

The Remicks of Port Isaac in the First World War

Three members of the Remick family were killed, and one survived, in the First World War. These are their stories.

Thomas Bate Remick – A survivor's war and the aftermath

Tom Bate Remick survived the war. He was called up for service on February 22nd 1917 and placed in 2nd Labour Company, Hampshire Regiment, before being transferred to the West Riding Regiment in October 1917. He was in the 1/5th Battalion West Riding Regiment which was transferred to 168th Brigade in 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division on January 30th 1918, where he may have met another Port Isaac lad, Edgar Mitchell who was in the same division. During Tom's time in France, the 62nd fought in the Battle of Bapaume on March 25th, the First Battle of Arras 1918 on March 28th, the Battle of the Tardenois July 20th to 30th, the Battle of the Scarpe August 26th to 30th, the Battle of the Drocourt-Queant Line on September 2nd, the Battle of Havrincourt on September 12th, the Battle of the Canal du Nord September 27th to 30th, the Battle of the Selle October 17th to 23rd, and the capture of Solesmes on October 20th, the Battle of the Sambre November 4th.

On November 9th the Division entered the southern outskirts of Maubeuge, crossed the Sambre and reached the Maubeuge-Avesnes road. The Division was selected to form part of the army which would advance across Belgium and occupy the Rhine bridgeheads, the only Territorial formation to receive this honour. The move began on November 18th, although Tom did not complete this trek as he was struck down with influenza on November 21st and was transferred back to the UK in Brighton on December 4th 1918. He was lucky to survive this latest brush with death (see Influenza Pandemic of 1918) and was granted sick leave after recovering. He failed to return at the end of his leave on December 30th 1918, but reported himself to the Regimental Sergeant Major at his base when he finally returned eight days later. Going Absent Without Leave was a serious issue. His Major dealt with the matter the next day without court martial, and he lost eight day's pay, and was given eight days Field Punishment Number 2, which during wartime involved hard labour whilst being placed in fetters and handcuffs. He may well not have served this, as he was given 28 day's leave only seven days later from his base in Fovant, before being finally demobbed in February.

The Remick family's sacrifice continued in the Second World War with two of Thomas Bate's children, as well as his son-in-law, being killed. Their eldest son Tom (born March 1900) was affected by the death of his Uncle Jonathan Remick, and also joined the navy. He was killed in the Battle of the River Plate on December 13th 1939, when an 11-inch shell from the German Pocket Battleship Admiral Graf Spee burst on the forward turret killing all present except the Captain and two others. It is an irony that the uncle was killed by Admiral Graf Spee's squadron, and the nephew was killed by the ship named after him. Their eldest daughter Dorothy (born April 1898) was killed in a bombing raid on Devonport Dockyards on April 22nd 1941. Dorothy and Tom's youngest sister Kate May Remick lost her husband, William Johnson Townsend (born 1892). Having previous army service, he tried to join up in 1939, but was judged to be too old, so he entered the Merchant Navy instead. On July 16th 1940 the Atlantic Convoy HX-55 was attacked by the German U-boat U-61 about 130 miles north west of Bloody Foreland, County Donegal, Ireland. His ship, the SS Scottish Minstrel was hit by a torpedo and sank the next day with the loss of nine crew members, including William Johnson Townsend.

Sources

62nd (2nd West Riding) Division: <http://www.1914-1918.net/62div.htm>

Field Punishment: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field_punishment

Family Information: Courtesy of Janet Townsend, Jonathan Richards and Elizabeth Broughton, relatives of Jonathan Remick.