

Pte. Fred LABOURN (1898 - 1915)
(Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment)



Fred Labourn was born at Chidswell, Dewsbury in 1898. His parents were George Labourn and Mary Ellen Bolton. Fred had two brother's, George (1884) and Albert (1895) and the 1911 Census shows the family were living in four rooms at 8, Co-op Buildings, Soothill, Batley. George Snr. was a coal miner, Albert was a labourer in a colliery and Fred was still a schoolboy.

Fred Labourn went to war aged only 17 years and died on the 17th June, 1915. His details were reported in the Batley News shortly after his death:

'Private Fred Labourn, 1st/5th Duke of Wellington's and son of Mr. and Mrs. G Labourn, Soothill Lane, Batley, has given his life at the Front. Although only 17 years of age, Private Labourn was a well made lad and he enlisted on the outbreak of war. He had been at the Front three months and his last letter home was dated June 15th. Intimation of the lad's injury was received in a letter from Lieut. Frank A Sykes...

'Dear Mrs Labourn, I am sorry to have to tell you that your boy was wounded early yesterday morning. We sent him straight off to hospital and from what I hear he is doing well. I always admired your boy; he is one of the pluckiest lads I have in my platoon and I hope to have him back soon. I will try and let you know how he is going on.'

In a later letter Lieut. Sykes stated,

'I regret to have to inform you that your son passed away yesterday. He died for his King and Country, which is a thing which will always be remembered of him. He had a very peaceful end and passed in his sleep. I feel that I cannot sympathise with you enough because your lad was a 'real man' and I am proud to have him in my platoon.'

Major Norton also wrote to the family and stated that it would be a hard blow for the family to hear, but trusted they would find consolation in remembering that, although so young, he bore himself like a man and died for his King and Country, in action.

His effects of letters, a photo, a knife and his wallet were returned to the family on the 4th of November 1915.

In February 1916 his brother Albert enlisted at Dewsbury and on the 15th of November 1916 he was called to service with the Coldstream Guards. He was wounded in action twice, on the 16th of October 1917 and the 27th of April 1918. He did however survive the war and married Agnes Groark in 1921. He died in 1952 aged 56.

Private Fred Labourn 5/3790, 1st/5th Battalion, Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) is Remembered with Honour at Merville Communal Cemetery, Nord, France. His name also appears on the Soothill Upper Memorial in St Paul's, Hanging Heaton churchyard.

Researcher:

Susan White, Batley History Group, April 2015.