Michael Broady





Rank: - Private

Number: - 16/628

Regiment: - West Yorkshire (Prince of Wales's Own) 16th Battalion (1st Bradford)

Missing, presumed Killed in Action: - 1st July 1916 aged 19 years

Memorial: - Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France. Pier and Face 2A2C and 2 D

Batley News, 4 Nov 1916, 11 Nov 1916 (photo) Batley Reporter, 2 Mar 1917

Family Details

Michael was born in Staincliffe in c 1897 the son of James and Bridget Broady nee Purtell or Purtle who had married in 1888 in the Dewsbury District. Bridget was born in Leeds.

Catherine and Mary Ellen were born in 1889 and in 1891 the family was living at 47, Common Road and James was working at a woollen mill whilst Bridget was a rag picker. John Thomas was born in 1891 but sadly died aged one month. He was followed by James Edward 1894, Michael and Hilda 1900.

In 1901 the family which included Catherine born 1889, James Edward 1894, Michael and Hilda 1900 was living at 29, Common Road, Staincliffe and James was working as a willyer. Mary Ellen was living at 2, Crofts, Staincliffe as the adopted daughter of widowed Elizabeth Casey.

Within the next decade they moved to a two roomed home at 16, Common Road, Staincliffe and there was the addition of John born 1906 and James had changed his occupation to become a rag grinder and 13-year-old Michael was working as a piecener. Hilda died aged 4 years in November 1904.

Before 1916 the family moved to 5, Bunkers Lane, Staincliffe. In February 1916 Elizabeth Sykes of Healey Street, Batley went to court to find why he did not pay to support her child. Mr. Henry Whitfield appeared for the complainant and Michael was ordered to pay 4 shillings (20pence) a week until the child was 14 years old. Her brother Sam Sykes was killed in action in January 1916 and her father died in 1915 shortly after the White Lee explosion in December 1914.

Michael attended St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Heckmondwike and before enlisting worked for Mr. Robert Bruce, cotton waste dealer, Heckmondwike.
Before 1916 the family moved to 5, Bunkers Lane, Staincliffe.

Service Details

Michael enlisted at Bradford but his records have not survived and the date is not known. He did not serve abroad before January 1916 because he was not awarded the 1915 Star.

The 16th Battalion was formed in Bradford in September 1914 by the Lord Mayor of the City.

The units were moved to concentrate at South Camp at Ripon in April and May 1915. There were severe shortages of arms, ammunition and much equipment. It was not until September that the Division moved for final training and firing practice at Fovant on Salisbury Plain.

In late November 1915 the Division received a warning order to prepare to sail for France. Advance parties began to depart however on 2 December final orders were received that the Division would go to Egypt, accompanied by the artillery of 32nd Division. Its own artillery would join 32nd Division in France. The advanced parties were recalled and the Division sailed from 7 December, with Divisional HQ being established at Port Said on Christmas Eve. The last units arrived in Egypt on 23 January 1916.

The Division took over the No 3 Sector of the Suez Canal defences and Divisional HQ moved to Kantara on 23 January. The stay in Egypt was short, and between 1-6 March the Division sailed to Marseilles for service on the Western Front. The 31st Division took part in:-

The Battle of Albert including the attack on Serre (1st-13th July)

On the 1st July the Battalion moved from Colincamps and was in its appointed place in the assembly trenches by 3 am they opened a preliminary bombardment on the enemy trenches. The Battalion lost very few men before zero hour which was at 7.30 am. Just before 7.25am the enemy fired machine guns, rifle power and shrapnel was directed at the parapet of the assembly trench—the southern half of Bradford trench – making them suffer considerably. A lot of men never got off the ladder but fell back and others fell back from the parapet in trying to get over. In getting out of the trenches they met machine gun, shrapnel and rapid rifle fire and lost many men and most of the Officers, NCO's and men were knocked out. Most of the men were killed between 7.30am and 9 am but others did try to advance.

Michael was missing, presumed killed in action.

After extensive enquiries an officer wrote to his parents in November 1916.

"*A Private Brearley who was with your son at the time of his death was with him in a shell hole when another shell came and killed your son. I have made enquiries and this is all I can find about him. Please accept my deepest sympathy."*

His brother, James Edward, was killed in action on the 1st November 1916.

Michael was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Christ Church, Staincliffe and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group