John Thomas Cogan M.M.





Rank: - Private

Number: - 17010

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 12th Battalion

Killed in Action: - 30th September 1918 aged 33 years

Cemetery: - Underhill Farm Cemetery, Hainault, Belgium D.48

"MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE AMEN"

Batley News, 2 Sep 1916 (photo ref M.M)

Family Details

John Thomas was born in Batley Carr on 3rd September 1885 the youngest son of Andrew and Bridget Cogan (nee Frain). The couple had married in the Dewsbury District in Qtr 1865. He was baptised at St. Joseph's R. C. Church, Batley Carr.

Ellen was born in 1867 followed by Michael 1869-1886 and in 1871 the family was living at 61, Staincliffe Road, Batley with Andrew giving his name as Anthony being born in Sligo, Ireland and Bridget born in Swinford, Co. Mayo, Ireland.

Bridget was born c1877 but died 1898 followed by Mary in 1880, Catherine 1883-1896 and John Thomas.

Andrew died in 1889 and Bridget was left to bring up her children alone. In 1891 the family was living at 9, Smith Road, Dewsbury and Bridget was working as a rag picker. Before 1901 the John Thomas and his mother had moved to live at 19, Carlisle Street, Dewsbury and 15-year-old John was working as a coal trammer below ground whilst his mother was still working as a rag sorter. Within the next decade they had moved to live at 23, Carlisle Street, Dewsbury and John had changed his occupation to become a williyer. The 1911 census shows that Bridget had 8 children born alive in her marriage but only four were still alive.

In the latter part of 1912, he married Catherine Stenchion in the Dewsbury District.

Andrew was born in 1913 but sadly died 1914 followed by Catherine in December 1914 and John T in 1918. He also sadly died in 1921 aged 3 years.

He returned to being a miner and before enlisting was employed at Messrs. Crawshaw and Warburton Ltd. (Shaw Cross Pit). He was connected to St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Batley Carr and also the Irish Democratic League Club.

Service Details

His service records have not survived but it was reported in the Batley News that he had enlisted in September 1914.

The 12th (Service) Battalion (Miners) (Pioneers) was formed in Leeds on 5 September 1914 by the West Yorkshire Coal owners Association. They moved to Farnley Park (Otley). In May 1915 they moved to Burton Leonard (Ripon) and attached as Pioneer Battalion to 31st Division. Moved to Fovant in October 1915. In December 1915 they moved to Egypt and to France in March 1916.

In 1916 they took part in the Battle of Albert (1- 13July) and Battle of the Ancre (13- 18 November).

In August 1916 he wrote home to his wife that had been awarded the Military Medal.

He said:-"I *am in the pink. I have got presented with the Military Medal for rescuing wounded men in a big bombardment. The Military Medal is a big honour. I am all right up to now."*

He wrote his sister Mrs. Aveyard of Batley Carr: - "I *am in the pink myself. I am glad to let you know I am getting the Military Medal for work I have done in the trenches in a bombardment"*
and in another he wrote:-

"I got the Military Medal for rescuing wounded men in a big bombardment. They say it is a big honour. Tell Jack the war will soon be over."

In 1917 they took part in Operations on the Ancre
The Third Battle of the Scarpe (3-4 May)
The Capture of Oppy Wood (28 June)

In 1918 they took part in: -
The Battle of St Quentin (21-23 March)
The Battle of Bapaume (24-25 March)
the First Battle of Arras (28 March)
The Battle of Estaires (9-11 April)
The Battle of Hazebrouck (12-15 April)
The Defence of Nieppe Forest (April)
The attack at La Becque (28 June)
The capture of Vieux Berquin (June)

The Battle of Ypres which started on the 28th September which was a series of battles which took place in northern France and southern Belgium.

John Thomas was killed on the third day of this battle having fought so long and hard.

He had been at the Front for about 12 months without injury and had last been home for 6 days about three months before his death.

He was awarded the Military Medal, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and is remembered with Honour on Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group