

Thomas Alfred SMITH

Born Dartmouth 1877

died France, 13 January 1917, aged 39

Private 22145

Devonshire Regiment, 9th (Service) Battalion

Thomas Alfred Smith was the grandson of William Smith (1803-) and Lumley Hunt Jago (1801-1873). William was a carpenter and joiner, born close by Dartmouth at Dittisham. In 1861 they were living "above town" in St Saviour's, Dartmouth with two sons, Richard Egg Smith, 23, a carpenter, and Thomas H Smith, 14, a joiner(learner).

Richard Egg Smith (1838-) married Louisa Allford Bell (1844-1883) in April 1863 in the Wesleyan Chapel, Totnes. He was also a carpenter, like his father.

By 1881 Richard and Louisa were living in Smith Street, Dartmouth and they had six children, William John (1864-), Emma Louisa (1866-), Richard George (1869 -), Amy Alford (1872-), Mary Ann (1874-), and **Thomas Alfred (1877-1917)**. A further child, Sarah Jane, was born after the census in 1882 and a year before the death of her mother.

In 1891 Richard E Smith was still working as a carpenter, was aged 53, and living at Smith Street, Dartmouth with Amy, 19, Mary Ann, 17, **Thomas, 14**, and Sarah Jane, 8. From this time the family appears to disintegrate and it has not been possible to identify with certainty the death of the father.

Thomas enlisted at Bedford with the Bedfordshire Regiment on 5th December 1893 (family record sources) when he was nearly 17 but he declared his age at 18 years and 1 month. He is shown as a labourer and was 5' 7 3/4" tall, weighing 127 lbs (9 stone). He completed twelve years service on the 4th December 1905 having taken courses in Transport Duties (1895) and Butchery (1901). He transferred to the Army Reserve from 3rd January 1906 for a period of four years. His father and siblings are shown as next of kin.

Thomas Alfred Smith married Hannah Bell (Lamshead) on 24th August 1907 in St Gregory's Church, Dawlish. They were cousins, their respective mothers being sisters. In the following year one child was born prematurely and died. This is recorded in the Devon and Exeter Gazette of Friday 8th May 1908 in which a report appeared of an inquest. "An inquest was held here (*Dawlish*) touching the death of the infant son of Thomas Alfred Smith, employed at Dartmouth Naval College. Dr C. Ll. H. Tripp attributed death to inanition (*want of nourishment*) from premature birth. The jury returned a verdict accordingly."

The 1911 census show **Thomas** in the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth as a boot cleaner, married and 34 years old. His wife "Annie Smith", 28, was with her uncle and aunt John Wood Lamshead, 57, and Hannah Alford Bell Lamshead, 60, of 4 Brook Street, Dawlish. John had been born in Dawlish (1854-) and his wife was born in Dartmouth where her sister had married Richard Egg Smith. John Lamshead worked for the railway company as a labourer. Another child to Thomas and Annie is Edith Janie Smith (1909-), shown on the 1911 Census. A further child has been recorded, born after the census, as Hannah Louisa Smith (1911-1989).

Thomas's later military record is sketchy. The Army Medals Roll index card gives no more than his regiment and number, but appears to place him in the 1st Battalion, Devonshire Regiment. There is no date given for his arrival in France. He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. Other references place him in the 9th (Service) Battalion, Devonshire Regiment, which was composed mainly of Kitchener's volunteers. The 9th Battalion had been engaged in

Dawlish World War One Project

the assault on Mametz Wood on 1st July and the Battle of Guillemont on 3rd September (Battles of the Somme).

A Casualty Clearing Station entry shows that he was admitted on 5th January 1917 with "Pyrexia of unknown origin", which is a fever for which there is no certain diagnosis. He died in hospital on 13th January.

A Death Grant of £4.10s.6d and a War Gratuity of £3.10s.0d were paid to his widow.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: SMITH, ALFRED THOMAS Private 22145

13/01/1917 Age: 41 Devonshire Regiment, 9th Bn.

Grave Ref: VII. F. 17. [Puchevillers British Cemetery](#), Somme, France

Son of Richard Egg Smith and Louisa Alford Smith, of Dartmouth, Devon; husband of Hannah Bell Smith, of 5. Stoneland Cottages, Dawlish, Devon.

The headstone is engraved "A devoted husband and father. Greatly Missed."

Devon Heritage site info: 22145 Private Thomas Alfred Smith of the 9th Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment. Son of Richard Smith and the late Louise Smith of Dartmouth. Born in Dartmouth 9 February 1886. (*Date of birth does not correspond with family census data*) Died 15 January 1917 aged 31. (*date of death does not correspond to other references*). Served out a Royal Navy contract before enlisting in the Devonshire Regiment. (*This may be a reference to employment at Royal Naval College Dartmouth?*)

He is recorded on the Devon Roll of Honour, but date of death not given (13/1/1917 – CWGC)

Dawlish War memorial inscription:

SMITH T.A. PTE. DEVON REGT.

Last known address: 5 Stonelands Cottages, Dawlish

Next of kin: Hannah Bell Smith, widow

References:

CWGC

Free Birth Marriage & Death records

Family reference data

Subscription website references:

Forces War Records for hospital admissions

Ancestry for census data,

Medal Rolls,

UK, Soldiers died in the Great War (*death date in error, shown as 15 January 1917*)

UK, Army Register of Soldiers' Effects.