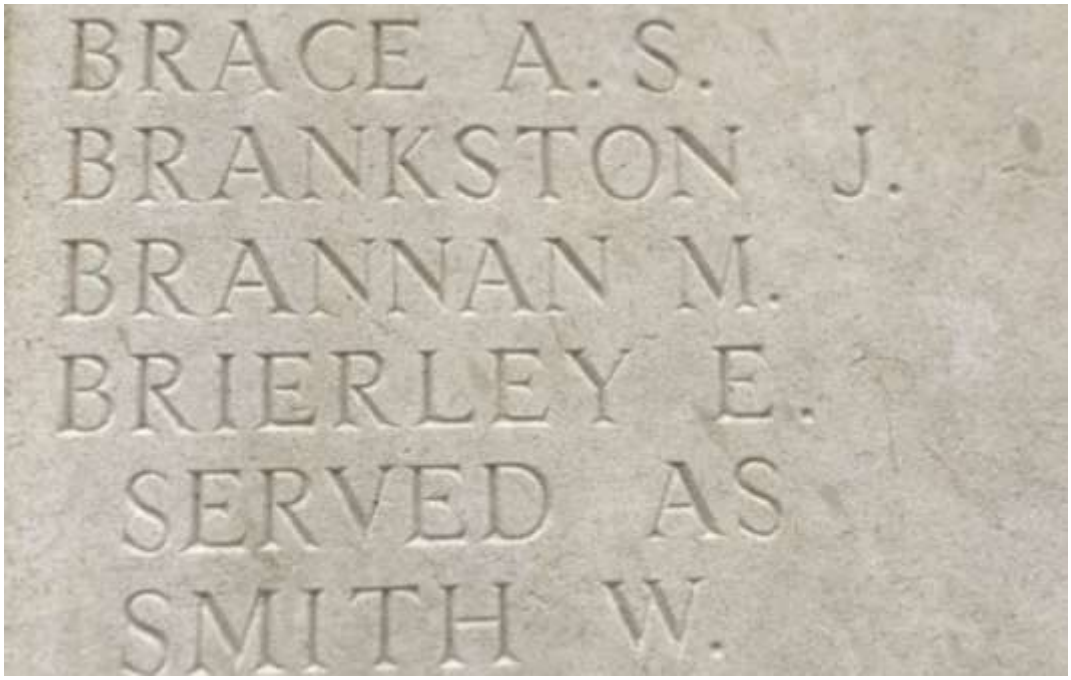
MICHAEL BRANNAN



Loos Memorial Inscription - Photo by Jane Roberts

Name: Michael Brannan
Rank: Private
Unit/Regiment: 2nd Battalion, The Northumberland Fusiliers
Service Number: 20898
Date of Death: 2 October 1915
Memorial: Loos Memorial, Pas de Calais, France

Family Details

Michael Brannan was born in Batley in around 1873. He married Annie Owens in 1897 and the family initially settled in Batley, living in the Skelsey Row area of town. They had four children baptised at St Mary's – Bridget born in 1898, Martin in 1904, Thomas in 1907 and William in 1913. Son John was born in March 1910 in the St Anthony's area of Newcastle upon Tyne when Michael's work as a coal hewer took the family up to Northumberland. It also explains Michael's subsequent military regiments.

Service Details

Michael enlisted in Newcastle-on-Tyne. He was originally in the Durham Light Infantry, possibly the 4th Battalion, Service Number 17515. He disembarked in France in May 1915.

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The 2nd Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers saw action in the Battle of Loos (25 September – 14 October 1915) and it was during this battle that Michael was killed.

The Battle of Loos was the first time the British used poison gas during the war. It also witnessed the first large-scale use of New Army, the so-called 'Kitchener's Army' units.

The battle opened on 25 September and the British were able to break through the weaker German trenches and capture the town of Loos, mainly due to numerical superiority. However, the inevitable supply and communications problems, combined with the late arrival of reserves, meant that the breakthrough could not be exploited. A further complication for many British soldiers was the failure of their artillery to cut the German wire in many places in advance of the attack. Advancing over open fields in full range of German machine guns and artillery, British losses were devastating.

Michael Brannan was one of the 13 fatalities from the Battalion on Saturday 2 October, missing presumed dead. Of these, 12, including Michael, have no known grave and are commemorated on the Loos Memorial.

Michael was awarded the 1914-15 Star, Victory Medal and British War Medal.

In addition to St Mary's, he is also remembered on the Batley War Memorial.



Loos Memorial and Dud Corner Cemetery - Photo by Jane Roberts

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