# Austin Nolan






*Photo courtesy of Jane Roberts*

**Rank: -** Private

**Number: -** 1442

**Regiment: -** King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry

**Died in hospital after the war: -** 22/08/1914 Age: 20

**Cemetery: -** Batley, Yorkshire H 710

Batley News, 29 August 1914 (photo)

**Family Details:**

Austin Nolan was born in Staincliffe in 1894. His parents, Parker and Ellen (nee Fall), married at St. Joseph's R.C. Chapel, Batley Carr, on 2 July 1882. Parker was from Batley Car, a stone mason of Irish descent. His bride was from Sherburn, although at the time of their marriage she lived at Staincliffe. After their marriage Parker and Ellen established their home in the Chapel Fold area of Staincliffe, recorded as living Cullingworth Street in both 1891 and 1901 censuses.

Austin was the couple's eighth child. Infant death was a shocking reality of the period but the Nolans had lost four children before the birth of Austin: James Martin whose birth and death was registered at the end of 1888; twins Joseph Henry and Gertrude, whose births were registered in the third quarter of 1890 and who died in March 1891 and on 18 January 1892 respectively; and Joseph Henry whose birth was registered in 1892 and who died in July 1893 aged 19 months. By the time of the 1901 census in addition to Parker, Ellen and Nolan the family consisted of a daughter Jane Elizabeth born in 1882; daughter Mary Anastasia, known as Annie, whose birth was registered in early 1885 under the name Mary Hannah Staticus according to General Register Office records; Eliza Helena whose birth was registered in the first quarter of 1887. After Austin came Gertrude Catherine/ Kathleen, known as Gertie, born in 1906; and Tom born in 1898. Within months of this census, in October 1901 the couple's final child Cecelia (known as Cissie) was born.

Between 1902 and 1905 another series of deaths struck the Nolan family. Six-year- old Gertie died and her burial took place at Batley Cemetery on 8 December 1902. Two weeks later on 22 December, Parker's burial took place and a little over seven months later; on 25 July 1903, 16-year- old Eliza Helena was buried alongside her father and sister. At this stage the family still lived in Cullingworth Street but two years later, on 16 August 1905, Jane Elizabeth was buried in the same family plot, L 471. Her address given was 54, Belvedere Road but it is not clear if this was the new family home, or if Jane was living separately from them. However, by 1911 the family had moved to live at 39, Talbot Street, Batley and this remained their address for many years.

According to the 1911 census Austin worked as a cloth finisher at Taylor's Mill but subsequently switched employer's and prior to enlisting worked nights in the finishing department at Messrs. G. and J. Stubley's mill.

**Service Details:**

Austin joined the Batley Territorial's, the 4th KOYLI, in April 1911, where he was a popular member. These men were at their annual camp in Whitby and on Monday 3 August 1914 when they, received an urgent order to return home to mobilise. After a couple of days frantic activity, they left the cheering crowds at Batley railway station bound for camp in Doncaster. In the absence of a father Austin had become the main breadwinner of the family and to a large extent they were dependent on his earnings. As a result of mobilisation, he received some money from the authorities and shortly before his death he came home to hand over a large portion of it to his mother. The family also made plans for his sister Cissie to visit him.

Whilst the "Terriers" were stationed at Doncaster part of their duty was to guard the Steel Tubular Bridge over the River Trent, on the Great Northern main line at Newark. Detachments were brought in by train on a daily basis. On the morning of Saturday 22 August 1914 Austin was one of a squad of the Batley detachment sent to take their turn. It was the first time he had been selected for sentry duty.

The fatal accident occurred at around 6 am. Sergeant Arthur Hodgson of Carlinghow, was leading Austin to his sentry post. The weather was foggy and the men walked on a four footway along the bridge. They walked inside the metals because the ironwork was slippery, and they felt it was safer to walk on the wood between the metals. Walking at the side of the rails in poor visibility was equally tricky, because of the incline of the bridge. Through the mist Sergeant Hodgson saw a train approaching. He jumped out of the way and shouted for Austin to jump too but a goods train was on the other line and the noise from this meant Austin failed to hear the warning cry. He was hit. The driver and fireman of the Peterborough to Doncaster light engine said they were going at about 20 miles an hour at the time. As soon as they saw the two men they stopped. Austin suffered a broken neck and death was said to be

instantaneous. An Inquest, held at Newark Hospital that Saturday afternoon, recorded a verdict of "*accidental death*".

Austin's mother received a telegram at around 9 am that morning, informing her of her son's death. A letter from Captain J.P. Critchley, commandant of the Batley Detachment KOYLI, arrived on Monday giving further details. He wrote:

"*Dear Madam, I regret having to inform you that your son, Private Nolan, No1442 G Company, 4TH KOYLI, was accidentally killed whilst performing duties on a railway bridge at Newark. He was being taken to his post and must have walked too near the metals and a passing engine caught his head. The doctor says his death was instantaneous and he suffered no pain. I want to offer you my deepest sympathy in your loss, which is also a great loss to the Company, as he was a courageous and willing lad and was the stuff of which soldiers are made. We are making arrangements for a military funeral in Doncaster, on Monday afternoon unless you otherwise desire. His body is now in a mortuary in Doncaster. It must be some little consolation to you to know that your son died in service of his country and in the execution of his duty. I may add steps will be taken to try to get a soldier's pension."*

Ellen immediately wired back to say that, whilst appreciating the honour of a military she would prefer her son to be brought back to Batley for internment. She went straight to Doncaster to fetch her son home, and a special coach attached to a train brought Austin back the same day. Sergeant Hodgson and Privates Goodall and Cooper accompanied Ellen and once in Batley they carried the coffin to the hearse. A great number of townsfolk paid their respects as the sombre military procession made the journey to Austin's Talbot Street home.

Austin was buried at Batley cemetery on the afternoon of Tuesday, 25 August 1914. It was reported that hundreds, probably thousands, of residents congregated in Talbot Street, where all the houses had blinds drawn as a remark of respect. The route was lined with sympathisers and more crowds gathered at the cemetery. Amongst the people who attended was the Mayor of Batley, Councillor Ben Turner. Military representatives included Colour Sergeant C. H. Talbot , leading about 18-20 members of the Batley Detachment of the National Reserves and Sergeant Swift and Lance Corporal Briggs of the Territorial Force.

The funeral was simple and St. Mary's parish priest Rev. Father Lea conducted the graveside ceremony.

Although pension ledgers and cards do exist for a dependents pension claim for his mother, they include no details of a final award. Austin was not eligible for any campaign medals because he did not serve overseas.



Researched by Jane Roberts and for more details and acknowledgements please see pasttopresentgensolgy.co.uk