Patrick Hopkins



Rank: - Private

Number: - 20889

Regiment: - 9th (Service) Battalion, The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)

Died: - 22 October 1916

Memorial: - Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.

Patrick was born in Batley on 20 December 1894, the third child of Patrick and Margaret Hopkins (nee Lynch). The couple came from County Mayo- Margaret's birthplace is pinpointed to Charlestown in the 1921 census- but married locally in 1890, In the early days of their marriage Margaret, also referred to as Maggie in some records, worked as a rag sorter, whilst Patrick worked a a labourer for Batley Gasworks.

Their first child Thomas, was born in September 1891 but died on 3 March 1892. In March 1893 Mary was born followed by Patrick just before Christmas 1894. Catherine was born in late 1896, but died in September 1903, James 1899, William in 1902 and Annie in 1905.

Throughout the period the family lived at Fleming Street, the censuses record Margaret as working, either as a rag picker or rag sorter. Her husband's job did change, from a labourer to a stone quarry man, and by 1911 he worked as a willyer at a woollen mill.

In the 1911 census young Patrick was also working in the textile industry, employed as a brusher in a woollen mill. By 1913 Patrick was described as a cloth finisher, working in the finishing department of Stubley's Bottoms Mill. However, another source stated he worked in the Lady Ann Mills finishing department, which was owned by J. B. and W. Hirst.

Outside of work, other than his connections with St. Mary's church, he was a bugler in the St. Mary's Boys Brigade and a member of the United Irish League Club. But he did not see his future in Batley.

On 30 August 1913 with 10 dollars in his pocket, his father paid for him to set sail third class from Liverpool to New York on board the Cunard liner *Mauretania.* Third class on the *Mauretania* was something special. On the sailing to New York Patrick was accompanied by his aunt Bridget Hopkins and cousins Mary Ann and Catherine. His final destination was Kingston, Pennsylvania, to join his uncle Michael (husband of Bridget). From his Ellis Island arrival documentation, we have Patrick's description. He stood at 5 feet 6 inches tall, with a fresh complexion, brown hair and eyes.

He was still in America when war broke out and he made the fateful decision to return home and enlist. On 14 May 1915 he, along with over 500 passengers mainly from Great Britain and Canada (note, no Americans) made the return journey to Liverpool on White Star Line's *Cymric.*

This was a wartime crossing with the threat of U-boats and restrictions such as lights blacked out and no smoking on deck at night. The iconic passenger liner *Lusitania* had been torpedoed off the coast of Ireland by a German U-boat only a week earlier, on 7 May, making the same New York/Liverpool crossing. Despite the risk, The *Cymric* was carrying war materials which made her according to some American newspapers "*little less than a floating arsenal*". How much Patrick and the other passengers knew of the contraband when they set sail is unclear, but according to the press not a single passenger cancelled. The *Cymric* made it safely to Liverpool, docking on 25 May 1915 but it was torpedoed and

sunk on 8 May 1916 off the Irish coast by the same U- boat, U-20 which sank the *Lusitania* a week and a day earlier.

By then Patrick was a private on the Western Front. In early June he went to Dewsbury to attest with the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and after a period of training arrived in France on 2 October 1915 to join the 9th Battalion. He may have been amongst the draft of 398 other ranks whose arrival at their camp at Busseboom, on the outskirts of Poperinghe on the evening of 4 October caused accommodation problems.

It was a brief initial spell. In the winter of 1915, he was invalided home with trench feet, enjoying 10 precious days leave with family and friends at Christmastime. He returned to France in February 1916 but was once more in hospital in April 1916. This time he was treated at the 4th Stationary Hospital at Arques, France for what was termed dental caries- tooth decay. He was discharged on 26 April to the Base Depots at Etaples ready for posting back to his unit. He was unable to return home when his father died on 31 May 1916 because they were preparing for the Battle of the Somme.

The 9th Battalion had moved south from Belgium and they were in reserve in Billon Valley near Carnoy on 1 July 1916 but by 3 July they were in the trenches at Montauban and suffering casualties. Between 3 and 8 July, when they returned to Billon Valley, they lost 32 men killed, five died of wounds 100 wounded and two missing believed killed. They moved from Billon Valley on 13 July to take up a position in front of Longueval for an attack on the German front line the following day. The casualties amounted to eight officers and over 200 other ranks.

On 17 July they were ordered to support the 6th King's Own Scottish Borderers in a bombing attack on the North West part of Delvile Wood, which was strongly held by the enemy with machine guns. On 18 July they were in trenches at Longueval. Heavily shelled day and night by the Germans they sustained a high number of casualties and their strength was reduced to about 235. They were relieved the following day and then followed a period of refitting and training. Patrick was killed two months later. On 21 October 1916 the 9th Scottish Rifles moved into the front line east of Eaucourt L'Abbaye. The Unit Diary described enemy artillery as very active. It remained active the following day. On 23

October they were relieved and moved from the front line to High Wood. The Unit War Diary said that casualties during their two days in the front line amounted to approximately 100 and including sick the numbers rose to 160.

On Tuesday 14 November 1916 Patrick's mother, Margaret received official notification from the Record Office at Hamilton that her son had been killed in action on 22 October 1916.

Patrick has no known grave and is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial. He was awarded the 1914-15 Star, Victory Medal and the British War Medal.

He is remembered on St. Mary's Church, Batley, Batley War Memorial and the Scottish National War Memorial at Edinburgh Castle.



Thanks to Jane Roberts and for further reference and acknowledgements please see: - pasttopresentgenealogy.co.uk