

Herbert Martin

Herbert Martin was born in 1885. He came from a large family with 10 siblings. The family lived in Linden Cottages in Chiswick, moving to Garrick Grove at a later date. His father Philip James was a carpenter and joiner and had married Jane Charlotte Spencer in 1867. At 14, Herbert was a bottle washer in the local brewery. It appears that Herbert married Agnus Mary Rogers in 1913 in Ealing, a year before war broke out. Their daughter, Agnus B Martin's birth was registered in Brentford in 1914. There is no reference to his family being together in the 1911 census, but Herbert's military records show that, at some point, he moved to Brentford and enlisted at Hounslow. Although previously in the Middlesex Regiment, he later joined the 8th Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (16th Division) to fight for his country. In 1916, these 'New Army (K2)' recruits were mobilised for war and introduced to trench warfare at the Battle of Loos and the Battle of Hulluch. In July, they moved to the Somme Valley. Here, Herbert's division played an important role capturing the German held towns of Gillemont and Ginchy – there were heavy casualties.



Between the 1st-10th September 4,314 men died in these battles, including Herbert.



**Picture taken on 9th September 1916 at Ginchy, the very day that Herbert was killed.
(Courtesy of the National Army Museum)**

On 9th September 1916, German held Ginchy was attacked by the 16th Division. The British began a bombardment early in the morning but waited until late afternoon to advance, to deny the Germans time to counter-attack before dark. Zero hour for the attack itself, was set at 4.45pm. The conditions were poor, wet with bad light. There was ferocious enemy battery and machine gun fire, but the Irish Division increased their bombardment to ***'hurricane intensity and for half an hour the enemy positions were subjected to a frightful ordeal under which it seemed nothing could live'*** (taken from The War History of the 4th London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers) 1914-1919. By Captain F C Grimwade (1922).

The village was taken on the first attempt. It took one hour! The Battle of Ginchy is regarded as one of the most successful battles of the whole Somme Offensive as it deprived the enemy of their strategic observation posts overlooking the entire battlefield. Herbert is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial and also at All Saints Church in Isleworth.

The following account of the capture of Ginchy was communicated by a former member of the staff of the Daily Express, London.

There is nothing in the world like a British bayonet charge, spiced with a dash of Irish blood. Of this I am convinced, for I have witnessed the taking of Ginchy, the formidable German fortress bristling with machine guns, by a handful of laughing, careless, cigarette-smoking Englishmen and Irishmen who, perhaps, eighteen months ago, were just artisans or clerks the same as you and I.

Now, in their happy-go-lucky way, they can beat the Kaiser's finest troops, trained from babyhood to war, at their own game; they can take a village on a hill, fortified and strengthened by all the ingenious devices known to modern military engineers, in just one impetuous rush. It seems incredible, but nevertheless it is true. Yesterday, Ginchy was a German fortress apparently invincible; to-day it is a British position invincible against the futile attacks of its former garrison.

DOOMED VILLAGE.

Daily Express London 12 September

