Michael Howley



Rank: - Private

Number: - 16959 581612

Regiment: - Labour Corps (Formerly 16959 KOYLI 9th Batt)

Died: - December 1919

Place: - New York. America

Family Details

Michael was born in Dewsbury in c.1881 the son of Michael Howley and Annie nee Gray who had married in 1880.

In 1891 he was lodging at the home of James Rourke of 44, High Street, Dewsbury with his widowed father and sister, Mary Ellen born 1884. Annie had died in March Qtr 1888 aged 26 years.

In 1894 his father married Margaret Ann Mullarkey and Margaret Annie was born in 1895 followed by John Edward c. 1899 and Patrick c.1900 and Michael was living with them at 114, Middle Road, Dewsbury in 1901. Kathleen was born in 1904 followed by Peter 1908 and Thomas 1910. In 1911 they had moved to New Street, Daw Green, Dewsbury.

Michael married Elizabeth Phillips in July Qtr 1905 at Dewsbury. Michael was born in 1905, Patrick 1907, John 1908 and Annie Mary 1910 and in 1911 they family was living in a two roomed home at 36, New Street, Batley. Michael was working as a coal miner hewer and Elizabeth was working as a rag sorter, despite her young children. Catherine was born in 1911 followed by Alice Maud and Joseph 1913, James 1916 and Henry 1918. James died aged 23 months in January 1918.

Service Details

Michael disembarked on 11th September 1915 in France and was discharged 7th March 1919.

We think he could have voluntarily enlisted shortly after WWI was declared – maybe Sept 1914. His KOYLI service number 16959 confirms this as likely. Bearing in mind the date of his embarkation we think he may have been in the 9th (Service) Battalion of K.O.Y.L.I.

The 9th Battalion was formed at Pontefract in September 1914 as part of K3 and came under command of 64th Brigade in 21st Division. Moved to Berkhamsted and then to Halton Park (Tring) in October 1914, going on to billets in Maidenhead in November, returning to Halton Park in April 1915 and went on to Witley in August. September 1915, they landed in France.

Advanced parties of the 21st Division embarked for France began on 2 September and the main body began to cross the Channel five days later. Units moved to assemble near Tilques, completing concentration on 13 September. The Division's first experience was truly appalling. Having been in France for only a few days, lengthy

forced marches brought it into the reserve for the British assault at Loos. GHQ planning left it too far behind to be a useful reinforcement on the first day, but it was sent into action on 26 September, whereupon it suffered over 3,800 casualties for very little gain.

Private Howley could have served at the Battle of the Loos in 1915 and spent much of 1916 fighting on The Somme, including the Battle of Albert on 1st July 1916. If he remained with the 9th KOYLI then 1917 would have seen at Arras and latterly at Ypres, including the second battle of Passchendaele. In 1918 the 9th KOYLI served again on The Somme and the Final Advance in Picardy.

The 9th stayed on until May 1919 with demobilisation starting in December 1918. Michael Howley was discharged on 13 -11-1918. He would by that time have been with the Labour Corps and quite possibly back home.... but we can't say for certain or when. We cannot ascertain when Michael moved from the KOYLI to the Labour Corps but he did serve for almost the whole of the war.

On the 3rd December 1919 Michael (miner) with his wife Elizabeth and children Michael aged 14(labourer), Patrick 13 (labourer), John 11 scholar, Annie 10, Catherine 8 , Joseph 6 and Henry 2, sailed from Liverpool to New York on board the "Carmania" of the Cunard Line and arrived in New York on the 19th December 1919. Michael, Elizabeth, Joseph and Henry were taken to hospital where Michael died.

The family returned to England and Elizabeth married Thomas Golden in 1926 and Michael and John of 45, Hume Street, Batley, once more went across the Atlantic to Quebec, Canada on board the "Laurentic" leaving Liverpool on the 16th May 1930.

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

He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group