



Joseph Staples Smith

Joseph Staples Smith was born in Gretton in 1895. His father was Joseph Smith of Gretton, his mother was Elizabeth Smith of Thurning.

The Family

In 1901, the family are living with Joseph's mother Ann Smith in Gretton. Joseph is a blacksmith. With Joseph & Elizabeth were their children Lydia, Joseph Staples, Alice and John.

By 1911, Ann Smith is 82 years of age. With Joseph & Elizabeth are their children Joseph Staples, John & Walter. Joseph Staples Smith was employed as a railway porter for Midland Railway. According to research by the Gretton History Society, Joseph Staples had a promising career ahead of him with the railway, having risen to the position of Clerk by the time of his enlistment.

Military Service

Joseph Staples Smith's service record has not survived.

He originally enlisted and served with the Norfolk Regiment (23577). At some point he transferred to the 1st/1st Battalion, Cambridgeshire Regiment (42629). It is noteworthy that at the time of his death at the age of 23 he had been promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

Sergeant Joseph Staples Smith was killed in action on 5th September 1918.

Sergeant Smith is buried at the Peronne Communal Cemetery, France and commemorated on the Gretton War Memorial.

Peronne was taken by the German on 24 September 1914. On 18 March 1917, the 40th and 48th Divisions captured the town, but it was recovered by the Germans on the 23rd March 1918. It changed hands for the last time on 1 September 1918, when it was taken by the 2nd Australian Division.

The cemetery extension was begun by the 48th (South Midland) Division in March 1917, used by the Germans in 1918, and resumed by Australian units in September 1918. At the Armistice it contained 177 graves, now in Plots I and II. It was then enlarged when graves were brought in from the battlefields north and east of Peronne and from the following small cemeteries in the area:-



AIZECOURT-LE-HAUT CHURCHYARD EXTENSION, which contained the graves of 18 soldiers from the United Kingdom and two from South Africa who fell in March 1918.

CARTIGNY COMMUNAL CEMETERY AND GERMAN EXTENSION, which contained the graves of 5,250 German soldiers, two from the United Kingdom and one from Australia.

COPSE TRENCH CEMETERY, ALLAINES, between Allaines and Moislains. Here were buried 64 soldiers from the United Kingdom (mainly 14th Black Watch and 12th Somerset Light Infantry) who fell in September 1918.

DRIENCOURT BRITISH CEMETERY, on the South side of the village, made by the 74th (Yeomanry) Division in September 1918, and contained the graves of 20 soldiers from the United Kingdom.

LIERAMONT COMMUNAL CEMETERY GERMAN EXTENSION, in which 63 soldiers from the United Kingdom were buried by the Germans in 1916-1918 and by the 58th (London) Division in September 1918.

MADAME MILITARY CEMETERY, Clery-sur-Somme (the origin of this name is uncertain, but the Germans had a "Maidan Trench" opposite), near the road to Bouchavesnes, where 56 soldiers from the United Kingdom (mainly 33rd Division) were buried in January-March 1917 (Three of these were moved to Serre Road Cemetery No.2, Beaumont-Hamel, and 53 to Peronne).

MOISLAINS BRITISH CEMETERY, a little South-West of the village, contained the graves of 54 soldiers of the 47th (London) Division who fell in September 1918.

MOISLAINS CHURCHYARD, which contained the graves of three soldiers from the United Kingdom and one from Canada.

MOISLAINS GERMAN HOSPITAL CEMETERY, at the North-East end of the village, contained the graves of 38 soldiers of the Empire, who fell in 1917 and 1918, and 281 Germans.

TEMPLEUX-LA-FOSSE GERMAN CEMETERY, on the East side of the village, contained the graves of 34 soldiers from the United Kingdom. Of these 33 were buried by their comrades in September 1918.



VAUX WOOD BRITISH CEMETERY, VAUX-SUR-SOMME, within Eastern edge of the wood. Here were buried, in September 1918, 25 soldiers from the United Kingdom (mainly of the London Regiment).

There are now 1,595 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in the extension. 224 of the burials are unidentified but there are special memorials to seven casualties known or believed to be buried among them, and ten buried in other cemeteries whose graves could not be found. The extension also contains five Second World War burials. There are 97 German war graves, 68 being unidentified.

The adjoining communal cemetery contains the grave of one airman of the First World War, killed in August 1914.

The extension was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield.

Reference

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Gretton History Society

Lest We Forget

Joseph Staples Smith
of the Cambridgeshire Regiment.

d.5th September 1918

March 2016 copy

Sergeant Smith's father, Joseph Smith died in September 1918, the same month as his son, at the age of 55 years.