James Anthony McNally





Rank: - Private

Number: - 2756694

Regiment: - Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) 1st Bn.

Died: - Killed in Action, Anzio Beach Head 28/02/1944 Age: 24 years.

Cemetery: - Beach Head War Cemetery, Anzio, XXII. H. 8.

James, "Jim", was born in Armagh, Northern Ireland in c..1918 the son of John and Mary McNally who came to Dewsbury when he was a child and he attended St. Paulinus Roman Catholic School and Church. He was an altar server at St. Paulinus Church and a member of the C.Y.M.S. His sister Margaret was born in 1906, John Joseph 1907, Patrick 1909, Thomas 1911, Eileen 1914 and William 1915. Jim was interested in football, swimming and boxing. His mother died in December 1927 when they lived at 41, Ravens Avenue, Dewsbury. His father lived at Dale Street, Thornhill Lees in 1944.

In 1943 Jim married Kathleen Gavaghan who lived at Peter Hill, Hanging Heaton.

Jim went to France in 1939 and was evacuated at Dunkirk in 1940 and went to North Africa in November 1942.



HANGING HEATON MAN KILLED

On Anzio Beach-head

Pte. James ("Jim") McNally (25), son of Mr. McNally, Dale Street, Thornhill Lees, and whose wife, Mrs. Kathleen McNally, lives at 21, Peter Hill, Hanging Heaton, was killed on the Anzio beach-head on February 28th.

Pte. McNally joined the Forces over four years ago, went to France in December, 1939, and was evacuated from Dunkirk. Fifteen months ago he went to the Middle East and fought in the North African campaign. He was one of the first five men ashore at Pantellaria, and also fought in Sicily.

Jas. McNally.

Pte. McNally came to Dewsbury as a child and attended St. Paulinus' R.C. School. He was an altar server at St. Paulinus' Church and a member of the C.Y.M.S. He was interested in football, swimming and boxing.

He has two brothers serving, Willie in the R.A.F. and Tommy in India.

Batley News, 1 Apr 1944

In November, 1942, Anglo-American Forces under General Eisenhower landed on the North West coast of Africa, still nominally under Vichy France control. French resistance was weak and the forces advanced rapidly across North Africa and into Tunisia, where they then met stiff German resistance. The 1st Battalion the Duke of Wellington's Regiment landed in North Africa in mid March, 1943, to join the battle for Tunisia and Lieutenant Colonel B W Webb-Carter took command in April after his predecessor was wounded and evacuated. The Battalion then took part in two major battles at Banana Ridge (losing 10 killed and 35 wounded) and Djebel Bou Aoukaz (31 killed and 75 wounded) for which the Commanding Officer was awarded the DSO.

The Battalion, as part of 1st British Division, was then trained in amphibious operations before taking part in the landing and capture of the Italian island of Pantellaria on 9th June, 1943.Jim was one off the first of five men ashore on this island.

They then returned to Tunisia for further training. Meanwhile 8th Army had captured Sicily, where Jim fought, and Southern Italy but had become bogged down on the Gustav Line south of Rome. In an effort to bypass the German defences in January, 1944, the 1st British Division, including the 1st Battalion, was part of a force ordered to mount an amphibious operation at Anzio. However, instead of exploiting the successful landing the Allies concentrated on securing the beachhead, giving the Germans time to recover and close off the landing force. The subsequent fighting over the next four months until the end of May saw some of the most desperate fighting of the war in the swamps and wadis of the Anzio Beachhead and the 1st Battalion played its full part, suffering battle

casualties over the full course of the operation of 39 officers 921 other ranks – 10.85% of the total casualties for the Division. The Battalion's reputation was such that it was selected to represent the British Army at the victory parade to mark the formal entry into Rome.

ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO HIM, O LORD, AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON HIM

James Anthony is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star and the 1939-1945 War Medal.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group