

HENRY GALLOWAY

Henry Galloway has only a tenuous connection with Alne parish, but I have included him as he is local and his story is a reminder that consequences of the period could have a devastating effect – even on those who managed to have a ‘good’ war.

Henry was born in Easingwold in April or May 1880 to James, a farm labourer, and his wife Ann. One of the youngest of twelve children, Henry spent his formative years living on Long Street, although by 1901 the census finds him working as a farm carter at High Leys House in Newburgh, Coxwold. In 1905 he married Ada Long who had been born in Husthwaite and was working as a domestic servant in Easingwold at the time of their marriage. The next year saw the birth of their first child, Tom, but he sadly died in infancy. The following year, 1907, their daughter Sarah was born, followed by sons Henry and John Thomas in 1909 and 1911 respectively.

By 1911 the family was living at Red House in Husthwaite, where Henry was employed as a foreman on a farm. Despite this apparent success, the next few years were to be turbulent and sorrowful ones; a second daughter, Ada, was born in 1913 but died very soon after, and her mother died the following year. Henry was therefore left with three small children to care for and so moved them in with his sister Sarah Jane Britton who was living with her railway platelayer husband and adult daughter in Gate House in Alne Station. Whether Henry had moved in there himself prior to signing up with the army on 2nd January 1915 is unknown, but he did give it as his home address on his attestation papers.

His service record shows that he was 5ft 3½ inches tall and around 9½ stone, in good health and with no distinguishing features or scars. He signed up in Thirsk and was then transferred to Bradford where he was assigned to the Royal Army Service Corps with the rank of Driver due to his experience with horses as a farm manager. He remained in Britain until 25th August 1915 when he joined the 70th Northumberland Field Ambulance, which was attached to the 23rd Division of the army. Information regarding how field ambulances operated is outlined in a previous article on Arthur Farmery. It is, however, worth noting the organisation of the transport section of the field ambulance and how important horses were; in addition to 14 riding horses, each field ambulance also included 52 draught and pack horses which pulled 23 wagons, 3 water carts, 3 forage carts, 6 General Service wagons, 10 ambulance wagons and the cook’s wagon. Each field ambulance also had one bicycle and, by the end of 1914, seven motorised ambulances.

Sailing on the *Empress Queen* out of Southampton on 26th August 1915 Henry arrived at Le Havre the next day before continuing on to Tilques, which is situated about twenty miles southeast of Calais. On 5th September the 23rd Division moved to the Merris-Vieux Berquin area across the border from Ypres, where they got their first taste of life in the trenches. The Division then remained on the Western Front until late 1917, seeing action in the Battle of Loos, the German attack on the Vimy Ridge, the Battle of the Somme and the Third Battle of Ypres – including Passchendaele. In what must have been a welcome respite in the middle of all this action, Henry was granted leave from his unit between 24th May and 3rd June. Then later in 1917, on 10th November, the Division was moved to northern Italy.

For the rest of 1917 the Division was active in the triangle between Mantua, Modena and Milan. By June 1918, however, they had moved east to the foothills of the

Dolomites a little way north of Venice, and it was here that they were positioned when the Armistice took effect. A month later, between 11th and 26th December, Henry was granted further leave, before finally being demobbed on 16th April 1919.

Given the huge numbers of casualties – the 23rd Division alone lost 25,574 men killed, wounded and missing over the war – work in a field ambulance must have been relentless and harrowing. Henry did, all the same, have a good war with apparently no injuries and the only record of medical problems being a week-long stay in hospital for scabies in February 1919. He was also awarded a Good Conduct badge on 2nd January 1917. On arriving home, however, he was confronted with the news that his two sons had both died of influenza; 9½ year-old Harry on 27th February and 8 year-old John on 1st March. His sister's daughter Charlotte, aged 24, also died in the same period – presumably also from the 'flu. Tragically, even more people – 228,000 in Britain alone – died from the Spanish Flu pandemic than did in the war. There is one interesting fact from a social history perspective in connection with Henry's sons' deaths – despite being born the year before the 1870 Education Act which made schooling universal and compulsory, Henry's sister Sarah who registered the boys' deaths was apparently unable to write her name and signed the death certificates with a cross. Education was seemingly not as universal as it had been intended.

What became of Henry after the war - having lost his wife and four of his five children - is unknown. A Henry Galloway is recorded in the 1939 England and Wales Register as living in Dewsbury and working as a 'Motor Driver Coal Deliverer' but there is no way of knowing whether or not this was our Henry Galloway. The only clues are that this person was also born in 1880 and was a widower. If this is our man, it would appear that he died in Dewsbury in 1964 at the age of 84. Incidentally, unlike all her siblings, Henry's daughter Sarah lived into old age, dying in 1992 just a month before her 85th birthday.