

**Gunner Herbert Taylor Smith**<sup>©</sup>  
**Regimental number: 66910**  
**124th Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery**

**born: 1884 - died: 10 May 1918**

Gunner Herbert Taylor Smith was born in 1884 in Chelsea, Middlesex,<sup>1</sup> the youngest child of George and Mary (nee Taylor) Smith.<sup>2</sup> His father George was born in about 1829 in Bucklebury, Berkshire, and his mother Mary in about 1841 in Sumersam, Huntingdon.<sup>3</sup> They married on 19 September 1868 at St Jude's Church in the parish of Upper Chelsea<sup>4</sup> and had four children—all born in Chelsea:

- Florence Ada (born in 1870 and married John Henry Day in 1892),<sup>5</sup>
- Edith Julia (born in 1873),<sup>6</sup>
- Ernest Henry (born in 1880)<sup>7</sup> and
- Herbert.

This was George's second family. He had previously had at least four children with Eliza Goddard:

- William James (born in 1856),<sup>8</sup>
- Edith Julia (born in 1858, but may have died at the age of 15 in 1872, about the same time as her half-sister, Edith Julia, was born),<sup>9</sup>
- Arthur Thomas (born in 1860, but may have died in 1871)<sup>10</sup> and
- Alice Rose (born in 1865, married Mark Pearce in 1885).<sup>11</sup>

In 1861, George was living with his first wife Eliza and children Edith and Arthur on Water Lane in Twickenham, Middlesex, where he was a carter.<sup>12</sup> Eliza probably died in 1867,<sup>13</sup> as George remarried in 1868. In 1871, he was living with his new wife Mary and three children at 44 Seaton Street in Chelsea. George was now a coachman.<sup>14</sup>

In 1881, the family was still in Chelsea, on Lots Street, but George was a horse keeper.<sup>15</sup> Ten years later, at the age of about 63, George was a general labourer. The family was still in Chelsea, living at 5A Upcerne Road, Chelsea<sup>16</sup>—they likely moved to that address about the time that Herbert was born.<sup>17</sup>

No evidence was found of where the family was in 1901 and 1911, but Herbert was living at 168 Lots Road again when he enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force on 6 November 1915.<sup>18</sup> He enlisted in Chelsea at the age of 31. He was 5' 6¾" tall and a decorator.

It is not clear when he first went to the Front, but in March 1918 he had leave in the United Kingdom. Two months later he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station; he had gunshot wounds on his left thigh and the rest of his left leg had been blown off. He also had a dislocated right knee and burns to his hands, face and body. He was admitted on 9 May 1918 and died the next day. He was buried on 11 May in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row B, Grave 29) with the Canadian chaplain J. K. Tibbits presiding.<sup>19</sup>

The Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.<sup>20</sup> In May 1918, over 3,900 soldiers were admitted to No. 1 CCCS—115 died.<sup>21</sup>

**A Form.** Army Form C. 2121. (In pads of 100.)  
**MESS AND SIGNALS.** No. of Message.....

Code and Service Instructions		Words.	Charge.	This message is on a/c of:		Recd. at ..... m.
Sent		At 9.55 p.m.		O.H.M. Service.		Date.....
To.....		By.....		(Signature of "Franklin Officer")		From.....
Mrs M. A. Smith,		168 Lots Road,		Colchester		
Sender's Number.	Day of Month.	In reply to Number.		A A A		
B3556	Regret	inform you				
O/E	1st Canadian	Battalion				
Cherry	Station	Dance reports				
11/5/18	No 66910	Gunner H.F.				
Smith	124	Heavy Battery RGA				
deed	10/5/18	Wounds				

Herbert's next of kin was not known to the chaplain, so a letter was sent to the adjutant of his battery to inform him of Herbert's death. In fact, his next of kin was his sister-in-law, Margaret Alice Smith. Margaret (nee Gifkins) had married Herbert's brother Ernest in 1903<sup>22</sup> and, when Herbert enlisted, he was living at 168 Lots Road with Ernest, his wife and five children. A letter was subsequently sent to Margaret and she received the private property he had with him when he died—letters, photos, a wallet and two cigarette cases.

The reason that his sister-in-law, rather than his brother Ernest, was identified as Herbert's next of kin was possibly because Ernest was away from home, also serving in the Great War.<sup>23</sup>

Ernest enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corps<sup>24</sup> at the Duke of York Headquarters in Chelsea on 20 March 1915 and originally served

Extract from British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920  
 Source: [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

with the 2nd London Sanitary Company. He was appointed lance corporal in February 1916 and acting sergeant in September 1917. It appears that he served with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force for most of the war—from June 1915 to March 1919. He was demobilized on 5 May 1919 but then immediately enlisted again in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was now 37 years old and a road maker. It appears that he was probably posted to the British Military Hospital in Gibraltar. He became an acting corporal in June 1920. He went back to the United Kingdom in August 1920 and, on 8 November 1920, he was discharged as surplus to requirements on "extreme compassionate grounds."

A statement of relatives, prepared in January 1920, identifies Ernest as Herbert's only relative. What happened to all his other full- and half-blood siblings? Some had died before the Great War, but perhaps others were estranged from Herbert and Ernest.

Ernest and Margaret were obviously close to Herbert, as Margaret had the following inscription put on Herbert's gravestone:

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN  
 R.I.P.<sup>25</sup>

Herbert was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 February 2018) entry for Smith, Herbert Taylor, Registration district: Chelsea, Volume 01A, Page 360

<sup>2</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 February 2018), entry for George Smith, Registration district: Chelsea, Sub-registration district: Chelsea, South, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 13a, Piece: 66, Folio: 46

<sup>3</sup> "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 February 2018), entry for George Smith, Registration district: Chelsea, Sub-registration district: Hythe, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 4, Piece: 75, Folio: 23, Page: 39

<sup>4</sup> "London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1931," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 October 2018), entry for George Smith

<sup>5</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 February 2018) entry for Smith, Florence Ada, Registration district: Chelsea, Volume 01A, Page 230

<sup>6</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 February 2018) entry for Smith, Edith Julia, Registration district: Chelsea, Volume 01A, Page 280

<sup>7</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 February 2018) entry for Smith, Ernest Henry, Registration district: Chelsea, Volume 01A, Page 312. His army pension file indicates that he was born on 29 July 1881. ("British Army WWI Pension Records 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 22 May 2018), entry for Ernest Henry Smith)

<sup>8</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 February 2018) entry for Smith, William James, Registration district: Bradfield, Volume 02C, Page 290

<sup>9</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 February 2018) entry for Smith, Edith Julia, Registration district: Bradfield, Volume 02C, Page 317; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 19 February 2018), entry for Edith Julia Smith, Registration district: Westminster, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1a, Page: 291

<sup>10</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 February 2018) entry for Smith, Arthur Thomas, Registration district: Brentford, Volume 03A, Page 49; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 19 February 2018), entry for Arthur Thomas Smith, Registration district: Chelsea, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1a, Page: 163

<sup>11</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 February 2018) entry for Smith, Alice Rose, Registration district: St Luke Chelsea, Volume 01A, Page 189; "London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1931," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 19 February 2018), entry for Alice Rose Smith

<sup>12</sup> "1861 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 February 2018), entry for George Smith, Registration district: Brentford, Sub-registration district: Twickenham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 1, Household schedule number: 58, Piece: 775, Folio: 9, Page: 11

<sup>13</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 19 February 2018), entry for Eliza Smith, Registration district: Chelsea, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1a, Page: 138

<sup>14</sup> "1871 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 February 2018), entry for George Smith, Registration district: Chelsea, Sub-registration district: Chelsea, South, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 1, Household schedule number: 208, Piece: 73, Folio: 22, Page: 36

<sup>15</sup> "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 February 2018), entry for George Smith

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- <sup>16</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 February 2018), entry for George Smith
- <sup>17</sup> "London, England, Electoral Registers, 1832–1965," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 16 February 2018), entry for George Smith, Reference number: MR/PER/B/060
- <sup>18</sup> "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 31 January 2018), entry for Herbert Taylor Smith. Unless otherwise indicated, all information about Herbert's military service comes from this source.
- <sup>19</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 15 February 2018), entry for Smith, H. T.
- <sup>20</sup> "Pernes British Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 13 January 2015)
- <sup>21</sup> "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=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 15 December 2014)
- <sup>22</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 26 November 2018), entry for Ernest Henry Smith, Registration district: Bromley, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 1068
- <sup>23</sup> "British Army WWI Pension Records 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 22 May 2018), entry for Ernest Henry Smith. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Ernest's military service comes from this source.
- <sup>24</sup> Ernest had three regimental numbers during his service: 7251564, 545469 and 205023.
- <sup>25</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 15 February 2018), entry for Smith Herbert Taylor, Service No: 66910
- <sup>26</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 31 January 2018), entry for Herbert Taylor Smith