Dominick Brannan



Rank: - Private

Number: - 6256

Regiment: - 'B' Company, King's (Liverpool Regiment)

Died: - 19 May 1915

Memorial: - Le Touret Memorial, Pas-de-Calais, France

It is very probable that Dominick Brannan appears twice on Batley War Memorial, originally under the name Dominick Brennan and again on the 1999 Addenda under George Brannen.

Dominick's parents were Mark Brannan and Mary Mulligan, whose marriage was registered in the Wigan district in 1866. The family name has several spelling variations, including Brennan and Brannen and Dominick or Dominic. His parents were both Irish born, with the 1911 census putting Mary's birthplace as Kilomore, County Mayo - possibly Kilmore. The first two children were born in Lancashire, Michael in 1868 and Peter whose birth was registered in 1869. They were probably born in Ashton in Makerfield but by the birth of third child, John, in June 1870 they were in Batley living in New Street in 1871 when the census was taken.

Mark Brannan worked as a coal miner and between pregnancies Mary worked as a rag sorter in 1881, weaver in 1891, rag sorter in 1899 and a cloth refiner in 1901. Their children were Michael, Peter, John who died in November 1882, Margaret 1871who died in June 1878, Harriett born 1873 and died in 1876, Catherine born 1875, Martin born 1877, Mary born 1878, Dominick 10 August 1879, Annie born 1891, Alice born 1883 Mark born in 1885 and Bridget born in 1887. In 1911 the census shows there had been 14 children born alive and nine were still living. There is no son named George among these 14 children, and is backed by GRO Index searches and parish baptisms. The name George was an alias in military service records.

On 25 November 1899 his sister, Annie, who had complained of feeling ill a day earlier, died at their home in New Street. Dominick, who had been a miner, was at home on furlough from the Army. He had served for 14 days in the militia in October 1899 and then enlisted at Warrington as a Private with The King's (Liverpool Regiment). He signed on for three years Army service followed by nine years on the Army Reserve. Assigned to the 2nd Battalion, his allotted service number was 6256. His medical examination described him as standing at 5'3", weighing 116llbs, with a sallow complexion, grey eyes and brown hair. He had numerous scars over the back and base of his right thumb, a linear scar on the middle finger of his left hand and a scar at the back of his head.

The most curious part of his attestation documents was the fact that he signed and served under the name George Brennen. These papers also show he was also known as Dominick and was ranked 3rd Class for reading, writing and arithmetic terms. This meant he could read a short paragraph from a more advanced reading book, write a sentence slowly dictated from a book and could

undertake arithmetic up to long division standard and understand compound rules around money. In terms of military accomplishment, he was rated as a 2nd Class Shot in the musketry classification. In the 1901 Irish Census he was at Curragh's Beresford Barracks in County Kildare on the roll in the Regiment's 2nd Battalion 'G' Company. He was originally a cycle orderly, becoming a signaller, which was a rank he would retain.

He transferred to the Army Reserve on 19 July 1902, returning to his New Street home in Batley and resumed his civilian occupation as a coal miner. He later joined the St. Mary's Branch of the National Catholic Benefit and Thrift Society. He was also a member of the Batley (John Dillon) Branch of the United Irish League. He spent time at His Majesty's Pleasure for being drunk and disorderly on different occasions. Military links have been found for his brothers, Peter, James, Martin and Mark. Martin served with the King's Rifle Corps, serving in South Africa during the 2nd Boer War and it was whilst with them at Gosport he died of illness on 22 July 1905.

With his Army Reserve due to expire in October 1910 he applied to stay on the Reserves. On 6 August 1910 after a medical examination showing, he stood at 5'5", with a chest measurement of 36", waist 37" and size seven boots he was accepted for another four years on expiration of service.

On 5th August 1914, he rejoined the Army, posted to the Regiment's 3rd Battalion Seaforth, Liverpool. On the 31 August 1914 he was sent to France to join the 1st Battalion and is listed amongst the Battalion's third lot of reinforcements, joining them on 22 September 1914 at billets at Oeuilly. The Regiment moved north and took part in the Battles of Ypres 1914 (First Ypres). This series of battles took place between 19 October and 22 November 1914. It was a desperate fight to the east of Ypres as the Germans repeatedly pushed to capture the city. It ultimately resulted in trench warfare and the entrenched, stagnant positions synonymous of the First World War. His mother died on 14 November 1914. The 1st King's became actively involved on the 24 October when their Commanding Officer Lieut.-Colonel William Stirling Bannatyne was shot through the heart by a sniper, and killed. In conflict this could have a huge impact on officers and men.

The 1st King's then spent until mid-November in and around the Polygon Wood area, in the triangle formed by Ypres and the villages of Gheluwelt and Zonnebeke. Black Watch Corner, Polderhoek, Veldhoek, the Nonne Bosschen Wood (Nun's Wood), Hooge and Bellewarde Farm were all unwontedly familiar to them as they experienced heavy shellfire day upon day and repulsed repeated German attacks to break through the line. In an appendix to the War Diary for 11 November was written: -

"*It must be remembered that the Battalion, in addition to being weak in numbers and occupying a very broad front had been shelled almost continuously for eleven days, with practically no British counter artillery fire and that the lack of any hot meals or hot drinks, or washing and sanitary facilities whatsoever, had greatly impaired the health of the troops and the fact of being shot at all day and night without being able to shoot back was beginning to make itself felt."*

Captain Hudson of the 1st King's described this time as "*the most awful bombardment I have ever been under"*

Everard Wyrall in his official War History of the King's described the men in this period living and fighting in holes full of water and thick slimy, sticky mud which clung to clothes and clogged rifles. The 1st King's were eventually relieved on 18 November 1914.

On 1 March 1915 at 7.20 am HRH Prince of Wales visited their trenches and was shown dead Germans. On 10 March they took part in the Battle of Neuve Chappelle and had 219 casualties on the first day.

Two months later Dominick was taking part in the Battle of Festubert. Everard Wyrall described it thus:

"No soldier can read the story of the King's Regiment (Liverpool) in 1915 without a quickening of the pulse and the red blood coursing more quickly through the veins. For it is a story of fine leadership, hard fighting and despite great losses, undaunted courage in the face of fierce opposition from the enemy."

Dominick was one of the losses. His Casualty Form states he was wounded in action at Richeburg between 16-19 May 1915. The next entry changes this to

'*killed in action'* between these two dates. Official records put his death as 19 May which is the night when the battalion was relieved and came out of line.

On 21 June 1915, increasingly worried at the lack of news, his family contacted his Regiment. The letter read: -

"Dear Sir, I would be very pleased if you could give me any information as to the whereabouts of my brother No6256 G. Brennen 1stB Kings Liverpool Regiment. Reported wounded at Richebourg Battery 16-19th of May we have not had a letter from him since 15 May. I remain your Humble Servant Mr. J. Brennan No 6 New St. Batley, Yorks."

Sadly, there was no positive news.

Dominick was awarded the 1914 Star, Victory Medal and the British War Medal (under the name of George).

Dominick had no known grave and is commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial, Pas-de-Calais, France under the name G. Brannen.

Dominick would have been added to the War Memorial in 1923 and again in 1999 when the addenda was added after the CWGC put details on-line. When searching the names on the addenda all have "Batley" in their details.



Thanks to Jane Roberts. For further details and acknowledgements please see: -

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