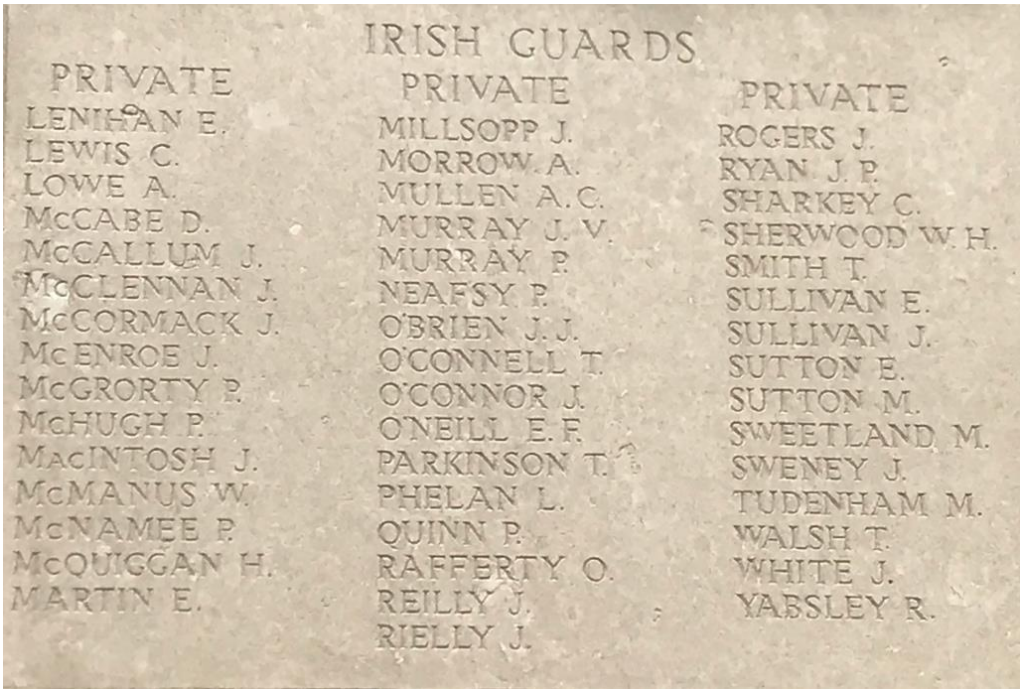
Patrick Naifsey



P Neafsy, Spelling Variant Used on the Loos Memorial – Photo by Jane Roberts

Rank: - Private

Number: - 6534

Regiment: - Irish Guards 2nd Battalion

Died: - 27 September 1915

Memorial: - Loos Memorial, Pas-de-Calais, Nord, France

Martin was a tenant farmer and the land was part of the estate owned by the Right Honourable Arthur Edmund Denis Dillon-Lee, Lord Viscount of Loughglynn. In 1876 his estate included 83,749 acres in County Mayo. Patrick Naifsey was born on 2 February 1890 at Cloghvoley, one of the 73 townlands in the civil parish of Aghamore. It is in the east of Co. Mayo. His parents were Martin and Catherine Naifsey (nee Henry). They had married on 3 February 1873 at Aghamore Chapel. Martin's occupation was a

farmer as was Patrick's both grandfathers. Patrick was the ninth child I have identified as being born to the couple. Mary was born on 11 November 1873 but died in 1897, Michael born 12 April 1876, Thomas on 3 August 1877, Bridget on 22 January 1879, John on 1 February 1881, Margaret born on 20 July 1882, died on 8 March 1883 after suffering from whooping cough, Ellen born 10 December 1883, died of burns on 3 April 1889, Martin born 9 September 1888 and Patrick.

Land in Ireland was owned by a small number of landlords, many absentees, and rather than farm it themselves rented it out with no security of tenure. These tenant farmers were forced to pay rack-rents- in other words excessive ones and often the land was too small a parcel to viably farm. Many tenants and their working –age sons were forced to work o seasonal harvests in England in order to earn money to pay the rent. Famine was never far away.

By the 1901 census the situation had changed, Martin Naifsey was the landowner, not only for his own farm, but also of the house and land farmed by Patrick Adams. Martin died on 5 May 1910, as a result of asthma which he had suffered for three years and in 1911 the household head was eldest brother, Michael. His brother, Thomas, had moved to Batley in the early 1900's and Patrick moved here shortly after the 1911 census was taken. All the family were both English and Irish speakers.

Patrick was involved with the St Mary's community including member ship of the St Mary's Batley Branch of the National Catholic Benefit and Thrift Society.

Service Details

Patrick enlisted in Dewsbury on 18 January 1915, joining the Irish Guards. Standing 5' 93/4" and weighing 156 lbs., he was also described as having fresh complexion, brown eyes and dark brown hair.

At this point the Irish Guards consisted of the 1st and the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion, with Patrick being in the latter. On 17 July 1915 the King approved the creation of an additional Irish Guards battalion and on the following day a fully fledged 2nd Battalion of the Irish Guards, commenced, essentially made up of personnel from the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. On 10 August the Battalion received orders that they were to prepare to embark at Southampton on 16 August. On 13 August Field Marshall Earl Kitchener of Khartoum, Colonel of the Irish Guards, came to inspect them.

Their arrival in France on 17 August 1915 coincided with the 18th birthday of one of the battalion's Lieutenants- John Kipling. He was the only son of author Rudyard Kipling

and his wife Carrie. This connection and the events of the Battle of Loos, was to have a profound effect on the life of Rudyard Kipling. His son was reported missing (subsequently killed) during the Battle of Loos. His death was 27 September 1915, the same day as Patrick Naifsey. Rudyard Kipling's search to find out what had happened to his missing son, and then locate his burial place, inspired him to become closely involved with the work of the Imperial War Graves Commission. We know the organisation today as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). Rudyard Kipling was invited to become a commissioner in 1917. He was responsible for suggesting the phrase" Their *Name Liveth for Evermore*," which was accepted as the inscription for the Stone of Remembrance (also known as the War Stone) found in many British and Commonwealth military cemeteries located around the world, depending on their size. He also suggested the words 'Known *unto God'* for an inscription at the foot of a headstone marking the remains of an unidentified British or Commonwealth soldier—something of a particular poignancy for the Kipling family. In fact, it was not until the 1990's, decades after Rudyard Kipling's death, that the CWGC established that a previously unidentified Irish Guards Lieutenant – whose body was found on the battlefield and buried at St Mary's military cemetery in Loos—was Kipling's long missing son.

Kipling's familial link with the Irish Guards also led him to write the official history of the Irish Guards in the Great War.

Patrick and his battalion left Le Havre by train on 18 August bound for Lumbres, from where they marched to billets at Acquin, a few miles from St. Omer. Here they were billeted in separate barns, each of which held around 40 to 50 men. The men were preparing for the forthcoming Battle of Loos and they dug trenches, did drill of various forms, under-took field training, practised artillery formations and attack, and the worst shots were given extra rounds to fire to up their game. On a wet 1 September, they joined up with the wider 2nd Guards Brigade to practise coming into line. Other scenarios rehearsed during this time included seizing a village and making good the ground gained. They were instructed in the care of '*smoke helmets*' and practised for the first time firing ten rounds whilst wearing the smoke helmets.

They finally left Acquin on the evening of the 22 September, marching to Dohem and then in heavy rain they made their way to billets in Linghem. At 5.15 am on 23 September they were once more on the move, marching with the Brigade to Burbure (arriving 9 am) and from there onwards to Haquin. It was a march punctuated by frequent halts, the road being used by Cavalry going forward usually through them,

and the battle wounded being evacuated back down the line. During the halts on the march a message from the Major General wishing the men "*God Speed on the eve of the World's greatest battle"* was communicated to them. The Battle of Loos, had started in the early hours of that morning.

After over 20 hours on the move, they arrived at Haquin, "*very wet and tired*" at around 1am on the 26 September. They were issued with breakfast at around 4.30 am as a further move was expected any time. In the event it was after noon before orders came for them to move via Noeux-les-Mines, Sally-Labourse, Noyelles and Vermelles to trenches in front of Le Rutoire. It was nearly midnight before they got into the trenches which was an old line of captured German trenches in front of Lone Tree. Kipling wrote in his official history:

"At a moderate estimate the Battalion had now been on foot and livelily awake for forty-eight hours, the larger part without food. It remained for them merely to go into fight at half-past two on the morning of the 27th of September...."

At this time, they received instructions to push forward 500 yards to another line of captured German trenches and relieve any troops there. It was nearly broad daylight by the time this was accomplished.

As the attack progressed during the day, the 2nd Guards Brigade's objectives were developed. A heavy bombardment was scheduled at 2 pm lasting one and a half hours, after which the 2nd Irish Guards would advance through the smoke on Chalk Pit Wood, establishing themselves on the north-east and south-east faces of it, supported by the 1st Coldstreams. The 1st Scots would then advance to the right rear of the Irish Guards, and attack the battered bulk of the colliery head and workings known as Puits 14 bis. A few casualties were incurred as a result of shellfire during the deployment of the leading companies, but at the appointed hour, and under a thick smokescreen, the Irish Guards led by 3 and 2 Companies and followed by Numbers 1 and 4:

".... advanced to the attack keeping their direction and formation perfectly. The companies advanced rapidly without hesitation and joined the further edge of the wood with small loss."

The 1st Scots Guards, in accordance with their orders, came partly through and partly round the right flank of the 2nd Irish Guards to attack Puits 14 bis, but this is where they were halted by machine gun fire. Kipling wrote:

"The Battalion had swept from all quarters and shelled at the same time, at the end of two hard days and sleepless nights, as a first experience of war and they had lost seven of their officers in forty minutes... No counter-attack developed but it was a joyless night that they spent among the uptown trees and lumps of unworkable chalk. Their show had failed with all the others along the line and "the greatest battle in the history of the world" was frankly stuck."

When they came out of the line on 30 September the Unit War Diary noted between 27 and 30 September 25 killed, 198 wounded and 101 missing but there was an addendum, *the majority of those missing were eventually found to have been admitted to some field ambulance wounded*. Looking at the CWGC records 30 officers and men from the battalion died on 27 September1915 and a further 51 between 28 and 30 September.

Patrick was killed and buried on the battlefield, on the 27 September as reported by Father Simon Knapp, chaplain to the 2nd Irish Guards, at Chalk Pit Wood between Lone Tree. His grave was subsequently lost and he is commemorated on the Loos Memorial.

Patrick is remembered on St. Mary's War Memorial, Batley War Memorial and at the Mayo Great War Memorial in Mayo Peace Park, Castlebar and in Ireland's Memorial Records of the Great War.

Patrick was awarded the 191-15 Star, Victory and British War Medal. The medals would have been sent to her as next of kin. She was also given a pension of 5s. a week as a result of his death. This was paid from 12 September 1916 and Catherine died on 28 May 1943 in Cloughvoley aged 96.



Thanks to Jane Roberts – for further information and acknowledgements please see pasttopresentgenealogy.co.uk