THE FALLEN OF SUTTON-IN-CRAVEN



REGINALD SMITH

MACHINE GUN CORPS

DIED OF PNEUMONIA 27TH OCTOBER 1918

BORN IN 1899 AT LEEDS, THE SON OF ALFRED AND BERTHA SMITH

Smith Family History

• 1901 census shows Alfred, his wife Bertha, their 2 children and a boarder living at 3, Moseley Place, Leeds as follows:

Name	Age	Work	Birth place	Birth year
Alfred (Head)	35	Currier	Leeds, Yorkshire	1866
Bertha (wife)	28		Leeds, Yorkshire	1873
Evelyn	4		Leeds, Yorkshire	1897
Reginald	2		Leeds, Yorkshire	1899 - 1918
Edward Cass (boarder)	17	Bookmakers' clerk	Leeds, Yorkshire	1884

• **1911 census** shows that Alfred and Bertha had been married for 15 years and that of their 3 children born alive, all 3 were still living. It also shows the Smith family now living at 4, Walton St, Holme Bridge, Sutton-in-Craven as follows:

Name	Age	Work	Birth place	Birth year
Alfred (Head)	46	Bricklayer's labourer	Leeds, Yorkshire	1866
Bertha (wife)	38		Leeds, Yorkshire	1873
Evelyn	14	Worsted spinner	Leeds, Yorkshire	1897
Reginald	12	School part time/Doffer	Leeds, Yorkshire	1899 - 1918
Maud	9	School	Leeds, Yorkshire	1902



(source: original postcard owned by Andrew Monkhouse)

World War 1

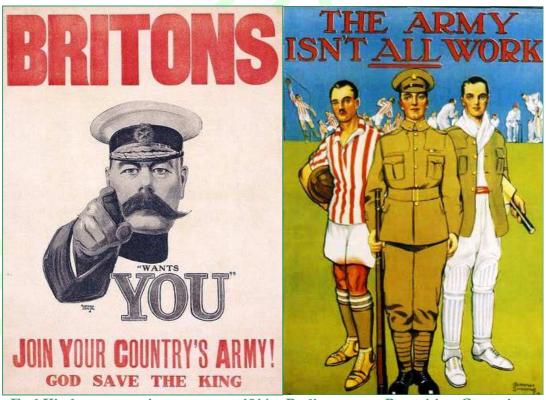


It had been **99 years** since Britain was last involved in a major European conflict following the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815

August 4th 1914 Britain declares war on Germany

In the autumn of 1914, the young men of the nation came from town and village to take the King's shilling and to offer him their dedicated services in defence of their homeland. From mills and mines, from shops and farms, from office chairs and civic departments, from loom, lathe, bench, plough and counter they flooded into the recruiting centres in answer to their nation's call for young manhood. These new recruits came to be known as **'Kitchener's Volunteers'**

The New Armies: "Kitchener's Volunteers"



Earl Kitchener recruitment poster 1914 Parliamentary Recruiting Committee London, 1915



British volunteers physical training, Manningham Park, 1914 (Kitchener's new army) (source: <u>*The Bradford Pals*</u> Ralph N. Hudson 2nd Ed, 1993)

Prior to enlistment, Reginald Smith was employed at Messrs. T. and M. Bairstow, Sutton Mills as a twister.

During the Great War, Reginald Smith responded to the call and enlisted into the 18th battalion Machine Gun Corps in February 1917. His regimental number was 129946 and he commenced with the rank of Private.



WW1 Machine Gun Corps cap badge & shoulder title

The **Machine Gun Corps** (MGC) was a corps of the British Army, formed in October 1915 in response to the need for more effective use of machine guns on the Western Front in World War I.

At the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 the tactical potential of machine guns was not appreciated by the British military. The army therefore went to war in 1914 with each infantry battalion and cavalry regiment containing a machine gun section of just two guns each.

A year of warfare on the Western Front proved that to be fully effective, machine guns must be used in larger units and crewed by specially trained men. The machine gun soon came to dominate and even to personify the battlefields of World War 1.

The MGC saw action in all the main theatres of the war and gained an enviable record for heroism as a front line fighting force. Indeed, in the latter part of the war as tactics changed to defense in depth, the MGC commonly served well in advance of the front line.

It had a less enviable record for its casualty rate. Some 170,500 officers and men served in the MGC with 62,049 becoming casualties, including 12,498 killed earning the MGC nickname 'the Suicide Squad'.

Pte Reginald Smith entered the Theatre of War around the 7th April 1917 when he arrived on the Western Front in France with the MGC.

Name.	Corps.	Hank.	Regtl. No.
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SMITH			
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Reginald			
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BRITISH	380 6360 20 de		
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			K. 1380
			K. 1550

MEDAL INDEX CARD for Reginald Smith (source: The National Archives)



WW1 British Vickers machine gun crew wearing anti-gas helmets

There were many instances where a single well-placed and protected machine gun cut great swathes in attacking infantry. Nowhere was this demonstrated with more devastating effect than against the British army's attack on the Somme on the 1st July 1916 and against the German attack at Arras on 28 March 1918. It followed that multiple machine guns, with interlocking fields of fire, were an incredibly destructive defensive weapon.



WW1 British Vickers machine gun aiming at aircraft

Having served on the battlefields of France with the Machine Gun Corps for over 18 months, Pte Reginald Smith suffered a severe attack of influenza in October 1918 and was hospitalised in the Australian Red Cross hospital at Rouen.

On the 27th October 1918, Pte Reginald Smith Died from Pneumonia

He was 20 years of age



Sutton Soldier Victim to Influenza

Mr. and Mrs. Alf. Smith, of Holme Bridge, Sutton, have received information that their only son, Gunner Reg. Smith. had died in the Australian Red Cross Hospital, Rouen, from pneumonia, following a severe attack of influenza, on Oct. 27th. Gunner Smith, who was 20 years of age, joined the army in February, 1917, and went out to France on Easter Saturday. His last letter (written by a friend and signed 'Reg.') states that he was improving and they need not worry about him. This was followed by a letter from the nurse, stating that he had passed away and that there had been little hope of recovery from the first; he had received every comfort they at the hospital could give; he is buried in the St. Lever [Sever] Military Cemetery, Rouen. Prior to joining the forces he was employed at Messrs. Tom Bairstow's as a twister. Deceased's father, Mr. Alf. Smith, joined the Labour Battalion early in the war. He was in the retirement from Gallipoli, and was also in the great push back in March last. He went through some very thrilling and trying experiences. He was invalided home to Warrington (Lord Derby's Hospital). He has since been discharged and is now employed at Spring Field, Sutton.

(source: Craven's Part in the Great War www.cpgw.org.uk)



Casualty Details

Name: SMITH, REGINALD

Initials: R

Nationality: United Kingdom

Rank: Private

Regiment/Service: Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)

Unit Text: 18th Bn.

Age: 20

Date of Death: 27/10/1918

Service No: 129946

Additional Son of Alfred and Bertha Smith, of 4, Walton St., Suttoninformation: in-Craven, Keighley.

Casualty Type: Commonwealth War Dead

Grave/Memorial Reference: S. III. E. 8.

> **Cemetery: ST. SEVER CEMETERY EXTENSION, ROUEN** (source: Commonwealth War Graves Commission www.cwgc.org/)

ST. SEVER CEMETERY EXTENSION, ROUEN

During the First World War, Commonwealth camps and hospitals were stationed on the southern outskirts of Rouen. Almost all of the hospitals at Rouen remained there for practically the whole of the war. They included eight general, five stationary, one British Red Cross, one labour hospital and No. 2 Convalescent Depot.

A number of the dead from these hospitals were buried in other cemeteries, but the great majority were taken to the city cemetery of St. Sever. The cemetery extension contains 8,346 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, ten of them unidentified.



St. Sever Cemetery Extension in Rouen, France (source: Commonwealth War Graves Commission www.cwgc.org/)



St. Sever Cemetery Extension in Rouen, France



(source: South Craven, the official guide, 1950)

BOM. A. SMITH, 19th Siege Batt. R.G.A. PTE. G. SMITH, 878 Leic. Regt. PTE. H. SMITH, "9" FIELD AMB. R.A.M.C. PTE. R. SMITH, 18th BATT. M.G.C. PTE. W. B. SPENCER, 2/OT D. OF WEW.R.R. PTE. P. STELL. 8TH DO. PTE. T. SUMMERSKILL, 13TH NORTH FUS. PTE. H. TAYLOR, 10TH D. OF W. W. R.R. PTE. F. W. THOMPSON, 2NP BORDER REGT. PTE. A. W. TUINE, 1/OTH D. OF WS W. R.R. PTE. A. WAGSTAFF, 2/5TH R. WARCE REGT. PTE. R. WHITEHALL, 187 EAST LANCE REGT. PTE. E. WILKINSON, 1/7TH W. Y. REGT.

Sutton-in-Craven War Memorial (photo taken by Paul Wilkinson)



Pte Reginald Smith was posthumously awarded the British War Medal & Victory Medal

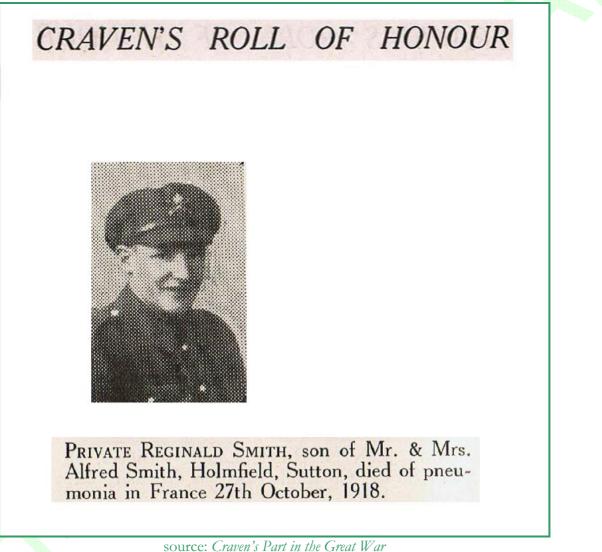
Original pair of WW1 medals (source: owned by Andrew Monkhouse)

A Memorial Plaque inscribed with the soldiers name was also given to the family of those who were killed during WW1



Original WW1 Memorial Plaque (name digitally altered) Also referred to as a Death Plaque or Dead Man's Penny (source: owned by Andrew Monkhouse)

Lest we Forget



(original 1919 copy owned by Andrew Monkhouse)

FOR THE FALLEN

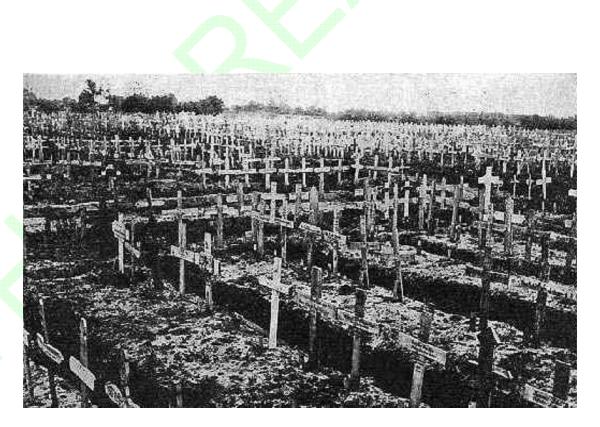
THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD, AS WE THAT ARE LEFT GROW OLD

AGE SHALL NOT WEARY THEM, NOR THE YEARS CONDEMN

At the going down of the sun and in the Morning

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

LAURENCE BINYON, 1869-1943



(Information compiled by Andrew Monkhouse 2011)