Martin Carney





Photo courtesy of Jane Roberts

Rank: - Private

Number: - 3419

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 1/4th Battalion

Date of Death: - 11th November 1915

Cemetery: - Bard Cottage Cemetery, Leper, West- Vlaanderen, Belgium.

Martin Carney born on 7 August 1887, was the son of County Mayo-born John Carney and his second wife Catherine (Kate) Gillon, who came from Halifax. He was the couple's second child.

John Carney hailed from Swinford, County Mayo and arrived in Batley in 1862, along with his first wife Mary (nee Riley) and young son Patrick. Subsequent children-

Andrew, Michael, Mary, John and Thomas- were all born in Batley. Mary died on 22 August 1884 and John married Kate Gillon on 18 July 1885 at St. Mary's Church, Batley. Kate was around fourteen years younger than John and their family continued to grow, Margaret was born 1886 but died aged 20 months in February 1888, Martin, George 1889, Rose Ann 1891, William 1892-1893, Mary Ellen 1893, James 1895-1895, Michael 1896, Fred 1899, Theresa March 1903-October 1894 and Joe in September 1909.

John Carney, whilst working on the construction of the Dewsbury's Great Northern railway station had an accident which resulted in the amputation of his left hand and it meant he wore a large hook which he would use to good effect. Despite his disability he worked as a mason's labourer, employed for many years by Joseph Oldroyd. Even working full time, he was only able to earn around 17s (85p) a week in 1899 which was well below the average wage for the period. It meant the Carney children did not have the easiest of childhoods and Martin and George had lengthy absences from school and at one point they were sent to stay with grandparents to escape the School Board Officer. In April 1901 the family was living in East Street, Batley. On the morning of 30 April John was removing scaffolding from a building in Warwick Road. One part of it got stuck and John, who was on the chimney of the house, attempted to release it, but unfortunately, he slipped. The roof had been prepared for slating and John fell through the lathes of the ceiling into the bedroom floor below. He landed heavily on his right side and was taken to Batley Hospital where it was discovered he had a fractured shoulder and serious internal injuries. He remained in hospital for several weeks which meant the family income had decreased although Martin had become a hurrier in a coal mine.

By 1911 the family were living in New Street, Batley and John was working as a mason's labourer whilst three of the children were working. Martin was employed as a coal mine bye-worker. At some point he worked at the Shaw Cross Colliery and before enlisting worked at the West End Colliery. Sadly John died in October 1911.

On 9 September 1912 Martin married Winifred Haley (sometimes Healey) at St. Mary's Church, Batley. They started married life in Villiers Street but quickly moved to New Street. Winifred's son had been born on 28 October 1907. She and Martin had a further three children, James born November 1912 died aged 3 days, Rose Ann was born 19 December 19 December 1913 and Martin in August 1915.

Martin's service papers have not survived, but from other sources but a brief description aged 19 was that he had brown hair, 5' 71/2" tall.

After training at camps Sandbach Park, Doncaster and Gainsborough they moved to York ,leaving on 12 April 1915 for France, arriving on 13 April 1915 as part of the 9th (West Riding) Division. In July 1915 the Battalion moved to Belgium in the vicinity of the Ypres-Boesomghe Line, which is north of Ypres along the Ypres Canal.

The Unit War Diary shows that, whilst there was no major battle, casualties occurred daily in the trenches.

Nov 7- relieved 4th (H)Y and L Regt in SKIPTON ROAD position. Casualties 2 O.R. wounded.

Nov 8—Enemy was fairkly active sniping both by night and day, otherwise situation quiet. Casualties O.R. 2 killed, 3 wounded.

Nov 9—Enemy more active with rifle and machine gun fire. They put a large number of rifle grenades and whizz-bangs in front trench. Retaliation silenced enemy. Casualties O.R. 1 killed.

Nov 10—Enemy has been much quieter. No shelling. Casualties 2 O.R. killed.

Nov 11—Our machine gun engaged enemy machine gun and after 3 minutes duel silenced enemy gun. Enemy working parties were fired on by our artillery. Battalion relieved and proceeded to Divisional Rest. 1 O.R. killed.

The first indication of his death came in the form of a letter from his 'pal' Pte Michael Kennedy which was followed by official notification from Major H. Moorhouse. He wrote:

"*I regret to inform you that your husband No.319 Private M Carney of the battalion under my command was killed on the 10th inst. He was shot through the heart by a German sniper."*

The officer went on to express his profound sympathy of himself and the battalion.

He was buried alongside Thomas Donlan. Baby Martin died 18 March 1916.

Martin was awarded the 1914-15 Star, Victory Medal and British War Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at St. Mary's Church, Our Lady and St. Paulinus R C Church and Dewsbury and Batley War Memorials.

Lawrence Carney was the son of Martin's half brother Andrew Carney.

Thanks to Jane Roberts and for more information and acknowledgements please see www. pasttopresentgenealogy.co.uk