

The Middlesbrough

Roll of Honour of the Great War

Supplementary Names, - “O”

Compiled by Robert Coulson (1952 – 2008)

The names below are found on the Supplementary Panels on the Middlesbrough War Memorial. The names were received for inclusion after the official unveiling of the Memorial, and are included on the 3 supplementary panels.

In the years 1914-1918 thousands of Middlesbrough men and women served their country in a time of hardship, stress and suffering both for the troops on the battlefronts and those left at home.

After the Armistice in November of 1918 handsome memorial tablets and plaques recalling the fallen were erected in the works, shops and churches of the Middlesbrough area.

At this time a committee was formed to consider the question of a war memorial for the town as a whole to remember the citizens who had laid down their lives. In the words of the committee,

“We recognise the splendid sacrifice made by our men and we desire that our children and our children’s’ children should hear the story and share in the inspiration which such sacrifice will always give”.

The response of the townspeople resulted in the fine cenotaph of Aberdeen granite and the wall of Portland stone containing the bronze panels with the names of the fallen that we see today at the entrance to Albert Park.

The memorial works were completed at a cost of approximately £17,000 and the people of the town attended in their thousands for the dedication and unveiling ceremony which took place on November 11th 1922.

This roll of honour contains close to 3500 names of the fallen who are remembered on the memorial and also those whose names were put forward by their families after the unveiling ceremony.

I felt it fitting that as the centenary of the onset of the Great War approaches I should try and add a little information on those remembered and the actions in which they laid down their lives.

I would just add that much as I regret it, details on some of these brave people is not available due to the passage of time but their names will still appear in the text as they do on the memorial panels.

Finally just a few points to consider,

It will be noticed that on some of the entries no Middlesbrough connection may be obvious, indeed the person appears to have come from well outside the area or even the country.

It must be remembered that it was the townspeople who put the names forward for inclusion and as an example a relation who stayed with the family in the town occasionally, could well appear after his family took the trouble to forward the name.

Middlesbrough was a thriving centre of industry at the time and a person may well have been employed in the town before hostilities and had their name included by workmates.

Serving under an alias is also quite common and although sometimes used to cover criminal activity, was normally just a person keen to serve but underage and using another identity.

Also a mother who had taken another man's name might have offspring who preferred to serve using their natural father's name.

Double entries for the same name also appear quite a few times, for example, Samuel Alder and S Alder.

I believe they are one and the same person named twice as a result of a large family with different branches putting the name forward twice.

The person will appear in the listing as named on the memorial with any variations in spelling and second names being included in the text.

It will be noticed that some entries begin "I believe this to be".

These are people who to the best of my judgement are those named but can not be 100% certain. They are included with the best intentions and if a mistake is made I make my apologies in advance.

Robert Henry Coulson died on 8 November 2008. His papers were donated to the Green Howards Museum in Richmond, and the work below comes from these papers.

O'Brien, Dennis.

O'Hara, Frank & O'Hara James.

I have put these two Middlesbrough brothers together as they fought and died together on the same day on HMS Indefatigable.

Both Royal Navy stokers they perished on May 31st 1916 at the Battle of Jutland when HMS Indefatigable was sunk by shellfire from the German battlecruiser the Von der Tann.

Frank and James O'Hara are remembered on the Chatham Naval Memorial in Kent and were the sons of Mrs Margaret O'Hara of 31 Suffield Street in Middlesbrough, James being married to Mary Teresa O'Hara of 79 Milbank Street in Middlesbrough.

O'Hara, Michael.

Listed as serving on the Beagle class destroyer HMS Foxhound, his name does not appear on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission listings.

O'Key, George.

Middlesbrough born and correctly named George Okey, he served with the home based 3rd battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment.

Private Okey died at home aged 30 on April 11th 1917 and is buried in Linthorpe Cemetery.

He was the husband of Mrs Florence Diana Okey of 5 Cadogan Street in Middlesbrough.

Oliver, John William.

John William Oliver was Middlesbrough born and enlisted in the town into the 4th battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment.

Private Oliver was killed in fighting in the Hindenburg Support Line close to Bayencourt on July 13th 1917 at the age of 22.

His grave can be visited today in Rookery British Cemetery at Heninel, six miles to the south east of Arras.

O'Neil, James Edward.

Royal Navy man James Edward O'Neil was a Stoker 1st Class aboard HMS Queen Mary.

He perished at the Battle of Jutland on May 31st 1916 when Queen Mary received direct hits from the German ships Seydlitz and Derfflinger.

His name is remembered today on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial on Southsea Common.

O'Rourke, John.

John O'Rourke was born in Middlesbrough where he enlisted for service with the 10th battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment.

Lance Corporal O'Rourke was killed in actions to the north west of the village of Croisilles on April 2nd 1917 aged 24 during the build up to the Arras offensive.

Having no known final resting place his name appears on the Arras Memorial at the Faubourg D'Amiens Cemetery in Arras.

He was the son of Charles and Ann O'Rourke of 13 Frederick Street in Middlesbrough and the husband of Mrs A E O'Rourke of 12 Frederick Street in Middlesbrough.

Overill, Joseph.

Born in Stockton on February 16th 1893, Joseph Overill emigrated to Canada and enlisted with the 47th battalion British Columbia Regiment in Vancouver on June 13th 1915.

Private Overill was killed during the Battle of the Ancre Heights aged 23 on November 6th 1916 and with no known grave is remembered on the Vimy Memorial situated on the highest point of Vimy Ridge five miles north east of Arras.

His next of kin was listed as his father Mr William Overill of John Street in Vancouver.

Oxley, Thomas William.

Thomas Oxley was Middlesbrough born and enlisted in the town as a member of the 2nd battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment.

Private Oxley was killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, July 1st 1916 aged 22 as the battalion attacked towards Pozieres at 7-45 am.

The son of the late William Oxley he is remembered today on the Thiepval Memorial situated high above the old Somme battleground.