William Kelly



Rank: Private

Regiment: 5th (Reserve) Battalion the Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment)

Service Number: 79545

Date of Death: 12 Sept 1918

Cemetery: Batley O 461

William Kelly was born in Batley on 3 May 1887. His parents were John Kelly and his wife Annie (nee Trainer). The couple had married at St. Mary's on 5 July 1884 with William the second of their seven children. James was born in 1885, but only survived nine months. After William came Mary Jane 1890, Ann, 1893, John Thomas 1896-1897, John Joseph 1898 and Thomas Edward 1901.

The family lived at Yard 2, Commercial Street in 1891, with John described as a coal miner hewer and Annie a woollen weaver. A decade later the address was Fleming Street, with John still a coal miner. William aged 13, had employment as a hurrier in a coal mine.

John died in 1903, and the following year Annie married Michael Kilroy. They had one son, Bernard, in 1906. William married Mary Cairns at St. Mary's on 11 February 1911. At first, they lived with Mary's parents at Grange Road, Batley. William worked as a coal miner hewer and Mary a rag sorter. They subsequently moved to 1 Spa Street and had two daughters, Agnes in 1912 and Anne in 1913.

Following the outbreak of war, William attested in Batley on 11 December 1915, just within the deadline of the Derby Scheme, but he chose to deferred service route. He would have been given an armlet with a red crown. He was finally mobilised on 21 June 1918 and posted to his battalion the following day. His Battalion was based at Rugeley Camp, Cannock Chase, Staffordshire. His papers described him as being 5'7" tall, with blue eyes, dark hair and a sallow complexion. His occupation was a miner. His character on discharge was stated as good, with no signs of drunkenness.

From the outset of his military service, he clearly was not a well man. He only spent one night under canvas with his unit before being admitted to Rugeley Camp hospital. Rather than moving with his Battalion to their new base camp at Hollesley Heath Camp, Woodbridge, Suffolk this was where he remained unto 13 August 1918, when wheels were set in motion for his army discharge. He was sent home to Spa Street to await instructions as to his final discharge.

His final discharge was officially confirmed from 3 September 1918. Suffering from phthisis, (the term for a wasting disease, most commonly pulmonary tuberculosis), he was deemed as no longer fit for war service. He was awarded a weekly pension of 27s.6d. from 4 September 1918.

He died on 12 September 1918 and because it was not attributed to his military service, he does not have a CWGC headstone. He is buried in a family grave. He is remembered on Batley War Memorial and St. Mary's Church Memorial.



Thanks to Jane Roberts and for more information please see

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