



James Edward May

1882 – 1917

James was born in Dewsbury in 1882. His father was John Jeffrey May, a Blacksmith born in St. Mabyn, Cornwall in 1859 and died in 1940. His mother was Amy Ellen (nee Milner) born in Dewsbury in 1858 and died in 1942. They were married on 13th April 1879 at Holy Innocents Church, Thornhill Lees.

Their other children were; Joseph William, born in 1880, Eliza Jane, born in 1888, Olive, born in 1893 and Alfred, born in 1898 and died in 1915.

On the 1891, 1901 and 1911 Census Records the family lived at 56, Gladstone Street, Dewsbury.

James worked as a coal miner (bye worker) at Soothill Wood Colliery. He was married in 1907 to Annie Dobson (born at Carlton, near Pontefract in 1884 and died in 1914). Their children were; Ivy May Dobson, born in 1906, John Jeffrey, born in 1909, Gladys, born in 1910 and died in 1915, Amy Ellen, born in 1913 and died in 1913 and Fred, born in 1914 and died in 1914. In 1911 they lived at 1, George Terrace, Field Lane, Batley with the family of James Heaton, who was an uncle of his wife Annie. Following Annie's death, their children were cared for by James's mother Amy Ellen May.

He was a Territorial at a camp in Whitby when war broke out and he immediately enlisted serving as Private 35776 in the 2nd Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. He served at home as a cook but was sent to the Western Front in December 1916. He died of wounds in No 11 Stationary Hospital at Rouen, France on 20th April 1917 having sustained a serious leg injury during the Battle of Arras the previous week, which necessitated amputation of his right foot. He was buried in St. Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen, Seine-Maritime, France. James was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and in 1923, the Territorial Force War Medal.

St. Sever Cemetery and St. Sever Cemetery Extension are located within a large communal cemetery situated on the eastern edge of the southern Rouen suburbs of Le Grand Quevilly and Le Petit Quevilly. Almost all of the hospitals at Rouen remained there for practically the whole of the war. They included eight general, five stationary, one British Red Cross and one labour hospital, and No. 2 Convalescent Depot. A number of the dead from these hospitals were buried in other cemeteries, but the great majority were taken to the city cemetery of St. Sever. In September 1916, it was found necessary to begin an extension, where the last burial took place in April 1920. The cemetery extension contains 8,348 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, ten of them are unidentified.

James is commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in the Dewsbury Central Library and on the War Memorial in St. John the Evangelist Church, Dewsbury Moor.

In Memory of
Private
J E May

35776, 2nd Bn., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry who died on 20 April 1917

Remembered with Honour
St. Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Headstone photograph by courtesy of Mlle. Anais Pancrazy, Rouen, France.