

John Edyvean



Born: 1895, Padstow, Cornwall
Occupation: Labourer for fish buyer, Padstow Docks
Enlisted: Padstow: 4th August 1914 (Pre-war Territorial)
Unit: 302nd Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery (TF)
Rank/number: Gunner: No.321004
Death: Died of wounds, 21st March 1918
Detail: John, known to all as Jack, died accidentally after a blasting accident near Asiago in Italy. A charge exploded prematurely in a gun position and he was fatally wounded. Hugh Dalton, an artillery officer who served in his battery, wrote of Jack in a book: "He was a Cornishman, very young and very popular with everyone in the battery. We missed him greatly."

Age at death: 23

Military info: Jack enlisted in the RGA Territorials at Padstow before 1914 and was called up on outbreak of hostilities. He spent two years in the UK, but was destined to serve in one of the forgotten corners of the Great War - Italy. In Spring of 1917 Italy's allies Britain and France answered her plea for help in her fight with Austria by sending troops and artillery. Ten howitzer batteries went and one of these, the 302nd, was Jack's unit. On 28th April they became the first British battery to open fire in Italy. Jack was based at Pec about 60 miles north-east of Venice. On 24th October 1917 an Austro-German attack at Caporetto pushed the Italians 40 miles west and three days later the British retreated. Jack's battery was the last to leave Pec and it took them 84 hours to reach safety in Treviso. In December Jack's battery joined 15th Brigade, RGA, an artillery group formed to fight in mountains. On 7th January 1918 the 302nd was the first British battery to fire in this strange alpine war. In March they moved to the Asiago Plateau. On the 18th tragedy struck. Hugh Dalton, a battery officer, described the incident in his book *With British Guns To Italy*: "Being an old Italian position, it had gun pits already blasted in the rock, though they were not quite suited to our guns and line of fire, and we had to do some more blasting for ourselves. In the course of this, a premature explosion occurred, wounding one of our gunners so severely that he lost one leg and the sight of both his eyes and a few days later, perhaps fortunately, died of other injuries." The gunner was Jack.

Grave/memorial: Jack is buried at Padua Main Cemetery, Italy and he is also commemorated at St Petroc's Church, Padstow and on the Padstow War Memorial.

Family info: Father: John Edyvean, born Padstow, Cornwall in 1855. Bus driver. Mother: Elizabeth Davey, born Camelford, Cornwall in 1856. The couple married in 1881 and had six children, two of whom died young. John died aged 48.



This information was researched by Peter Smith, who is currently writing a book about Padstow's part in the Great War. Anyone wishing to correct errors or supply additional information can write to him at 24 Mallard Drive, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5PW. Also phone 01825 762226 or email smithpeter24@gmail.com

+Lest we forget+