

Pte. Joseph KING (1895 – 1914)  
(King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry)



Joseph King was born in Westtown, Dewsbury in 1895, but he was Registered as Joseph Patrick Burns. Shortly after his birth his mother, Mary Burns, married Elam King at St Paulinus Church, Dewsbury in 1895. Elam and Mary had 8 other children Annie (1897), Mary Ellen (1900), Lily (1903), Margaret (1905), Elam (1907), George (1909), Eveline (1913) and Norman (1916).

In 1901 Joseph (Burns) is living with his maternal grandmother Margaret Burns at Back Victoria Street, Dewsbury. His parents were in Rotherham with Annie and Mary Ellen.

The 1911 Census shows Joseph is now using the surname King and living with Elam and Mary. Joseph and Elam were both miners. His brother George died in 1911 and Eveline died in 1917. The family were living at 34 Albert Street, in Batley Carr, when Joseph enlisted at Dewsbury and he disembarked on the 10th August, 1914. He was badly wounded on the 2nd November and wrote to his mother telling her a bullet had gone through his leg and broken it. He told her to cheer up and "tell all the boys I got wounded and am going on well". He hoped to be home for Christmas.

The Reverend Nugent then wrote from the Base Hospital in Boulogne to tell her that Joseph had had to have his left leg amputated to the knee and that he was being very brave and patient.

He wrote to her again saying –‘My Dear Madam, I grieve to tell you that Private King died here on December 12th. We so hoped he was getting better but suddenly he took a turn for the worse and died. I am sure he was prepared to go. I visited him several times and I got to know him well. He will be buried with military honours tomorrow morning. God bless and comfort you.’

His sister also received a letter from Joseph written a few days before he died. King George V and the Prince of Wales had visited him and asked how he was getting along. He was hopeful of being moved to a hospital nearer home and asked her to give his love to mother, father and all at home and that he expected to see them soon. He asked her to not forget that he would be pleased to receive a present at Christmas.

Aged 19 years, Private Joseph King, 10707, 2nd Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, is Remembered with Honour at Boulogne Eastern Cemetery.

Researcher

Susan White, Batley History Group, July 2014