Michael Cafferty



Rank: - Private

Regiment: - The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment), 17th (Service) Battalion.

Number: - 17/1039

Date of Death: - 1 August 1916

Cemetery: - St Sever Cemetery, Rouen, Seine- Maritime, France

Michael was born in Batley on 13 July 1889, the fifth child of seven children born to Michael and Bridget Cafferty (nee Dunn). Michael and Bridget came from County Mayo had married in Batley in 1881. Michael worked as a rag grinder and Bridget, when she worked was a rag sorter. In addition to Michael their other children were John, born in September 1882, but who died in October 1884, Jane, born in February 1884, Patrick in 1886, Thomas in October 1886, Catherine in January 1892, but who died in March 1894 and James born in 1898.

In 1891 the family lived at New Street, Batley, but by 1901 they were living at Ambler Street, and they were also there a decade later. In 1911. Michael was working as a hewer in a coal mine and in the same street was Margaret Owens, who he married at St Mary's on 17 February 1912.

Michael enlisted in Leeds in early January 1915, joining the 17th Battalion, (2nd Leeds) The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment). Initially the 17th West Yorkshires were billeted locally, firstly at Leeds, followed by Ilkley. From there they went to huts at Skipton, before moving to a tented camp at Masham in June 1915. At about this

time Michael appeared before Batley police court on 21 June 1915, charged with being absent without leave from his battalion since 19 June 1915. He was remanded to await escort.

Towards the latter part of the year the 17th West Yorkshires moved down south to Wiltshire and the camps on Salisbury Plain in preparation for the move overseas, staying at Chiseldon Camp, Perham Down and Larkhill. At this time, he made an informal will leaving everything to his wife, Margaret, who was living at 27, Villiers Street, Batley.

The battalion finally set sail from Southampton on 31 January 1916, disembarking at Le Havre the following day.

From mid July 1916 the 17th West Yorkshires were on the Somme, in the Montauban, Bernafay Wood, Delville Wood area, involved in operations to capture the latter. The tasks included providing working parties to carry ammunition to dumps, taking lights, flares and wire to the front lines: loading trench mortar bombs, undertaking repeated attempts to bury cables—these proved unsuccessful because of heavy shelling; carrying out salvage work and the burial of the dead; and they were in reserve for an operation on 30 July when they were praised for their actions in pushing through and occupying the front line. Michael served with "W" Company, and they are referred to directly in some of this work.

The area they operated in did come under heavy shelling on and off through this period, including sporadic gas shelling, but they paid a high price. The War Diary entry for 13 July 1916 states that they had 10 officers and 304 other ranks casualties (dead, missing and wounded).

Michael died of wounds at the 10th General Hospital, Rouen, on 1 August 1916. He is buried at St Sever Cemetery, Rouen.

Michael was awarded the Victory and British War Medals. He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial and St. Mary's Church.

Michael and Margaret did not have any children. She married Martin Gallagher in April 1919.



Thanks to Jane Roberts and for more details see www.pasttopresentgenealogy.co.uk