucretia 1879-1880 and Minnie 1881.

Willie and Emma had also lost two illegitimate children who were probably Clarence 1906-1906 and Benjamin 1910.

Service Details

Willie Ray enlisted at Halifax on the 29th November 1915 when he gave his address as 5, Spring Wood Terrace, Hollywell Brook, Halifax. He was described as being a mill-hand, 5ft. 2" tall and weighing 100 lbs. His children were John Thomas Norcliffe, Kathleen 26th November 1913 at Meltham Mills and Phyllis born 16th July 1915 at Holywell Brook.

Willie disembarked on 31st October 1917 and arrived at Etaples on the 1st November when he was transferred to the East Yorkshire Regiment. On the 28th November he was sent to hospital from field but returned to duty on the 8th December 1917.

The 4th Battalion in late 1917 was part of 150th Brigade, 50th (Northumbrian) Division. On 15th July 1918 it was reduced to cadre and transferred to Lines of Communication.

On 16th August 1918 the regiment transferred to 116th Brigade, 39th Division.

In 1918 they took part in

The Battle of St Quentin

The Actions at the Somme Crossings

The Battle of Rosieres

which were phases *of the First Battles of the Somme 1918*

The Battle of Estaires

The Battle of Hazebrouck

which were phases of the Battles of the Lys

The Battle of the Aisne

The Division had now taken part in the three great battles against the German offensives of 1918. It had suffered heavy casualties and was exhausted. A decision was taken to rebuild the Division. The original infantry units left and others arrived to take their place.

The 50th Northumbrian Division on 16 August 1918 was transferred to 116th Brigade, 39th Division.

After suffering heavy losses during the Battles of the Lys a decision was taken to reduce the Division down to a cadre. This took place by 1 June. After this it was engaged in supervising courses of instruction for American troops, beginning with units of the 77th American Division.

Divisional HQ was based at Eperlecques from 11 April to 7 June 1918; it then went to Wolphus and then Varengeville (from 15 August) and finally Rouen (5 March 1919)

Willie Wray was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour on Batley War Memorial.

