James Trainer (Trainor)





Thanks to Peter Bennett for the photo

Rank: - Private

Number: - 10926

Regiment: - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 10th Bn

Died: - Died of Wounds, 3 July 1916

Cemetery: - Heilly Station Cemetery, Mericourt, L'Abbe, Somme.

James Trainer was born in Spa Street, Batley on 1 May 1894 the eldest son of John and Bridget Trainer.

It was a colourful family background with James' County Mayo- born mother serving a prison sentence at Wakefield whilst pregnant with James for stealing a woollen handkerchief from a Batley draper's shop just before the Christmas of 1893.

In July 1894 she was back in Wakefield prison serving a one-month sentence after being found guilty of stealing two pairs of boots from Alfred Shaw's shop on Commercial Street. They had been hung on a display outside his shop when they went missing. The next time Mr Shaw saw the boots they were on the feet of Bridget's two daughters. Aware that Bridget had a very young child, namely James, Mr Shaw did not want to press the case. The magistrate took this into account when sentencing her.

Several other offences also occurred mainly because she could not pay fines imposed. These started after her marriage to John Trainer. John ended up in prison a few times for several misdemeanours, including debt.

Bridget Collins married John Trainer at St. Mary's Church on 17 October 1885. John came from Batley although he spent some of his early years in Liverpool and Chorlton-in- Medlock before the family returned to Batley. In 1877 he joined the army serving until 11 October 1885. He then went on the Reserve, coming home to Batley to marry Bridget days later.

The following October, Ellen, the first of the Trainer's seven children was born. Mary was born in April 1888 followed by Kate Ann in February 1890 but only survived three weeks. Kate was born just before Christmas 1891 followed by James, John in November 1896 and William Edward in January 1899. He died in March 1900, when the family lived at Amber Street. They were there in the 1901 census.

When Mary was born the family was living at Newsome's Fold off Commercial Street, the same yard where John's mother and sisters had houses. There was a long running family feud and John accused his mother and married sister, Mary Gavaghan of trying to set him against Bridget who they called "*an Irish Grecian*". In one dispute John knocked Mary to the ground, Bridget assaulted John's other married sister, Ann Kelly, and threw a can full of dirt and stones through her window. John and Bridget were sent to prison.

In 1901 John worked as a labourer but previously had been employed as a collier and a rag grinder. Bridget worked at times as a rag picker. She died in April 1909 when the family lived at 17, Spa Street, Batley.

The 1911 census records the family at this address with James having left school to work in the coal mining sector as a hurrier. Subsequent sources name his employers as Messrs Critchley's Batley Colliery. In 1912 when he enlisted in the Army, he worked in the goods yard at Batley Railway Station. Outside work he was a member of the Batley United Irish Land League Club.

There is some confusion about when he first went to the Western Front. His medal records indicate 14 November 1914. Newspaper report put the date far earlier, stating he went to the Front 10 days after the outbreak of war and was wounded in the first retreat from Mons and again in the Battle of Aisne. James did initially serve with the 2nd KOYLI and they landed at Le Havre on 16 August 1914. From here they went on to take part in the retreat from Mons and the Battle of Aisne which took place in August and September 1914, so this does tally with the newspaper report.

On 5 April 1915 James appeared before Batley magistrates charged with being an absentee from the 2nd KOYLI at Pontefract since 2 April. The report reads:

He explained that he was first wounded last October, and after a period at home he was sent back to the Front in February, having returned to this country five weeks ago. He added that he had been treated like a dog, and was refused permission to leave the barracks, but came home for a change of clothing.

James then uttered what perhaps were prophetic words, exclaiming*:*

If they can't do anything for us now God help us when the war is over.

The magistrates clearly had some sympathy. The Bench said they had no alternative but to order him to await an escort. But they also promised the substance of his defence would be reported to the military authorities at Pontefract.

A newspaper report in 1916 also indicates James was wounded twice more. The paper indicates that the fourth occasion was a serious wound to his body which resulted in James being treated at the 2nd Northern General military hospital, based at Beckett's Park, Headingly, Leeds. After being successfully treated he returned to the Front on New Year's Day, 1916.

James, in addition to the 2nd KOYLI also served during the war with the 1st KOYLI and finally the 10th KOYLI. It is with latter battalion he received his fatal wounds. It is not definitive exactly when James sustained these injuries but the battalion took part in the Battle of the Somme, and it is likely they took place on the opening day, 1st July 1916.

On 1 July the 10th KOYLI was part of the 21st Division 64 Infantry Brigade, and were involved in the attack towards the north of Fricourt. The 10th KOYLI led the 64th Brigade assault.

The Unit Diary of the day simply reports that they left the trenches at 7.30 am, took Crucifix Trench that morning and held it until early the next when they were relieved by the 1st Lincolns. The casualty figures in the margin of the diary for the day give more of a clue to the horrors of the engagement - nine officers killed and 16 wounded; 50 other ranks killed, 292 wounded and 135 missing. On 2 July they moved to Sausage support trench and the following day they moved back to Dernacourt, arriving about midnight, where they bivouacked for the night. No casualties were reported for these two days.

James died of wounds on 3 July 1916 at the 36th Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) based at Heilly, on the Somme, about 2 kilometres south-west of the village Mericourt-L'Abbe and 12 kilometres south-west of the town of Albert. He is buried in Heilly Station Cemetery. The CWGC points out:

The burials in this cemetery were carried out under extreme pressure and many of the graves are either too close together to be marked individually, or they contain multiple burials. Some headstones carry as many as three sets of casualty details, and in these cases regimental badged do not feature.

James' headstone is shared with a Corporal from the East Yorkshire Regiment.

James was awarded the 1914 Star with Clasp, Victory Medal and the British War Medal. He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial and St. Mary's Church (under the name Trainor).

One post script to James' biography is the posthumous birth of his son, James. Conceived on the final stay in Batley, and names in his honour, James Riding was born on 7 September 1916.

Annie Riding, the baby's mother, was the sister of James' brother-in-law Charlie Riding. There was to be no happy ending because James Riding died aged three years in 1920.



Thanks to Jane Roberts and for credits and more details please see: https://pasttopresentgeneaogy.co.uk