

Edgar Spear MARTYN



Born: 13th March 1896, Portugalete, Bilbao, Spain
Occupation: Pupil at Forest School, Walthamstow, London
Enlisted: Commission 1st December 1914 (Volunteer)
Unit: 6th (Queen's Own) Royal West Kent Regt.
Rank/number: Captain
Death: Killed in action, 30th November 1917
Detail: Edgar died at Lateau Wood during a German counter-attack at the Battle of Cambrai. His parents, told only their son was missing, lived in hope for weeks. But they learnt the awful truth in January 1918 when a captured 6th RWK officer sent them a letter from a PoW camp in Germany saying he had seen Edgar - "your brave son" - being killed in action.

Age at death: 21

Military info: Edgar left school four months after the outbreak of war and gained a commission in the 6th Royal West Kents, part of 37th Brigade, 12th (Eastern) Division. The battalion arrived in France on 1st June 1915. In January 1916 Edgar was promoted to lieutenant and a month later he joined the 6th RWK at Manqueville, in the Pas-de-Calais. Later that month the battalion moved to trenches at Loos where they suffered 200 casualties during heavy fighting. Edgar was slightly wounded that March. On 17th June the battalion began training for the Somme offensive and early on 3rd July the 6th RWK took part in a night attack on a heavily-defended salient at Ovillers. The battalion suffered 375 casualties. Edgar was twice wounded. On 13th September 1917 he was promoted to captain and returned to duty. In March that year the Germans withdrew to the new Hindenburg Line and on the 20th November British troops and 475 tanks attacked at Cambrai. The Germans were caught unawares and British units advanced more than four miles in a day. The 6th RWK, with Edgar leading a company, was one of the battalions taking part. But the British failed to exploit their breakthrough and on 30th November the Germans counter-attacked. The 6th RWK suffered appalling casualties and were reduced to 1 officer and 17 men. Edgar was killed, his last-ditch heroics later revealed through a fellow officer's eye-witness testimony.

Grave/memorial: Edgar's body was never found. He is commemorated at Cambrai Memorial in France, St Petroc's Church, Padstow and on the Padstow War Memorial.

Family info: Father: Samuel Martyn, born Padstow on 25th November 1865. Ship owner. In WW1 one of Samuel's vessels was torpedoed off Trevoise Head, Padstow. Mother: Helena Bennett, born Padstow in 1866. Teacher. In 1891 they married and settled in Penarth. They later moved to Bilbao where Edgar was born.



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+

