



James Kelly

1896 – 1916

James was born in Batley on 12th October 1896. His father was Thomas Kelly, a coal miner/hewer born in Birstall in 1869 and died in 1934. His mother was Mary (née Kilroy) born in Batley in 1872 and died in 1945. They were married in the Oldham district in 1889.

Their other children were; Thomas, born in 1890, Elizabeth Ann, born in 1894, Catherine, born in 1898, Mary, born in 1900, Margaret, born in 1902 and Norah, born in 1906.

At an early age he was admitted to the Cottage Homes, Healds Road and it was at the initiative of the Dewsbury Board of Guardians that he went to the Royal Naval training ship *Wellesley* where he did well.

He retained his local connections when on leave, joining his sisters who lived with their guardian Mrs. Hart at 71, Warwick Road, Batley. He regularly sent money home for their support. His favourite sister was the youngest, Norah and he used to say, "*If I come home and get married I shall take Norah to live with me*". His final visit home was at Christmas 1915.

He attested in the Royal Navy on 25th September 1912 and before the war he was drafted to the battlecruiser HMS *Queen Mary* where he served as a Gunner rising to the rank of Able Seaman J/20255. He was killed in action on 31st May 1916 in the Battle of Jutland when the *Queen Mary* was hit by the German battlecruiser *Derfflinger*, causing a massive explosion in her magazines. Over 1,200 other men died on board the vessel, including two other men commemorated on the Dewsbury War Memorial; Stokers Thornton Parker and Walter Edward Roberts, also John Herman Howe who is commemorated on the Batley War Memorial. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Hampshire. James was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

It was nine-year-old Norah who received the news of her brother's death from the Admiralty. Before the battle he had named her as beneficiary in his will. She became Mrs. George Spencer in 1928 and lived to the age of 96.

Standing on Southsea Common overlooking the promenade in Portsmouth, Hampshire, is the Portsmouth Naval Memorial. It commemorates 9,706 naval personnel of the First World War who were lost or buried at sea.

James 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 War Memorial in Our Lady and St. Paulinus Church. His family donated his Memorial Plaque to the church where it is held in safe keeping.

In Memory of
Able Seaman
James Kelly

J/20255, H.M.S. "Queen Mary.", Royal Navy who died on 31 May 1916

Remembered with Honour
Portsmouth Naval Memorial



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Memorial Plaque of Able Seaman J/20255 James Kelly, donated by his family to Our Lady and St. Paulinus Church.