

Richard Brenton BATE



- Born:** 1881, Padstow, Cornwall
- Occupation:** Fisherman
- Enlisted:** Bodmin: 14th December 1914 (Volunteer)
- Unit:** 6th Duke of Cornwall's LI
- Rank/number:** Private: No.17189
- Death:** Died of wounds, 31st July 1915
- Detail:** Richard was fatally wounded when Germans launched the first flamethrower attack of the war at Hooge, Ypres. The 6th DCLI war diary says the battalion were ordered to hold Zouave Wood and at 7pm the Germans struck. "The enemy used liquid fire and bombs and our artillery barrage and our rifle and machine gun fire drove them back." They came again the next night and Richard fell dying.
- Age at death:** 34
- Military info:** As a Padstow lifeboatman Richard was no stranger to danger and he was among the first to volunteer for the war. He enlisted after hearing a rousing speech by a recruiting sergeant at the Public Rooms in the town. The father of four joined up with seven Padstow pals. Three of the group would be killed. As he left for the war Richard shouted to his mates on the quayside: "Look after the lifeboat, lads!" Brothers Harry and Thomas also enlisted, and both would survive. Richard arrived in France on 21st May 1915 and was sent to the world's most dangerous place - the Ypres Salient. The British had clung to this tiny piece of Belgium since 1914 and would keep it until the peace. The Salient thrust eastward from the town and men who manned its defences could be shot at from every direction - even behind. Richard arrived on 24th June 1915 and was soon in action. The 6th DCLI, part of 43rd Brigade, 14th Division, were resting at Vlamertinghe when at 4am on 30th July they were ordered back to the frontline. Their Division had been driven from trenches by flamethrowers, the first time this weapon had been used. A counter-attack failed and the Dukes were told to hold Zouave Wood. At 7pm that night and at midnight on the 31st the enemy attacked with flamethrowers. The Dukes fought them off, suffering 187 casualties. Richard was killed - the first Padstonian soldier to die in the Great War.
- Grave/memorial:** Richard is buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery in Belgium and he is also commemorated at St Petroc's Church, Padstow and on Padstow War Memorial.
- Family info:** Father: John Bate, born Wadebridge, Cornwall in 1851. Labourer. Mother: Susan Brenton, born Padstow, Cornwall in 1852. Wife: Emily Hicks, born Padstow, Cornwall in 1884. They married in 1903. One year after Richard's death his son Rowland, 8, drowned picking blackberries at Credis Creek.



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

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