

William John Sterrett

SERVICE

Royal Irish Rifles
Rifleman
15974

Home	14 September 1914 - 1 October 1915
France	2 October 1915 – 28 March 1916
Home	29 March 1916 – 7 September 1917
France	8 September 1917 – 22 September 1918
Home	23 September 1918 – 7 October 1918
France	8 October 1918 – 14 February 1919
Home	15 February 1919 – 15 March 1919

While initially posted as part of the 14th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, he is listed as being 19th Battalion reserves from June 1916 – September 1917. He then returned to the 14th Battalion in September 1917.

He was promoted temporarily in 1917 to Acting Corporal but returned to his permanent rank of Rifleman in the same year.

He was wounded with a gunshot wound to the arm however many of the notes about this are illegible. It appears that this happened on 6 April 1918. It also seems that he may have had some sort of disability in 1921, though again this is difficult to read (*haemorrhoid?).

Battles of the 36th Ulster Division on the dates he was in France were: 3rd Ypres, Cambrai*, 4th Ypres and Courtrai. *Cambrai is mentioned in his letter to Dundela in 1918.

FAMILY

William's parents were John and Emily Elizabeth Sterrett. John was from Armagh and Emily Elizabeth was from County Carlow. Emily's surname may have been McCartney but this will need confirmed. William John himself was born in Warrenpoint.

In 1901 the Sterrett family were living at 24 Connsbrook Avenue. His father John is listed as a gardener and domestic servant and his mother Emily, a housewife. The eldest in the family, William John is aged 15 and his occupation is given as a Telegraph Messenger. At this time he has 5 younger siblings, Emily, Lydia (or Letitia), David, Thomas and Murdoch.

By 1911, the family have moved to 134 Larkfield Road, although William John is not present at the address with them. Emily states that she and John are now 27 years married and have only 6 children of 10 still living. Murdoch unfortunately died aged 1 year old in the winter of 1901. The sixth surviving child to the couple is Walter Stanley born in 1907. The 1911 census also tells us that William John's sister and the eldest female of the Sterrett siblings married Henry Holden Hogg and had a child named Elizabeth Orr Hogg. The young couple were living in the Sterrett family home at this time. This marriage took place at Knock Presbyterian on 12 July 1909 and their baby Elizabeth was born in 1910. William John Sterrett has not been found on the 1911 census as yet.

His occupation as a Telegraph messenger in 1901 resulted in a permanent job with the Postal Service and William John was appointed a postman in March 1907, the same year his younger brother Walter was born and it was a job he retained until his death. Walter himself joined the

Postal Service and was listed as a Postman (Manager) in 1924, remaining there until at least 1950 when he was appointed a 'Tech II'.

Sadly their mother Emily died aged only 50 years old on 8 July 1914, address listed as 174 Connsbrook Avenue indicating that the Sterrett's had returned to their old street.

William John married Kathleen Francis Evans in St Mark's Dundela on 6 June 1915 while in the army but on home service as part of the Reserve battalion. Kathleen or Katherine as she appears to be named on some documentation is listed as William John's next of kin on his service record, living at 275 Beersbridge Road. Their first child John was born on 18 March 1917 in Newcastle, County Down.

William John and Kathleen's address in 1921 is given as 15 Major Street.

Also in 1917 on the 26th December, William John's sister Lydia Abigail Sterrett married in St Mark's Dundela. Her husband was Arthur Middleton Rudge from 17 Grace Avenue in the East of the City. The eldest of 5 boys born to Arthur and Annie Rudge, he was a Plater. Interestingly, like Lydia's bother William John, Arthur's brother Walter was also listed as a telegraph messenger in the census. He was appointed an Assistant Postman in 1913 and promoted to Postman in 1915. Another of Arthur's brothers, Frederick joined the 8th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles in September 1914, only to be declared medically unfit and discharged with only 58 days service. Further investigation shows that he was discharged from service as he was 'not likely to become an efficient soldier'.

William John's father John Sterrett died on 17 October 1935 aged 76 years, his address listed as 10 Seascape Parade.

William John is listed on the civilian register of deaths as having died in the Belfast Blitz on 5th May 1941, not far from his home. It appears that William was a Sergeant within the Home guard. His home address was 1 Seascape Parade in the Shore Road area, but he was killed at number 10 Seascape Parade, his father's old house, indicating that he was perhaps helping his relatives or that there may have been a shelter there. The houses around this area were particularly badly hit and many many civilian casualties caused by the German bombing of Belfast.

William John was buried in Dundonald cemetery on 8 May 1941 with his parents. His will was granted on 2 July 1941 - £543 to his wife Kathleen. On this it is noted that he was a postman. Kathleen died on 21 August 1965, and is buried with her husband and his parents.

From the burial record we can see that there are two other family members in the same plot. These were Walter and John Sterrett. These were William and Kathleen's sons. John was born during the war in 1917 and died aged 61 on 3 February 1979, his address given as 17 Silverstream Park. Walter was born post-war in 1924 and died aged only 33 years old on 21 August 1957. It is unknown at this stage if there were any other siblings or descendants.

Research: Karen O'Rawe
classygenes@rocketmail.com