John Hopkins





Rank: - Private

Number: - 4750356

Regiment: - York and Lancaster Regiment 2nd Bn.

Died: - Killed in Action 27 May 1941 aged 23 years

Memorial: - Athens Memorial, Greece Face 7

Batley News, 12 Jul 1941; 26 Jul 1941 (photo)

John was born on the 28 July 1917 the son of Patrick and Catherine Hopkins nee Finneran who had married on 29 February 1908at St. Mary's Church, Batley. Michael James was born in November 1908 followed by Annie 1910, Mary 1912, Thomas 1914, John and Catherine 1925. His father who died in February 1938 was one of the first Batley men to volunteer for service at the beginning of the Great War, in which he was wounded. He also served in South Africa and India.

John attended St. Mary's School and St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church where he was at one time an altar boy. He was a member of the Batley Irish Democratic League Club. A keen footballer and swimmer he represented his school in the final rounds. John formerly worked at Messrs. J.T. & J. Taylor's Station Road, warehouse before he enlisted. The family lived in Peel Street, Batley. In his last letter home written in January from the Middle East John wrote:" *I'll nip up to Batla' one of these days to see the old cottage."*

It was reported that John had been in South Africa, Egypt and Crete. In Crete the 2nd Battalion who were attached to the 70th Division saw very heavy fighting against the Germans.

His mother had not heard from John for 14 weeks and the War Office said that they had not received official notification that he was a casualty.

Private John Gavaghan of Hume Street, Batley who was with John in Crete wrote home to his wife to say that John had been taken to hospital badly wounded.

John Gavaghan sent an air-graph and wrote:-

"*I have just been throught the worst ordeal of my life-the evacuation of Crete, during which I celebratd my birthday. We had a very rough time of it and saw some terrible sights.John won the hearts of all his pals on*

SAVED THE LIVES OF FIVE PALS

Young Batley Soldier's Heroism in Crete

HUME STREET COLLEAGUE SAFE

The devotion to duty and courage of a young Batley soldier who gave his life for his comrades under intense enemy fire in Crete, has been described by a fellow Batley man, who has been evacuated safely from that island.

The soldier was Private John Hopkins (23), of the York and Lancasters, whose mother, living at Peel Street, Batley, has received a tribute to his bravery from Private John Gavaghan, of Hume Street, Batley, who fought alongside him.

The sad news of Private Hopkins' death was received officially on Wednesday, and Private Gavaghan, in an air-graph, writes:

"I have just been through the worst ordeal of my life—the evacuation of Crete, during which I celebrated my birthday. We had a very rough time of it and saw some terrible sights. John won the hearts of all his pals on May 23rd, when he lost his life with his gun in his hands. He saved the lives of five of his pals when he found an enemy gun. We buried him in a Cretan cemetery, and I placed a Cardinal Hinsley cross in his hands. I send my deepest sympathy to Mrs. Hopkins and family. Do not worry about me. I am O.K. Letter follows."

It is fifteen weeks since Mrs. Hopkins received a letter from her son. He had served in South Africa, Crete, and Egypt, and before joining the Army was employed at Messrs. J., T. and J. Taylor's Station Road warehouse. He attended St. Mary's School and St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, where he was at one time an altar boy. A keen footballer and swimmer, he represented his school in final rounds. He was a member of Batley Irish Democratic League Club.



Pte. J. Hopkins.

His father, the late Mr. Pat Hopkins, was one of the first Batley men to volunteer for service at the beginning of the last war, in which he was wounded. He also fought in South Africa and India.

Private Gavaghan was a miner at Shaw Cross Colliery.

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

He is remembered with Honour on Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group