



Thomas James 1885 – 1915

Thomas was born in Southwick, Sunderland in 1885. His father was also Thomas James, a Boilersmith's Labourer born in Sunderland around 1857. His mother was Mary, born in Southwick around 1863; there are many spelling variations of her surname and her birth name has not been established, on her marriage record she is *Huitt*, on her children's birth records she is *Huritt*, *Huitt* and *Hewitt*. They were married in 1883.

Their other children were; Robert (birth name recorded as Robert *Just*), born in 1884, Ernest, born in 1888 and James Barnard (known as *Barnett*), born in 1890 and died in 1914.

On the 1891 Census the family lived at Cleveland Terrace, Southwick. In 1901 they are now at 12, Watergate Road, Dewsbury; Thomas Snr is not listed and Mary is recorded as the head and her status is married. In 1911 Mary and Barnett are living at 36, Back Lawson Street, Dewsbury, her status is widowed. Thomas Snr has not been positively identified but is likely to be the person of this name living as a boarder in Sunderland age 50, status widowed and giving his occupation as a sailor. He is also likely to be the Thomas James who was married in South Shields in 1916 to a Mary Jane Turner (nee Hanlon), born in Dublin around 1871. On the 1921 Census they are living at Owen Street, Tyne Dock, South Shields, County Durham with five children aged between 20 and 11 years from Mary Jane Turner's first marriage. Thomas's age is given as 63. No death record has been found for him.

Thomas worked as a Glass Blower in 1901 and as a Cloth Finisher in 1911 and later as a Window Cleaner. He was a member of Dewsbury Northern Union Football Club and was also a checker at Dewsbury Empire Theatre and Hippodrome. He was married to Alice Whittles (born in 1884 and died in 1952) at All Saints Church, Dewsbury on 13th August 1904. They lived at 52, Cross King Street, Batley and later at 13, Smith Road, Batley Carr and had five children; Herbert, born in 1905, Ernest, born in 1908, Annie, born in 1910 and died in 1911, Thomas, born in 1912 and Norman, born in 1915.

He was a former Territorial and Reservist and served as Private 11411 in the 6th Battalion, Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, being part of the machine-gun section; he was sent to the Western Front on 21st May 1915 and was killed in action in Flanders on 6th October 1915. He is buried in Elzenwalle Brasserie Cemetery, Ieper, Belgium. Thomas was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Elzenwalle Brasserie Cemetery is located 5 km south west of Ieper (Ypres) town centre, on the road connecting Ieper to Kemmel. The cemetery is named from a brewery which stood opposite and is in fact a collection of small regimental burial grounds, of which Plot III in particular was made by the 22nd Battalion Canadian Infantry (Quebec Regt). The eight plots are numbered neither in order of date nor in order of position, and the short rows vary from one grave to fourteen, but they record the names of the units which held the trenches on this front from February 1915 to June 1917, and of some of those which, from June to November 1917, held the forward line won in the Battle of Messines. Elzenwalle Brasserie Cemetery contains 149 First World War burials.

Thomas is also commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library.

In Memory of
Private
T James

11411, 6th Bn., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry who died on 06 October 1915

Remembered with Honour
Elzenwalle Brasserie Cemetery



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Ms. Danielle Roubroeks, Antwerp, Belgium.