

James Copley Watson



Rank: - Signaller

Number: - 14405021

Regiment: - Royal Corps of Signals, S.E.A.C. 14th Army

Died: - Died at Staincliffe County Hospital 12/09/1945 Age: 21 years.

Cemetery: - Hanging Heaton (St. Paul) Churchyard. Grave 1187.

James Copley Watson was born on 1 December 1923, in Batley, the only son of Herbert Morris and Harriet Ann Watson (nee Copley, m. 1921, registered Dewsbury) who lived at 9 High Street, Hanging Heaton, Batley.

He attended Mill Lane School and for many years was a member of Ebenezer Methodist Church, Hanging Heaton and Mill Lane Youth Club. Before joining the Forces, he was an apprentice electrician at Messrs. Bickers Ltd., Dewsbury.

James joined the Army in 1942 and for two years from 1943 served with the 14th Army.

The British Fourteenth Army was a multi-national force comprising units from Commonwealth countries during WW2. As well as British Army units, many of its units were from the Indian Army and there were also significant contributions from West and East Africa divisions within the "Forgotten Army" because its operations in the Burma Campaign were overlooked by the contemporary press, and remained more obscure than those of the corresponding formations in Europe for long after the war. For most of the Army's existence, it was commanded by Lieutenant General William Slim.

In early 1944, the Allies began tentative advances into Burma. The Japanese responded with all-out offensives, intending to destroy the Allies in their base areas. The result of the battles was a crushing Japanese defeat. The Japanese suffered 85,000 casualties, mainly from sickness and disease after their supplies ran out. The Allies had been continually supplied from the air, in the largest operation of its type to that date. The Japanese attempted to forestall the Allied attacks by withdrawing behind the Irrawaddy River. Fourteenth Army was nevertheless able to change its axis of advance. IV Corps, spearheaded by armoured and motorised units, crossed the river downstream of the main Japanese forces and seized the vital logistic and communications centre of Meiktila. As the Japanese attempted to recapture Meiktila, XXXIII Corps captured Mandalay, the former capital which was of major significance to the majority Burman population. The result of the Battles of Meiktila and Mandalay, known as the Battle of Central Burma, (Jan – March 1945) was the destruction of most of the Japanese units in Burma, which allowed the subsequent pursuit.

FUNERAL OF SIGNALMAN JAMES C. WATSON

Signalman James Copley Watson, Royal Signals, who died in Staincliffe County Hospital on Wednesday of last week, was the only son of Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Watson, 222, Commonside, Hanging Heaton.

Joining the Army three years ago, Signalman Watson had nearly two years' service in S.E.A.C. to his credit, serving with the now famous 14th Army.



Returning to England in April of this year, he underwent an operation for a tropical disease at a Weston - super-Mare Hospital, after which he was transferred to the Staincliffe County Hospital.

Signalman Watson, James C. Watson, who was 21 years of age, was in civilian life an apprentice electrician at Messrs. Pickers, Ltd., Dewsbury. He attended Mill Lane School and was for many years a member of Hanging Heaton Ebenezer Methodist Church and Mill Lane Youth Club.

A funeral service conducted by Mr. J. Hodgson on Saturday at Ebenezer Methodist Church, was followed by interment at Hanging Heaton Churchyard.

Family mourners were: Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Watson, father and mother; Mr. and Mrs. W. Copley, grandfather and grandmother; Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Hirst, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Shaw, Mr. Eric Copley, Mr. G. Watson, Mrs. G. Adams, Mrs. H. Copley, Miss Ellen Copley, nunts and uncles; Mr. Albert Adams, Master Brian Hirst, cousins.

Also present were: Mr. and Mrs. Walter Wormald, Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Wormald, Mr. John Wormald, Miss Gladys Wormald, Miss J. Wormald, Miss Annie Kenyon, Miss Agnes North, neighbours, and representatives of Ebenezer Methodist Church and Mill Lane Youth Club.

There were many floral tributes, including ones from: Staincliffe County Hospital; Ebenezer Methodist Church; Ebenezer Sunday School; Mill Lane Youth Club.

Batley News, 15 Sep 1945;
22 Sep 1945

James returned to England in May 1945 and underwent an operation for a tropical disease at a Weston-Super-Mare hospital after which he was transferred to Staincliffe County Hospital.

James died at Staincliffe Hospital on Wednesday 12 September 1945 and a funeral service, conducted by Mr. J. Hodgson, was held at Ebenezer Methodist Church followed by interment at Hanging Heaton Churchyard the following Saturday.

A TREASURED MEMORY. REMEMBERED ALWAYS

James Copley is remembered with Honour at Hanging Heaton War Memorial (St Paul's); and Batley War Memorial. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star and the 1939-1945 War Medal.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group