



JOHN CATTANACH, Carlton, caps 1, cap number 73

John Cattanach was born in Newtonmore on 2nd February 1885 to William Cattanach, a general merchant, and his wife Anne (nee Kennedy). He was educated at Newtonmore and Kingussie Public Schools, then George Watson's College in Edinburgh.

He was noted as a promising sporting talent from an early age. Being born in the highlands, his first sport was shinty. He is recognised as the greatest shinty player of his generation and until 2023 was the only shinty player in the Scottish Sport Hall of Fame. His entry notes

“his peerless skill won him fame throughout the Highlands and he became a tower of strength to the Newtonmore team, which he captained in a victorious season during a vintage period in the club’s history. His most spectacular individual performance came in the 1909 Camanachd Cup Final in Glasgow, where he scored eight goals in an 11-3 victory over Furnace – a record that still stands to this day.”

He went to Edinburgh University and graduated MA in 1907 then in Medicine in 1912. At university he displayed his talents for other sports, gaining international caps at hockey and athletics. At athletics, he regularly won university events most notably as a sprinter and long jumper. He won the Rangers Football Club 100 yards’ handicap (off 10 yards) in the fast time of 9.45 seconds, in 1914.

John Cattanach was the 73rd man to be capped for Scotland. His solitary cap was against Wales on 24th February 1912 in a match played at St Andrews. John, representing Carlton, was a late call up at centre forward after L.A. MacKenzie called off. MacKenzie in turn had been called up to replace D.T Richardson, the original selection. The match ended in a 1-1 draw. When the team for the following match against Ireland was announced, Richardson of Edinburgh University had regained his place.

After graduating in 1912, John was appointed clinical assistant to Dr Mackay at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Then in March 1913 he was appointed House Doctor at Bangor Hospital.

After the declaration of war, John volunteered for service with the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was attached to the 9th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

On the 18th June 1915 the battalion embarked on HMT Royal Edward on route to Gallipoli. They disembarked at Cape Helles overnight on the 13th/14 July. After a period in the front lines , the battalion were withdrawn to reserve on 22nd July. Because the beachhead at Gallipoli was so narrow, even the reserve positions were under shellfire, Sadly John was wounded on 22nd July and died of his wounds on 27th July 1915.

He is remembered on the Helles Memorial to the missing Edinburgh University roll of Honour. By a medal awarded to Edinburgh University's Shinty Player of the Year (from 2016)

Sources

Scottish Sport Hall of Fame

The Long Long Trail

Scotland's People

Ancestry

British Newspaper Archive

Scottish Hockey Records

Commonwealth War Graves Commission