

Pte. Austin NOLAN (1894 – 1914)  
(King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry)



Austin Nolan was born in 1894 at Cullingworth Street, Staincliffe to Parker (Patrick) Nolan and Ellen (nee Fall). Parker and Ellen married in 1882 and had 11 children, but only 4 had survived by the 1911 Census. Most had died as babies. Their last child Cecelia was born in 1901.

Parker died in 1902 as did his daughter Gertrude Catherine aged 6. Eliza Helena died in 1903 aged 16 and the oldest of the family Jane Elizabeth died in 1905, aged 23. Life was very hard for Ellen after her husband died and with so many tragic deaths in the family.

At some point in the early 1900s the family moved to 39 Talbot Street, Batley. On the 1911 Census, Mary Anastasia (known as Annie) is working from home as a milliner. Austin is now 17 years old and working nights in the finishing department of G. and J. Stubley. Tom, aged 13, is an errand boy and Cecelia (Cissie), aged 9, is at school.

Austin joined the Batley TA in 1910 and then enlisted in Batley at the start of the War and was stationed in Doncaster. His details are given as Private 1442, 1/4 KOYLI (G Company). He never made it to the front, but was the first Serviceman named on the Batley War Memorial to die in WW1.

He was knocked down and killed on the 22nd August 1914 by a passing train whilst guarding a bridge over the River Trent. There was a thick fog and despite warning shouts he never heard them. The Coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death and asked that everything possible be done for his mother and offered his sympathy to the family. The Batley News reported that his mother was overwhelmed with grief.

A brief telegram from his commanding officer conveyed the distressing news which created a painful sensation in the town. Large numbers of neighbours proceeded to Mrs Nolan's house to express their sympathy. Only a fortnight previously young Nolan had paid a flying visit home from the Doncaster encampment. He had received some money from the authorities and he brought a big share of it home. Mrs Nolan said he had always been good to her and was her chief support. Since her husband's death she was to a large extent dependent on Austin's earnings. She stated he was very popular with his comrades in the TA and had been in camp at Whitby and later Doncaster. Cissie had arranged to visit him in Doncaster as he spoke so highly of the town.

His body was brought back to Batley station and the coffin was escorted with a military escort to his home in Talbot Street. His funeral took place at Batley Cemetery. Many were present to pay their respects including the Mayor of Batley, Councillor Ben Turner, and 18 members of the Batley detachment.

Mrs Nolan continued to live at 39 Taylor Street until her death in 1939. Annie married in 1915 and had a son but her husband died in 1916 and she returned to live with her mother. Tom never married and he too lived with his mother. Cissie married in 1936 and her daughter Judith, who still lives in Batley, remembers as a school girl taking her friends to proudly show them the name of her uncle on the Batley War Memorial. His name also appears on St Mary's Church Roll of Honour.

Researcher

Susan White, Batley History Group, May 2014