

Private Oliver James Smith©

Regimental Number: 126790

3rd Machine Gun Corps

born: about 1898 - died: 26 May 1918

Oliver James Smith, born about 1898 in Marksbury, Somerset, was the son of William Ambrose (born about 1855 in Saltford, Somerset) and Susan (born about 1858 in Nunney, Somerset) Smith.¹ William and Susan (the former Susan Elizabeth Charlton) married in 1880.² Oliver's siblings probably included Agnes Laura Gertrude (born in 1881),³ Ambrose William (born in 1882),⁴ Thomas (born in 1884, but probably died the same year),⁵ Florence Edith (born in 1887),⁶ Eliza Annie (born in 1887),⁷ Elizabeth Kesia (born in 1889, but died at the age of 21 in 1910),⁸ Susan Mabel (born in 1890),⁹ Beatrice Rose (born in 1892),¹⁰ Frederick (born in 1895),¹¹ Henry George (born in 1897)¹² and Melinda Alexandra Maud (born in 1903).¹³

When William and Susan began their married life, William was an agricultural labourer.¹⁴ By 1891, he was a carter and the family was living in Stanton Prior in Somerset.¹⁵ In 1901, William was once again an agricultural labourer and the family was living in Marksbury, Somerset.¹⁶ They were still in Marksbury in 1911, living at 12 Vale Cottage. William was a cowman on a dairy farm and three of his sons were also farm labourers.¹⁷

Oliver enlisted in Weston-super-mare in the Machine Gun Corps.¹⁸ In 1915, machine gun sections had been removed from Infantry battalions overseas and formed into machine gun companies, one of which was attached to each brigade. In 1918, four companies were formed into a machine gun battalion and one machine gun battalion was attached to each division.¹⁹



Oliver James Smith in Pernes British Military Cemetery
(Source: Author, July 2015)

On 20 May, Oliver was gassed and admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.²⁰ He survived for six days, succumbing to his injuries on 26 May, and was buried the following day in the Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row C, Grave 42) with the chaplain, J. K. Tibbits presiding. Oliver was identified as being a member of the Church of England.

On 20 May, 370 soldiers were admitted to No. 1 CCCS—by far the highest number of admissions in any one day that month.²¹ This brought the total number of patients to 522. In the whole month of May, there were 115 deaths at this CCCS – more than in any of the other three and a half months that No. 1 CCCS was in Pernes. The Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCS came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.²²

His father, who was still living at Vale Cottage, Marksbury, was notified of his death.²³

Oliver was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁴

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¹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2015), entry for Oliver Smith, Registration district: Keynsham, Registration District Number: 317, Sub-registration district: Keynsham, ED, institution, or vessel: 5, Household schedule number: 116, Piece: 14777. "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2015), entry for Oliver Smith, Registration district: Keynsham, Sub-registration district: Keynsham, ED, institution, or vessel: 5, Piece: 2351, Folio: 51, Page Number: 2, Household schedule number: 14

² "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 17 November 2016), entry for William Smith, District: Bath, County: Somerset, Volume: 5C, Page: 599

³ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Smith, Agnes Laura Gertrude, Volume 05C, Page 663

⁴ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Smith, Ambrose William, Volume 05C, Page 653

⁵ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Smith, Thomas, Volume 05C, Page 657

⁶ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Smith, Florence Edith, Volume 05C, Page 661

⁷ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Smith, Eliza Annie, Volume 05C, Page 659

⁸ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Smith, Elizabeth Kesia, Volume 05C, Page 64057

⁹ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Smith, Susan Mabel, Volume 05C, Page 630

¹⁰ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Smith, Beatrice Rose, Volume 05C, Page 591

¹¹ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2015), entry for Oliver Smith

¹² "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Smith, Henry George, Volume 05C, Page 586

¹³ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Smith, Melinda Alexandra Maud, Volume 05C, Page 535

¹⁴ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2016), entry for William E. Harris, Registration district: Keynsham, Sub registration district: Newton,, the, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 5, Piece: 2448, Folio: 52, Page: 4

¹⁵ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2016), entry for William A Smith, Registration district: Keynsham, Sub registration district: Newton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 5, Piece: 1944, Folio: 51, Page: 12

¹⁶ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2015), entry for Oliver Smith

¹⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2015), entry for Oliver Smith

¹⁸ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2015), entry for Oliver James Smith

¹⁹ "The Vicker's Machine Gun," (<http://www.vickersmachinegun.org.uk/units-mgc-i.htm#sthash.sBku60Wr.dpuf>: accessed 2 September 2014)

²⁰ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916–10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Library and Archives Canada, (records accessed 2013 and 2014), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 521

²¹ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st 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=FINN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 15 December 2014)

²² "Pernes British Military Cemetery" *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 13 January 2015)

²³ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916–10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 521

²⁴ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2015), entry for Oliver James Smith