

Levi Horsley

Private. No 17750, 11th (Service) Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

Levi's parents, Michael Horsley, born in the Warwickshire village of Ratley and Mary Ann (nee Hitchcox) of nearby Radway were married in the church of St. Paul, Ratley on the 3rd May 1871. The couple spent the first few years of their marriage living in Ratley where Michael worked as a farm labourer, before moving to Church Walk, Wellesbourne Mountford with their daughter Sarah Ann. A further five children followed: Daniel, William, George, Ellen and Levi. Two additions, Alice and James, arrived in the mid 1890s, by which time the family had crossed the River Dene and taken up residence in Church Street, Wellesbourne Hastings. Michael worked for much of his life as a farm labourer but at some time in the 1890's became a roadman for the County Council.

Levi was born on the 17th July 1880 and baptised on 12th September of the same year. He passed through the village school attending the infants section before joining the juniors in July of 1887. Unfortunately the school records give no indication as to his intended occupation after completing his education in June 1893ⁱ.

Census records of 1901 and 1911 reveal that a number of former residents of Wellesbourne had moved to the area surrounding Aston, Birmingham: two of the Hone brothers, William Reynolds, and members of the Atkins family. The prospects of more or better employment opportunities may have been the key. In the earlier Census the lodging house of Alfred Sanders at 34, Ashted Road, Aston includes the names of 5 men describing themselves as General Hauliers. Levi Horsley aged 20 and his brother William were two of them; also Frank Holtom from Walton.

According to the 1911 Census Levi worked as a labourer for Erdington District Council and lodged at 131, Trafalgar Rd, Erdington.

Levi didn't arrive at the battlefields of France until 1916. Either, as part of Lord Derby's 1915 scheme of 'voluntary conscription' or as the result of the Military Service Act of 1916 for compulsory conscription, he would have been called to the colours around the spring of 1916. Registering in Warwick, he became Private Levi Horsley, No 17750 of the 11th (Service) Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment.



Flat Iron Copse Cemetery, Mametz.

Prior to his joining, the Battalion had already been in France since 31st July 1915 as part of 112th Brigade, 37th Division. Levi joined in time for what was planned as the big breakthrough of the war, but in which he was to become a casualty of the futile and indiscriminate slaughter that was the Battle of The Somme.

The Battle was in its sixth week when, on the 6th July, the 11th Battalion moved into trenches at Bazentin-Le-Petit to the east of Albert. For 5 days they were heavily shelled and aircraft fought dog fights overhead. On the 6th day, August 11th 1916, the day Levi Horsley died, the war diary reports:

Hostile Artillery very intensive throughout the day....our casualties were-: other ranks killed 13,wounded 43, missing 7. Total 63....A large number of men were buried by H.E. shells.

This accounts for the missing. Four bodies were afterwards dug out..... This was a trying day for the troops.

Levi is buried in the Flat Iron Copse Cemetery, Mametz, Somme (Grave Ref. II. D. 3.), approximately 1 mile south from where he died. His name appears on the Wellesbourne Roll of Honour for the Dead, St. Peter's Church and on the Wellesbourne War Memorial in addition to the Birmingham Roll of Honour.

He was awarded the Victory and British War Medals.

Researched by Grev Hudson(July 2014) (grev.hudson@tinyworld.co.uk)

^{i i} Wellesbourne School Records (WRO. CR371/2,CR371/2.CR371/3 AMD CR371/4)

Other Sources

War Diaries 11th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment (NA WO95/2538)
The Long Long Trail (www.1914-1918.net)