



Joseph Norman Balmforth **1893 - 1916**

Joseph was born in Batley Carr on 7th September 1893. His father was John Walter Balmforth, a Rag Merchant born in Thornhill in 1866 and died in 1938. His mother was Sara (née Holt) born in Mirfield in 1864 and died in 1910. They were married in 1889.

Their other children were; Herbert Edward, born in 1895 and died in 1896 and Ernest Arthur, born in 1897 and died in 1911.

On the 1901 Census the family lived at 10, Longlands Road, Staincliffe, Dewsbury and in 1911 at 4, Tate Naylor Street, Dewsbury.

Joseph was employed in his father's rag merchant business in 1911 but later moved to live at 28, Stratford Road West, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne and worked as a foreman in a rag warehouse for Messrs Jebbs and Company. He had attended Batley Carr Wesleyan Chapel and Sunday school. He was married at Purlwell Wesleyan Chapel, Batley on 18th September 1915 to Martha Hannah Clayton (born in 1891 and died in 1921). They had no children. In 1916 Martha was living with her parents at 33, Purlwell Hall Road, Batley; she later moved to live at "Stoneleigh," 62, Saville Road, South Shore, Blackpool but died in 1921 aged 29.

He enlisted at Newcastle upon Tyne in April 1916 serving as Private PS/10915 in the 23rd Battalion Royal Fusiliers and was sent to the Western Front in July. He was killed in action in the final stages of the Battle of the Somme on 14th November 1916 during the Capture of Beaumont Hamel, which was a part of the Battle of Ancre; he was buried in Serre Road Cemetery No 2, Somme, France. Joseph was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The village of Serre is 11 kilometres north-north-east of Albert. In June 1916, the road out of Maily-Maillet to Serre and Puisieux entered No Man's Land about 1,300 metres south-west of Serre. On 1st July 1916, the 31st and 4th Divisions attacked north and south of this road and although parties of the 31st Division reached Serre the attack failed. The 3rd and 31st Divisions attacked once more on the 13th November, but again without success. Early in 1917, the Germans fell back to the Hindenburg Line and on 25th February, Serre was occupied by the 22nd Manchesters. The village changed hands once more in March 1918 and remained under German occupation, until they withdrew in August. In the spring of 1917, the battlefields of the Somme and Ancre were cleared by V Corps and a number of new cemeteries were made, three of which are now named from the Serre Road. Serre Road Cemetery No.2 was begun in May 1917 and by the end of the war it contained approximately 475 graves, but it was greatly enlarged after the Armistice by the addition of further graves from the surrounding area, including graves from smaller cemeteries. There are now 7,127 Commonwealth burials of the First World War in the cemetery, mostly dating from 1916. Of these, 4,944 are unidentified.

Joseph is commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library and on the Batley War Memorial.

In Memory of
Private

Joseph Norman Balmforth

PS/10915, 23rd Bn., Royal Fusiliers who died on 14 November 1916 Age 23

Son of John Walter Balmforth; husband of Martha Hannah Balmforth (formerly Clayton), of "Stoneleigh,"
62, Saville Rd., South Shore, Blackpool.

Remembered with Honour
Serre Road Cemetery No.2



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Steven Van Den Eynde, Aalst, Belgium.