

# **Upton Lovell Men That Served Their Country & Returned Home**



**World War I**



**181292 & WR/287449**

**WILLIAM JAMES SMITH**

**ROYAL ENGINEERS**

## William James SMITH

William James Smith was born in 1894 at South Shields in the county of Durham to parents Alfred Ernest & Rose Annie Smith (nee Lelliott). A birth was registered for a William James Smith in the March quarter, 1894 in the district of South Shields, Durham.

The 1901 England Census recorded William Jas. Smith as a 7 year old living with his family as Boarders in No. 5 Hut, Ramsden Dock, Barrow in Furness, Lancashire. The head of the Household was William Blunt (General Labourer, aged 44). William & Emma Blunt had 9 children. The Smith family, in this Census consisted of 6 members – Parents – Alfred E. Smith (General Labourer, aged 30) & Rose Annie Smith (aged 27). William was the eldest of 4 children listed in this Census – William then Alfred John (aged 5), Florence Rose (aged 3) & Ernest Henry (aged 6 months).

The 1911 England Census recorded William James Smith as a 17 year old Engine Cleaner for L. & S.W.R. Co., living with his family at 45 College Street, Southampton, in a 6 roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as Alfred Ernest Smith (Dock Labourer, aged 40, born Camring Town, Essex) & Rose A. Smith (aged 37, born Mosely, Surrey). William's parents had been married for 18 years, having had 9 children, 2 of them deceased. William was the eldest of 7 children listed on this Census – William then Alfred John (Grocer's Errand Boy, aged 15, born Southampton), Ernest Henry (Scholar, aged 10, born Barrow in Furness, Lancashire), Mark (Scholar, aged 8, born Southampton), Walter Edward (Scholar, aged 6, born Southampton), Lily Florence (aged 4, born Southampton) & Frederick George (aged 1, born Southampton).

William James Smith enlisted with Royal Engineers – Railway Operating Division on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1915 at Warminster. William Jams Smith was aged 21 years & 10 months & his next of kin was listed as his mother – Rose Annie Smith of 45 College St, Southampton. His occupation was listed as Shunter & his residence was listed as Manor Rd, Upton Lovell, Wilts.

The Royal Engineers' maintained the railways, roads, water supply, bridges and transport - allowing supplies to the armies. They operated the railways and inland waterways, maintained wireless, telephones and other signalling equipment, making sure communications existed. The Royal Engineers grew into a large and complex organisation, by the 1 August 1914, the RE consisted of 1056 officers and 10394 men of the regular army and Special Reserve, plus another 513 and 13127 respectively serving with the RE of the Territorial Force. The officers and men manned 26 coastal defence Fortress Companies (of which 15 were overseas), 7 Signal Companies, 2 Cable and Airline (signalling) Companies, 15 Field Companies, 3 Survey Companies, 2 Railway Companies, and miscellaneous other units.

Sapper William James Smith was sent to Army Reserve on 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1915 & mobilized on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1916. He embarked from Devonport on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1916 & disembarked at Alexandria, Egypt on 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1916. He joined the G.B.D. at Sidi Bishr on 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1916.

William James Smith was certified at a "skilled" rate of Engineer Pay as a Shunter & rated as Proficient on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1917 when he was tested. He was tested again on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1918 at a "Superior" rate of Engineer Pay as a Shunter & rated as skilled. 2/Cpl. Smith was tested again on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1919 at a "skilled" rate of Engineer Pay as a Shunter & rated as Proficient.

Sapper William James Smith was appointed Acting 2<sup>nd</sup> Corporal on 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1918 & promoted to that position the same day. He was admitted to Hospital sick on 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1918.

2/Cpl. William James Smith had been employed by the Army as a Foreman Shunter & was reliable & intelligent.

2/Cpl. William James Smith embarked from Alexandria, Egypt on HMAT *Himalaya* for UK on 26<sup>th</sup> October, 1919. He was discharged from Service on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1919.

The Medal Index Card for 2/Cpl. William James Smith shows that he was entitled to the British War Medal & the Victory Medal.

