

## **Private James Morgan**

**Regimental number: 6506**

**1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, North Staffordshire (Prince of Wales') Regiment**

**born: about 1882 - died: 30 April 1916**

Private James Morgan was born in about 1882 in Manchester, Lancashire.<sup>1</sup> He was the son of John and Jane Morgan.<sup>2</sup> John was born in about 1852 in Tenbury, Worcestershire and his wife was born in about 1848 in Whitchurch, Shropshire. They had at least eight children: Frederick (born in about 1875 in Burslem, Staffordshire),<sup>3</sup> Mary Alice (born in about 1877 in Crewe, Cheshire),<sup>4</sup> Charles (born in about 1879 in Manchester),<sup>5</sup> James, Charles Henry George (born in about 1885 in Manchester),<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth (born in about 1887 in Smallthorne, Staffordshire),<sup>7</sup> John (born in about 1889 in Smallthorne)<sup>8</sup> and Edward William (born in about 1891 in Smallthorne).<sup>9</sup> There were probably two other children, who died young: John (born in 1873 in Smallthorne, but died within a few weeks)<sup>10</sup> and Sarah Jane (born in the first months of 1894 in Smallthorne, but in the last months of 1895).<sup>11</sup>

At the beginning of their marriage, John and Jane were probably living in Staffordshire. They moved to the Manchester area where two of their children were born. They returned to Staffordshire and, in 1891, the family was living in Smallthorne, where their last four children were born. John was a labourer – in 1891, working in an ironworks and then, in 1901, working as a forge labourer.

James was not with the family in 1901 but by 1904 James had married Minnie Pauline Sigley.<sup>12</sup> They were married near Wolstanton, Staffordshire. Minnie was born in 1881<sup>13</sup> in Tunstall near Stoke-upon-Trent, Staffordshire, the daughter of John and Selina Sidgley.<sup>14</sup> James and Minnie had four children:<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth (also known as Lizzie) (born in 1907), Eliza Jane (born in 1909), Gladys (born in 1911) and James F. (born in 1915). In 1911, the family was lodging with Minnie's mother, Selina at 35 Lime Street in Tunstall. James was a miner, working at the face, and Minnie was a potters' sponger.<sup>16</sup>

James enlisted as a Private in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the North Staffordshire (Prince of Wales') Regiment in Hanley, Staffordshire.<sup>17</sup> He joined the British Expeditionary Force on 10 September 1914.<sup>18</sup>

In April 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was stationed north of Wulverghem, Belgium.<sup>19</sup> At 12.55 a.m. on 30 April a gas alarm was given. There was one wave of gas, probably chlorine, which lasted about 20 minutes. With winds blowing 10 miles per hour, the gas covered about 50 metres in eleven seconds. That did not give the men much time to adjust their helmets and a large portion of the men were gassed. At 1.20 a.m. a German attack began. There was considerable confusion because of the suddenness of the attack and the fact that the men were still wearing their smoke helmets and, as a result, were partially blinded. Although the Battalion had to evacuate the area, the enemy was not able to advance and much of the area was reoccupied. A shortage of bombs prevented anything more than a steady advance of the Battalion and the enemy was able to return to its own lines. The enemy had taken one man prisoner and killed or wounded a dozen more men. "Our losses from gas-poisoning were considerable chiefly owing to the speed with which the gas travelled over the short distance between the trenches. Smoke helmets when adjusted properly in time proved most effective. A large number of men suffered from after-effects being taken ill 12 to 24 hours after the gas had passed. Most of their cases, however, were only slight."<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately this was not the case for James. He died of gas poisoning on 30 April 1916 at the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.<sup>21</sup> The effects of the gas attacks were also felt at the 1<sup>st</sup> CCCS, stationed near Bailleul,<sup>22</sup> which was just about six miles from Wulverghem. Fifteen patients died the same day as James, many apparently from gas poisoning.<sup>23</sup> In April and June 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion suffered well over 500 casualties in two serious gas attacks, while in the trenches north of Wulverghem.<sup>24</sup> James lost four comrades from his battalion in the few days at the end of April and beginning of May: Private Oliver Llewellyn Boon, Private Samuel Bertrem (Bert) Clewlow, Private George William Burrows and Private Thomas Alfred Hulme. Most of his comrades had been poisoned by chlorine gas.

James was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot II, Row D, Grave 131).<sup>25</sup> Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several Casualty Clearing Stations, including the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian, were quartered there for considerable periods. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made in April 1915. An extension was built and burials continued until April 1918, and occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.<sup>26</sup>

A letter was sent to his wife, who was still living at 35 Lime Street, to notify her of his death.<sup>27</sup> She also received the monies owing to him from the army after his death.<sup>28</sup>

James was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>29</sup> Although the record does not indicate it, he was probably also entitled to and received the 1914-15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).

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<sup>1</sup> Soldiers died Gt War "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 26 August 2015), entry for James Morgan

<sup>2</sup> 1891 census "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for John Morgan, Registration district: Leek, ED, institution, or vessel: 4, Piece: 2183, Folio: 78, Page Number: 13

<sup>3</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for Frederick Thomas Morgan, Registration district: Leek, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 318

<sup>4</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for Mary Alice Morgan, Registration district: Nantwich, Inferred County: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 352

<sup>5</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for Charles Morgan, Registration district: Salford, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8d, Page: 19

<sup>6</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for Charles Henry G. Morgan, Registration district: Chorlton, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8c, Page: 762

<sup>7</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for Elizabeth Morgan, Registration district: Leek, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 3098

<sup>8</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for John Morgan, Registration district: Leek, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 2386

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- <sup>9</sup> "Staffordshire baptisms," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for Edward William Morgan, Archive reference: D5060/1/1, Page: 234
- <sup>10</sup> "Staffordshire baptisms," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for John Morgan, Archive reference: D5060/1/1, Page: 93; "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for John Morgan, Registration district: Leek, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 198
- <sup>11</sup> "Staffordshire baptisms," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for Sarah Jane Morgan, Archive reference: D5060/1/1, Page: 259; "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for John Morgan, Registration district: Leek, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 194
- <sup>12</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 26 August 2015), entry for James Morgan, Registration district: Wolstanton, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 158. In the marriage index, his wife's maiden is given as Sigley. However, there are various spellings of Minnie's surname – Sigley, Sidley and Sidgley – in different documents over the years.
- <sup>13</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for Minnie Pauline Sigley, Registration district: Wolstanton, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 143
- <sup>14</sup> "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 September 2015), entry for Minnie Pauline Sigley, FHL Film Number: 1526193
- <sup>15</sup> According to the 1911 census, Minnie and John had another child, who had died before 1911. "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 August 2015), entry for James Morgan, Registration district: Wolstanton, Registration District Number: 360, Sub-registration district: Tunstall, ED, institution, or vessel: 18, Household schedule number: 78, Piece: 16474
- <sup>16</sup> "1911 England Census," entry for James Morgan
- <sup>17</sup> "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 August 2015), entry for James Morgan
- <sup>18</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 August 2015), entry for James Morgan
- <sup>19</sup> "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920," , " *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 16 August 2015), Regiment or Unit: Prince of Wales's (North Staffordshire) Regiment, Sub Unit: 1st Battalion, Division: 24th Division, Diary Dates: 1915 Nov - 1919 May, Piece Description: Piece 2213/1: 1 Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment (1915 Nov - 1919 May), Piece Number: 2213
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 68
- <sup>22</sup> "War Diaries of the First World War: 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* ([http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202\\_e.html&r=1&f=G](http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G); accessed 17 June 2015)
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> "North Staffordshire Regiment," Wikipedia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North\\_Staffordshire\\_Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Staffordshire_Regiment); accessed 16 August 2015)
- <sup>25</sup> "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org); accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Morgan, J., Service No: 6506
- <sup>26</sup> "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery.%20Nord>; accessed 5 August 2015)
- <sup>27</sup> "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 68
- <sup>28</sup> "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 19 January 2015), entry for James Morgan
- <sup>29</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 26 November 2015), entry for James Morgan

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