John Farrington



Rank: - Guardsman

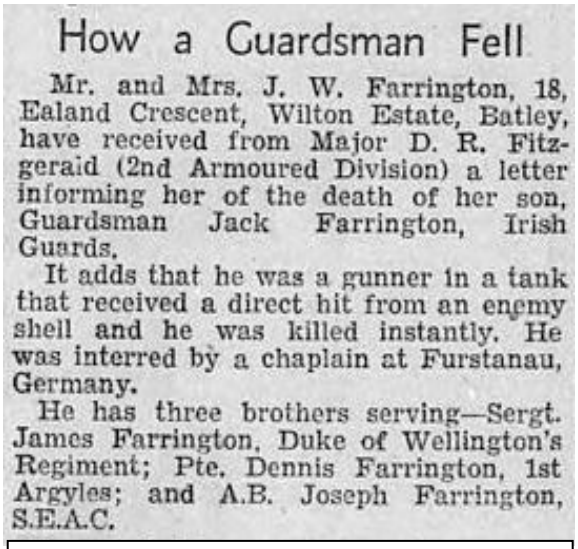
Number: - 2723922

Regiment: - Irish Guards 2nd Bn.

Died: - Killed in Action 08/04/1945 Age: 30 years.

Cemetery: - Sage War Cemetery, Niedersachsen, Germany 6. D. 5.

John, known as Jack, was born on 4 Nov 1914 in Batley the son of James William and Mary Ellen Farrington nee Melia who had married in 1909. James William came from Thurning, Northamptonshire and Mary Ellen from Pudsey. James William was born in 1910 followed by Edith M. 1912, John, Denis 1918, Margaret 1923, Joseph 1925, Peter 1927, Clement 1929 and Terrence 1930. At the beginning of their married life the couple lived at Batley Carr but moved to live at 18, Ealand Crescent, Batley. In 1939 he was working as a boiler firer.



How a Guardsman Fell

Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Farrington, 18, Ealand Crescent, Wilton Estate, Batley, have received from Major D. R. Fitzgeraid (2nd Armoured Division) a letter informing her of the death of her son, Guardsman Jack Farrington, Irish Guards.

It adds that he was a gunner in a tank that received a direct hit from an enemy shell and he was killed instantly. He was interred by a chaplain at Furstanau, Germany.

He has three brothers serving—Sergt. James Farrington, Duke of Wellington's Regiment; Pte. Dennis Farrington, 1st Argyles; and A.B. Joseph Farrington, S.E.A.C.

Batley News, 28 Apr 1945

The 2nd Battalion first saw action in the Hook of Holland as part of a small infantry force sent to the Netherlands to help protect and evacuate the Dutch government. On 13 May the Battalion landed with a solitary German plane dropping a bomb which exploded nearby as the unit disembarked. Orders had been received just prior to embarkation that the Battalion was to move towards the Hague. However, events on the ground meant that the Battalion remained at the Hook of Holland. Before long, Queen Wilhelmina had appeared and been evacuated. The Dutch government arrived later that evening followed by the Diplomatic Corps. An air raid later in the day killed seven Guardsmen and wounded twenty-three. More casualties were sustained in an air raid the next morning before the Battalion was evacuated back to Britain on board the *Malcolm, Whitshed* and *Vesper.*

There was little respite, as on 22 May, orders were received to 'Prepare to move'. This time the Battalion was sent to Boulogne one of the important Channel ports in France to help in its defence. Embarking on board the Queen of the Channel without most of its transport and with limited equipment and weapons, the Battalion landed at Boulogne in the evening. There was heavy fighting and many casualties were sustained before the Battalion was evacuated back to Britain, returning to Tweseldown Camp on the morning of 24 May. The Battalion then spent the next four years training in Britain. On 15 September 1941 the 20th Independent Infantry Brigade (Guards) was re-designated as the 5th Guards Armoured Brigade. The 2nd Battalion was converted to an armoured role and was designated as an armoured battalion. The 5th Guards Armoured Brigade served with the Guards Armoured Division for the duration of the war in Europe.

They remained in Britain until 13 June 1944, when it landed several armoured command vehicles at Arromanche. It lagered its advanced tactical headquarters in communication with GHQ awaiting the bulk of the armour Normandy, France,

during Operation Overlord as part of V111 Corps. Its first major engagement was Operation Goodwood, the attack by three armoured divisions towards Bourguebus Ridge in an attempt to break out of the Normandy beachhead. That was followed by Operation Bluecoat, the advance east of Caen as the Falaise pocket formed. Transferred to XXX Corps, the division liberated Brussels. It led the XXX Corps attack in Operation Market Garden, the ground forces' advance to relieve airborne troops aiming to seize the bridges up to Arnhem, capturing Nijmegen bridge in conjunction with American paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division. The Tac HQ reached Arnhem but was not able to seize the bridge because German anti tank guns were entrenched on the North side and the British airborne had surrendered or were too far away to help. During the Ardennes offensive, it was sent in bitterly cold weather, which forced the tanks to start their engines every hour to prevent the fuel and oil freezing, to the Meuse as a reserve in case the Germans broke through the American lines; some German tanks breaking through were stopped. It endured hard fighting in Operation Veritable, the advance towards the Rhine through the Reichswald, and again in the advance through Germany.

It was whilst advancing through Germany that Jack, who was a gunner, received a direct hit from an enemy shell and he was killed instantly. He was interred by a chaplain at Furstenau, Germany.

He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial and was awarded the 1939-45 Star and the 1939-1945 War Medal.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group