



Henry Coldman

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Henry trained as a territorial soldier with the Sherwood Foresters and signed up for service in September 1914 aged 31. He was assigned to the 12th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters which was formed in Derby on 1 October 1914, but he later transferred to the 10th Battalion which landed at Boulogne on 14 July 1915, destined for the trenches of Northern France. His military records states that Henry was a skilled sniper - his job would be to spot and pick off enemy soldiers from a concealed place.

In autumn 1916, towards the end of the Battle of the Somme Henry spent nearly two months in hospital in Kent suffering from boils – the medical officer prescribed “repeated tonics”. At 33 life in the trenches was obviously taking its toll.



Battle of the Somme: Troops of the Sherwood Foresters Regiment cooking their 'Pork and Beans' ration in dixies, November 1916. © IWM (Q 4594)

On his return to active service Henry was attached to the 12th Training Reserve Battalion based at Brocton Training Camp on Cannock Chase in Staffordshire. In

September 1916 training for all conscripts was reorganised and centralised. New conscripts now received their basic training with the Training Reserve and were then assigned to a regiment. At Brocton Camp recruits were able to train in modern warfare in a system of training trenches. We don't know what Henry's role was at the Camp but with the end of the war in November 1918 the urgency to train new recruits reduced and in December 1918 he was transferred to the Labour Corps until he was demobilised in February 1919.

The Labour Corps was formed in 1915 and was manned by men medically unfit for frontline duty – often soldiers were transferred to the Corps following an injury. By November 1918 over 389,000 men had served with the corps. In addition many men from Egypt, China, India and other parts of the British Empire were drafted into the corps. The task of the Labour Corps included keeping roads, railways and canals in good working order, as well as constructing the camps, dumps and stores needed by the army.

Before the war Henry had trained as an Engineering Draftsman, specialising in refrigeration equipment and he resumed this career after the war. After demobilisation in February 1919 he moved away from Derby, marrying Maud Dickerson in Ipswich in 1929. They continued to live in Ipswich until they died – Maud in spring 1967, and Henry in January 1968, aged 84.