

Charles Edward Sykes



Rank: - Private

Number: - 5117941

Regiment: - Worcestershire Regiment 1st Bn.

Died: - Killed in Action, Libya 14/06/1942 Age: 22 years

Cemetery: - Knightsbridge War Cemetery, Acroma, Libya 2. C. 22.

Charles Edward was born in 1920 in the Isle of Man the son of Walter Goldthorpe Sykes and Susannah Sykes formerly Dent, nee Mc Garry who married on 4 November 1922 at Buxton Road Chapel, Huddersfield. Susannah had previously married James Dent in 1915 and Francis was born in 1917.

Willie Goldthorpe was born in 1923, Leonard 1924, Albert E 1926, Richard B 1927, James 1930. In 1939 the family lived at Nursery Wood Road, Hanging Heaton.

The 1st Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment was a Regular Army battalion that was stationed in the Middle East on the outbreak of the Second World War,

having been stationed there since 1938 due to the 1936-39 Arab revolt in Palestine. On 7 September 1939, just four days after the outbreak of the war, Private Darby of the 1st Battalion died in Jerusalem of wounds he had sustained earlier in the year, the first British soldier to die in the war. The battalion was destined to see service in the Western Desert. In July 1940, the battalion was assigned to the 21st Infantry Brigade, serving alongside the 2nd Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment and the 1st Battalion, Essex Regiment. On 11 October 1940, however, the brigade was re-designated 29th Indian Infantry Brigade and the other two battalions of the brigade were replaced by two battalions from the Indian Army. the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Punjab Regiment and 6th Battalion, 13th Frontier Force Rifles. The brigade was assigned to the 5th Indian Infantry Division and saw service in the East African Campaign. On 22 June 1942, the battalion, still fighting in North Africa, surrendered, along with 30,000 other British Commonwealth troops, at Tobruk during the disastrous Battle of Gazala. Of the men of the original battalion, only 68 officers and men remained.

The defence against Rommel's drive across Cyrenaica towards Suez consisted of a number of irregularly spaced strong point or 'boxes' lined by deep minefields. Those nearest the Axis forces were held by infantry while those further back served as reserve static positions and as bases from which the armour could operate. The chief 'Box' Knightsbridge was round a junction of tracks about 20 kilometres west of Tobruk and 16 kilometres south of Acroma, commanding all the tracks by which supplies came up to the front. Knightsbridge was a key position and the pivot on which the armour manoeuvred during heavy fighting which commenced in late May 1942.

SLEEP ON, MY SON, YOU HAVE DIED FOR FREEDOM AND HONOUR

Charles Edward is remembered with Honour at Hanging Heaton War Memorial (St Paul's) and Batley War Memorial Addenda.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group