



John Arthur Smithson DCM

1884 – 1917

John was born in Dewsbury in 1884. His father was Samuel Smithson, a cloth printer born in Dewsbury in 1850 and died in 1924. His mother was Majella (nee Bevitt) born in Mirfield in 1852 and died in 1931; there are many spelling variations of the first name. They were married at Holy Innocents Church, Thornhill Lees on 24th August 1872.

Their other children were: Annie, born in 1874, Mary Elizabeth, born in 1876, Sam, born in 1878, Fred, born in 1880, Hannah Maria, born in 1882 and died in 1885, Alfred, born in 1887 and died in 1890, Ernest, born in 1888, Sarah Ann, born in 1892 and died in 1898, Albert, born in 1895 and died in 1898. Sam and Fred both served in World War 1.

On the 1891, 1901 and 1911 Census Records the family lived at 32, South Elmwood Street, Flatts, Dewsbury.

John was a colliery pick sharpener at Messrs Crawshaw and Warburton's Colliery, Shaw Cross, Dewsbury. He was married to Ada Carter (born in 1885) on 20th February 1904 at All Saints Church, Dewsbury. Their children were; Albert, born in 1904 and died in 1906, Arthur, born in 1906 and died in 1906, Harry, born in 1908, Mary, born in 1910, Edith, born in 1912 and died in 1912, Annie, born in 1913 and Edwin, born in 1917. On the 1911 Census they lived at 19, Vulcan Road, Flatts, Dewsbury. Ada was remarried on 29th March 1919 to a widower Sam Wilson (born in 1875 and died in 1954). They lived at 396, Lees Hall Road, Thornhill Lees.

He enlisted in August 1914 serving as Private 11660 in the 6th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and was sent to the Western Front on 21st May 1915. He was killed in action on 24th August 1917 during the Battle of Passchendaele for which he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. A comrade said he saw him fall, badly wounded. His remains were never identified for burial and so he is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. In addition to the Distinguished Conduct Medal, John was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The following citation for the award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal appeared in the London Gazette on 26th January 1918: *"For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty when the enemy counter-attacked using flammenwerfers. He went out in front of the trench with his Lewis gun, on his own initiative, killing the flammenwerfer-bearers and materially assisting to beat off the attack. Again on the same day, though he had been wounded during the enemy's counter-attack he pushed forward and kept up a steady and accurate fire on the enemy machine guns and enabled our counter-attack to push forward. He accomplished this despite his leg being broken, showing magnificent courage and devotion to duty"*.

John is also commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park, and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library and on the Memorial Plaque to former employees of Messrs Crawshaw and Warburton, displayed in the porch of St. Paul's Church, Hanging Heaton.

In Memory of

Private

John Arthur Smithson

D C M

11660, 6th Bn., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry who died on 24 August 1917 Age 33

Son of Mr. S. Smithson, of South Elmwood St., Flatts, Dewsbury; husband of Mrs. Ada Wilson (formerly Smithson), of 396, Lees Hall Rd., Thornhill Lees, Dewsbury, Yorks.

Remembered with Honour

Tyne Cot Memorial



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

SMITHSON J. A.