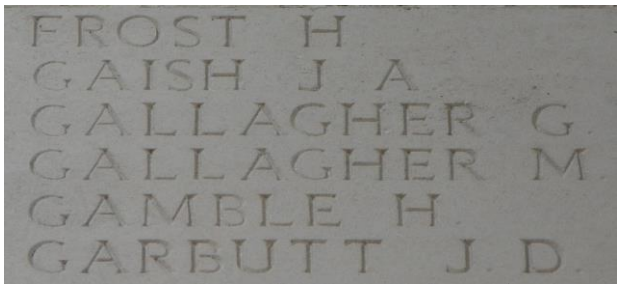
Martin Gallagher





Rank: - Private

Number: - 1573

Regiment: - 6th Service Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry

Died: -15 September 1915

Memorial: - Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.

Martin was born in Batley on 7th November 1881 the son of Irish born John and Mary Gallagher nee Sherlock. Before moving to Batley, the couple lived at Castle Eden/ Castle Eden Colliery area of Durham where their son John was born in 1874.

Sarah Ann was born in Batley in 1876 but she sadly survived 2 weeks and was buried at Batley Cemetery in July 1876, Michael born October 1877 only survived three weeks, Mary was buried in August 1879 aged 7 months, Ellen born June 1880 only survived six weeks.

By April 1881, the family living at Mill Lane, Batley only John was alive. John [snr] worked as a rag grinder and Mary a rag sorter. Mary Ann was born on 25 July 1886 but she sadly died on 27 July 1886.

Thomas was born in November 1887, and in the 1891 the family was living at 18, Ambler Street, Batley. Mary died on 2 June 1899 at Batley Cottage Hospital. In 1901 John [snr] was living with his three sons at 16, Villiers Street, Batley. John was now undertaking farm work and Martin was working as a flock packer in a flock mill.

By 13 February 1902 Martin was working as a mill hand at Queen Street Mills on Bradford Road, Batley. He went to Pontefract to see if he could enlist with the militia having been rejected as being medically unfit for regular military service. Militia men, after initial training returned to their regular jobs but committed to regular training and annual camps each year. They generally stayed at home serving as local defence units.

He was accepted for this part time military service and enlisted for six years as a Private with the 3rd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. His papers give a brief description. At enlistment he stood at 5 feet $6^{1/2}$ inches weighed 126 lbs, had a fresh complexion, grey eyes and brown hair. He completed this service on 12 February 1908 and in 1911 Martin and his father were boarders at the Cobden Street of John William and Bridget Chappell. Martin completed the form for the household. He and his father had once more changed jobs, both working as labourers for Batley Corporation.

At the declaration of war, Martin was still employed as a labourer but with Messrs. Goodall Brothers, contractors, Batley. With his previous military experience, he was one of the first to answer the call for volunteers, enlisting in late August 1914. He joined the 6th KOYLI. After training they left Folkestone for Boulogne on 21 May 1915. He was twice wounded.

The first occasion was in December 1915 with the 6th KOYLI recording the date 7 December as him being struck off the ration return as a result of a shrapnel wound. On 3 December the Battalion had moved up for a spell in the trenches at St. John to the north east of Ypres. Prior to setting off there was an unfortunate incident when the barn where the machine guns were billeted caught fire. It was put out, but as the Battalion moved up the trenches the

Germans began shelling possibly attracted by the smouldering farm. One shell dropped in the middle of No5 platoon just as they were moving off, killing one man, wounding nine and a further three could not proceed to the trenches due to shock. However, it proved a relatively quiet spell. The major concern being the condition of the trenches, the water - logging not helped by the heavy rain showers and at one point they even endured gale conditions. They were relieved on the 7th December and it appears Martin was amongst the three men wounded whilst in the trenches.

The second occasion was towards the end of June 1916, with him being struck off ration on 29 June. During this period the Battalion was in the trenches in the St. Nicholas sector, north east of Arras. It is most probable that Martin's injuries were sustained in the early hours of 29 June when the Germans heavily shelled the British lines.

By September 1916 they were on the Somme and this is where he lost his life on 15 September. That day marked the opening day of the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, part of the Somme offensive. It is not possible to definitively pinpoint what part Martin played as the 6th KOYLI had been sub-divided with orders that Companies W and X would be attached to 41st Brigade and Companies Y and Z were involved in a subsequent failed attack on 16 September towards Gird Trench and Gird Support Trench between Flers and Gueudecourt. Tanks were first used in battle at this time with the 6th Battalion KOYLI.

Martin was lost in this battle but news did not arrive home until the first week in November of his death, after briefly being posted missing.

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

Martin does not have any known grave and is remembered with honour at the Thiepval Memorial, Batley War Memorial and St. Mary's Church.



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