

Pte. Albert Arthur SMITHSON (1892 – 1916)

(4043, 3rd/4th Battalion Cameron Highlanders)



Albert Arthur's parents, Joseph Smithson (22) and Annie Grant (18) were married in Batley on 3 March 1891. Albert Arthur was christened in Batley on 5 June 1892 and he had sister's Edith born 1891 and Doris 1901. Their father Joseph was a 22 years old Journeyman Butcher at the time of the 1891 Census, but sadly died in the June qtr. of 1909 at the age of 40.

Albert Arthur, aged 23, lived with his widowed mother at 189, Upper Taylor Street, Batley, when he enlisted in Batley and then Leeds in November 1915. He was billeted at South Camp, Ripon and attached to the Cameron Highlanders. About two months after enlisting he was the victim of a motor accident in Ripon and died the following day.

According to evidence at the inquest, deceased and his friend Pte Denton Wilson (also a Batley soldier and son of Mr & Mrs Joseph Wilson, Commercial Hotel, Clerk Green, Batley) had been in Ripon town centre on the evening of Thursday 6th January 1916. At about 8.40 they were returning to the camp and called in at No.1 YMCA hut for some supper to take back to camp. They came out of the hut into Wycliffe Lane and owing to a strong gale against them they had to battle against it with their heads down as they walked across the road. They somehow became parted and eventually Pte Wilson reached the pavement whilst Pte Smithson was blown into the middle of the road.

A motor car came down the wrong side of the road; the horn was sounded and Wilson heard it. He shouted to Smithson to get out of the way, but presumably he did not hear, and in a moment Smithson fell injured in the road. Wilson did not see the car hit him. The car did not stop and Pte Smithson, claiming “that car has run over me”, was soon taken to hospital on a stretcher He died early on Friday morning, 7th January 1916.

His mother received a telegram on Friday about the accident, but when she arrived at Ripon her son had passed away.

On Monday 10th January, more than 400 soldiers escorted the coffin to the station in Ripon on its way to Batley cemetery and a band played ‘Scots Wha Ha’e’. A Sergeant and six Private’s came as escorts to Batley Cemetery. It was the seventh funeral of the war at the Cemetery.

He was well known in Batley, and respected by a large number of friends. He was a salesman for Messrs. George Jessop and Sons, clothiers, Batley and associated with Zion Methodist Church and Sunday School. He was also a member of the Batley Branch of the Shop Assistants Union.



Pte. Albert Arthur Smithson, 4043, 3rd/4th Cameron Highlanders, is Remembered with Honour at Batley Cemetery. The headstone and CWGC record gives his age as 24 but he was in fact still 23 years old.

Researcher

Ken Fedzin, for Project BUGLE and the Batley History Group, December 2015