Peter Gavaghan





Rank: - Lance Sergeant

Number: - 3193439

Regiment: - King's Own Scottish Borderers 1st Battalion

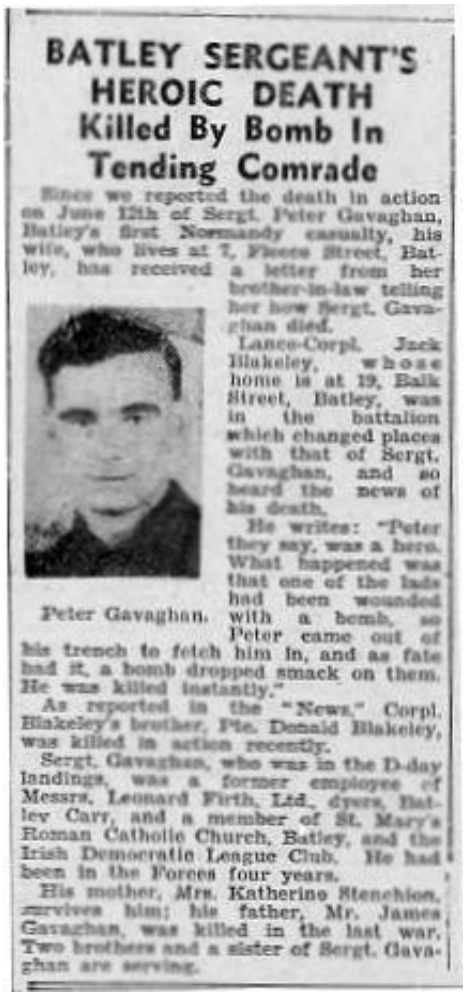
Died: - Killed in Action, 12 June 1944 aged 33

Cemetery: - La Delivrande War Cemetery, Douvres, Calvados, France 1X.C.6.

Batley News, 1 Jul 1944 (photo); 19 Aug 1944 (photo)

Peter was born in Batley on 14 May 1911 the son of James and Catherine Gavaghan nee Donlan who married in 1909. His father was killed in action on 10 August 1916 and his uncle, Thomas Gavaghan, was killed in action, 28 December 1915. In 1918 his mother married Thomas Stenchion and she had a further five children.

In 1935 Peter married Annie Malone. Rita was born in 1935, Peter 1939 and Richard 1941. In 1939 the family was living at 7, Ambler Street, Batley and working as a builder's labourer. Peter was a member of St. Mary's Church, Batley and the Irish Democratic League Club. Before he enlisted in 1940, he worked for Messrs. Leonard Firth, dyers, Batley Carr. Before 1944 the family had moved to 7, Fleece Street, Batley.



BATLEY SERGEANT'S HEROIC DEATH
Killed By Bomb In Tending Comrade

Since we reported the death in action on June 12th of Sergt. Peter Gavaghan, Batley's first Normandy casualty, his wife, who lives at 7, Fleece Street, Batley, has received a letter from her brother-in-law telling her how Sergt. Gavaghan died.

Lance-Corpl. Jack Blakeley, whose home is at 19, Balk Street, Batley, was in the battalion which changed places with that of Sergt. Gavaghan, and so heard the news of his death.

He writes: "Peter they say, was a hero. What happened was that one of the lads had been wounded with a bomb, so Peter came out of his trench to fetch him in, and as fate had it, a bomb dropped smack on them. He was killed instantly."

Peter Gavaghan.

As reported in the "News," Corpl. Blakeley's brother, Pte. Donald Blakeley, was killed in action recently.

Sergt. Gavaghan, who was in the D-day landings, was a former employee of Messrs. Leonard Firth, Ltd., dyers, Batley Carr, and a member of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Batley, and the Irish Democratic League Club. He had been in the Forces four years.

His mother, Mrs. Katherine Stenchion, survives him; his father, Mr. James Gavaghan, was killed in the last war. Two brothers and a sister of Sergt. Gavaghan are serving.

The 1st battalion KOSB embarked for France in 1939 as part of the 3rd division of the BEF. They crossed the Belgian frontier in May 1940, and like the rest of the force, outgunned by an enemy of overwhelming numerical superiority, they were ordered to withdraw.

Fighting their way to the coast, on the night of 31st May/1st June they were evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk and reached England.

With the allied invasion of Europe in 1944, 1st battalion KOSB was there at the forefront, returning to France on D-Day, 6th June, landing at Sword 'Queen' Beach. They fought through Normandy and around Caen until the town capitulated. Peter wrote a letter home to his wife on the day he died which arrived on 26 June, the same as she received official news that he had been killed. A few weeks later Annie received a letter from her brother-in-law Lance/Cpl. Jack Blakeley who was in the battalion which changed places with Peter and so heard the news of his death.

"*Peter, they say was a hero. What happened was that one of the lads had been wounded with a bomb, so Peter came out of his trench to fetch him in, and as fate had it, a bomb dropped smack on them. He was killed instantly."*

On 15 June 1945 his brother Bernard Stenchion was killed as a result of an accident, whilst serving in the Isle of Wight.

Peter was awarded the 1939-45 Star; 1939-1945 War Medal

He is remembered with Honour at the British Normandy Memorial, column 47 and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group