John Maguire



Rank: - Fusilier

Number: - 14566128

Regiment: - Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) 9th Battalion.

Died: - Killed in Action, 23 April 1945 age 20.

Cemetery: - Argenta Gap War Cemetery, Italy 11.F.5.

John was born in 1925 the son of Patrick and of Sarah Maguire (nee Smith, m. 1920, registered Dewsbury) of Birstall. Catherine was born in 1920 followed by Mary, 1922, John 1925, Kevin 1927 and Ellen 1929. Patrick attended St. Patrick's Church, Birstall.

The battalion landed at Salerno on 9th September 1943 as part of the first wave. It advanced and occupied Battipaglia on 10th September but a violent German counter-attack retook the town and inflicted very heavy casualties on the battalion. Two Royal Engineer companies were attached to the remnants of the battalion and this allowed the battalion to fight on in the bridgehead. After being reinforced at the end of September the battalion took part in the advance to the

Volturno and then on towards the Gustav Line, including the second battle of Monte Camino.

The battalion formed part of the first wave in the assault over the River Garigliano on 17th/18th January 1944 and took part in the defensive fighting in the bridgehead until early February when, with the rest of 56th Infantry Division, it was withdrawn and sent to Anzio.

The battalion was rested and refitted in, absorbing a number of Royal Artillery personnel and officers. In early July the battalion returned to Italy and took part in the fighting on the Gothic Line in September and October where it again suffered heavy casualties, especially around Croce in early September. At the end of September, it absorbed most of the personnel from 8th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, who were disbanded, but the battalion was only brought up to near full strength in November when 56th Division was withdrawn from the front to rest, refit and reorganise.

On 3 September 1943 the Allies invaded the Italian mainland, the invasion coinciding with an armistice made by the Italians who then re-entered the war on the Allied side.

Following the fall of Rome to the Allies in June 1944, the German retreat became ordered and successive stands were made in a series of defensive lines. In the northern Appennine mountains, the last of these, the Gothic Line, was breached by the Allies during the Autumn campaign and the front inched forward as far as Ravenna in the Adriatic sector, but with divisions transferred to support the new offensive in France, and the Germans dug in to a number of key defensive positions, the advance stalled as winter set in.

The final offensive began early the following April and Argenta Gap War Cemetery marks the final stages of the hard fighting in Italy in the spring of 1945. John was killed on 23 April 1945.

The site of the cemetery was chosen by the 78th Division for battlefield burials, and it was later enlarged when burials were brought in from the surrounding district.

I BESEECH ALL THOSE WHO LOVED ME, TO GRANT ME THE HELP OF THEIR PRAYERS R.I.P.

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



Researched by members of
Batley History Group