

**Gunner Clifford Smith**<sup>©</sup>  
**Regimental number: 99893**  
**25th Battalion, Royal Field Artillery**

**born: 1889–died: 12 July 1917**

Clifford King Smith was the third child born to Fred Smith who was born in 1859<sup>1</sup> and Mary Jane King who was born in 1864.<sup>2</sup> Fred and Mary Jane were married in St. Peter's Church, the parish church of Leeds in the county of York, England, on 11 September 1884.<sup>3</sup>

Both parents were local, each having been baptised at St. Mathew's Church, Chapel Allerton,<sup>4,5</sup> an inner suburb of northeast Leeds.<sup>6</sup> Fred was a joiner: "a skilled carpenter ... who works with wood."<sup>7</sup>

The couple's first child, a son named Lindon, was born on 20 February 1885<sup>8</sup> and was baptised at St. Matthew's on 26 April 1885.<sup>9</sup> Their second child, a daughter, Nellie, was born on Christmas Day in 1886.<sup>10</sup> The family had moved to the village of Meanwood, just 3 km away but more rural, near Meanwood Wood and Meanwood Beck.<sup>11</sup> This is where Nellie<sup>12</sup> and the later children were born.<sup>13</sup> Clifford was born in June 1889<sup>14</sup> and baptized at Holy Trinity Church, Meanwood, on 25 October 1890.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the family was back at Holy Trinity on 11 December 1890, to bury their eldest, Lindon, who died at the age of 5.<sup>16</sup> Five more children were born to Fred and Mary Jane after Lindon's death: Millicent (b. 1891),<sup>17</sup> Amy (b. 1893),<sup>18</sup> James (b. 1895),<sup>19</sup> Barbara (b. 1897),<sup>20</sup> and Owen (b. 1899).<sup>21</sup>

Clifford enlisted with the 25th Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery in December 1914,<sup>22</sup> arriving in France on 22 May 1915.<sup>23</sup> The brigade was under the command of the 1st Division of the British Army throughout the war. During the time that Clifford was with the brigade, the 1st Division took part in a number of important battles: the Battle of Loos (25 September–8 October 1915); the Battle of the Somme (1 July–18 November 1915); and the Battle of Pozières (23 July–3 September 1916).<sup>24</sup> Three batteries made up the brigade: 113, 114 and 115;<sup>25</sup> Clifford was assigned to Battery 115.<sup>26</sup>

The role of the artillery was both defensive and offensive: in the former role, providing covering fire in support of advancing infantry, and in the latter, trying to destroy emplacements, particularly the enemy's guns. According to military historian John Terraine, "The war of 1914–18 was an artillery war: artillery was the battle-winner, artillery was what caused the greatest loss of life, the most dreadful wounds, and the deepest fear."<sup>27</sup>

In the summer of 1917 the British were planning an amphibious landing near the town of Nieuwpoort in West Belgium, where the River Yser opens into the North Sea. This was to be Operation Hush.<sup>28</sup> To defend the bridgehead at the mouth of the river the plan relied on the arrival of 583 guns with the Fourth Army. However, by 10 July, when the Germans launched Unternehmen Strandfest (Operation Beach Party), only 176 guns had arrived. During this operation the Germans



**Gunner Clifford Smith**

Source: "Armitage Family Tree," Ancestry ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca)). **Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all photos are from the same source.**

used mustard gas for the first time, captured part of the bridgehead over the Yser and annihilated two British infantry battalions. The Germans also took 1,284 prisoners.

Operation Hush, designed to support planned advances near Ypres, was officially cancelled on 14 October 1917 as the push forward at Ypres was too far behind schedule.

The 25th Brigade war diary describes its participation in Operation Hush: about 7:00 p.m. on 10 July 1917:

the enemy attacked and occupied all ground on divisional front east of River Yser. Our trenches were completely obliterated by hostile fire and bridges over Yser destroyed. The SOS signal was sent up and replied by all the 25 B<sup>e</sup>. As far as can be ascertained this SOS was only replied to by field guns and 60pdrs,<sup>29</sup> the heavy artillery was noticeably silent. The horrible bombardment was about 10 times the volume of our own. Throughout the night the Germans shelled all roads, barraged bank areas with gas shell. Enemy made no attempt to cross river but began to dig himself in on far bank. ... Situation at dawn unchanged - we hold a line along west bank of canal and enemy are consolidating on old British support line east of canal. Casualties sustained by the 25th Bde yesterday were as follows: 2Lt B.C. Richards 113th Bty killed while returning from OP to Bty ; 2 OR (other ranks) missing believed killed, 2 OR killed, 12 OR wounded.<sup>30</sup>

Clifford would have been one of the wounded. Unfortunately, by the time he reached No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, nothing could be done to save him. He was buried in Grave 835 of the Adinkerke Churchyard Military Cemetery Extension in Belgium on 12 July 1917.<sup>31</sup>



Grave marker for Gunner Clifford Smith

Clifford was awarded posthumously the British Military Medal (awarded to personnel of the British Army, below commissioned rank, for bravery in battle on land),<sup>32</sup> and the 1914–1915 Star (awarded to all who served in any theatre of war during 1914 and 1915).<sup>33</sup> This latter medal was never awarded singly; recipients also received the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>34</sup>

Clifford's death was not the only tragedy that the Smith family had to bear during the war years. His older sister, **Nellie**, married wheelwright<sup>35</sup> John Henry Armitage in Meanwood in September 1910.<sup>36</sup> Their son, Lyndon, was born in the summer of 1911<sup>37</sup> and their daughter, Margaret, in the summer of 1914.<sup>38</sup> John served with the 9th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers, rising to the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major before he was killed on 23 March 1918. He is buried in Bac-Du-Sud British Cemetery, Bailleulval, France, under a cross bearing the inscription: Into Thy Hands O Lord.<sup>39</sup> To add to Nellie's grief, her daughter, known by the family as Peggy, died of the Spanish Flu in September 1918, less than a month after her fourth birthday.<sup>40</sup>



RSM John Henry Armitage

Fate and the war were not yet done with the Smith family. George Alexander Levy, who had married Clifford's sister **Amy** in June 1915, joined the 2nd Battalion of the Prince of Wales's Own (West) Yorkshire Regiment. He was killed in action on 24 March 1918, the day after his brother-in-

law. He is memorialized on the Pozieres Memorial in the Somme Department of France,<sup>41</sup> which lists the names of 14,657 British and South African soldiers of the Fifth and Fourth Armies who were killed during the German advance known as the Spring Offensive (21 March–18 July 1918) but who have no known grave.<sup>42</sup> George and Amy had two daughters: Zelda (b. 12 August 1915)<sup>43</sup> and Frances (b. 14 February 1918).<sup>44</sup>

Neither Nellie nor Amy ever remarried. Both remained in the Leeds area until their deaths in 1964 and 1956 respectively.<sup>45,46</sup> Nellie is buried with her daughter in the Holy Trinity Churchyard in Meanwood;<sup>47</sup> Amy is buried in the Harehills Cemetery.<sup>48</sup>

Clifford's mother, **Mary Jane**, died on 15 December 1923; she is buried in the Holy Trinity Churchyard.<sup>49</sup> His father, **Fred**, who died in February 1947, is buried beside his wife.<sup>50</sup>

**Millicent**, Clifford's immediately younger sibling, married Robert Percival Brooks in 1924.<sup>51</sup> Millicent passed away in Leeds in April 1958;<sup>52</sup> Robert died the next month.<sup>53</sup> They do not appear to have had any children.

Clifford's brother **James** married Elsie Lamb in January 1922.<sup>54</sup> They had quite a large family: two sons, John (b. 1922) and Gerald (b. 1924) and four daughters, Margaret (b. 1923), Rita (b. 1918), Shirley (b. 1933) and Freda (b. 1937)<sup>55</sup> James died in 1973<sup>56</sup> and Elsie passed away two years later.<sup>57</sup>

**Barbara**, the youngest daughter in the Smith Family, married William Albert Howel on 6 April 1924 in Holy Trinity Church, Meanwood.<sup>58</sup> Barbara died in May 1967;<sup>59</sup> Albert in October 1980.<sup>60</sup> Both are buried in Lawnswood Cemetery and Crematorium in Leeds.<sup>61, 62</sup> The couple appear to have been childless.

The last of Clifford's siblings, **Owen**, married Alice Marguerite White on 30 March 1929.<sup>63</sup> They seem to have had at least one child, a son, Michael.<sup>64</sup> Owen passed away in January 1966.<sup>65</sup> His wife, Alice, survived him by almost two decades; she died in October 1985.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "UK and Ireland, Find a Grave Index, 1300s–Current," Ancestry ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Frederick Smith

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., entry for Mary Jane Smith (nee King)

<sup>3</sup> "West Yorkshire, England, Marriages and Banns, 1813–1935," Ancestry ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 20 January 2025), entry for Fred Smith

<sup>4</sup> "West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813–1910," Ancestry ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 18 February 2025), entry for Fred Smith

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., entry for Mary Jane King

<sup>6</sup> "Chapel Allerton," Wikipedia ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org): accessed 18 February)

<sup>7</sup> "Victorian Occupations," *Census 1891* ([www.census1891.com](http://www.census1891.com): accessed 18 February 2025)

<sup>8</sup> "West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813–1910," Ancestry ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 18 February 2025), entry for Lindon Smith

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> "UK, World War I Pension Ledgers and Index Cards, 1914–1923," Ancestry ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 18 February 2025), entry for Nellie Armitrage

<sup>11</sup> "Meanwood," Wikipedia ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org): accessed 18 February 2025)

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- <sup>12</sup> “1891 England Census,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca) accessed 18 February 2025), entry for Nellie Smith, Registration district: Leeds, Sub-registration district: Chapeltown, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 4, Piece: 3713, Folio: 61
- <sup>13</sup> “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca); accessed 18 February 2025), entry for Fred Smith, Registration district: Leeds, Sub-registration district: Chapeltown, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 25, Piece: 4251, Folio: 65, Page: 36, Household schedule number: 268
- <sup>14</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 18 February), entry for Clifford King Smith, Registration place: Leeds, West Yorkshire, Volume: 9b, Page: 587
- <sup>15</sup> “West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813–1910,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 18 February 2025), entry for Clifford King Smith
- <sup>16</sup> “West Yorkshire, England, Deaths and Burials, 1813–1985,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 18 February 2025), entry for Lindon Smith
- <sup>17</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 21 February 2025), entry for Millicent Smith, Registration place: Leeds, Yorkshire West Riding England, Volume: 9b, Page: 573. Note: According to the 1939 England And Wales Register ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 21 February 2015), Millicent was born on 12 February 1892; however, the year must be a mistake, as she is included at the age of 7 weeks in the 1891 Census.
- <sup>18</sup> “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 21 February 2025), entry for Amy Levy, Line number: 37, Schedule number: 330, Sub-schedule: 1, Enumeration district: Kgct, Borough: Leeds, Registration district: 500/1
- <sup>19</sup> “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 21 February 2025), entry for James Smith, Line number: 38, Schedule number: 241, Sub-schedule: 1, Enumeration district: Kgct, Borough: Leeds, Registration district: 500/1
- <sup>20</sup> “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca) accessed 21 February 2025), entry for Barbara Howell, Line number: 11, Schedule number: 76, Sub-schedule: 2, Enumeration district: Kgl, Borough: Leeds, Registration district: 500/3
- <sup>21</sup> “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 21 February 2025), entry for Owen Smith, Line number: 18, Schedule number: 17, Sub-schedule: 1, Enumeration district: Kgnb, Borough: Leeds, Registration district: 500/3
- <sup>22</sup> Based on “War Gratuity Calculator” (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 24 February 2025)
- <sup>23</sup> “UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 February 2025), entry for Clifford Smith
- <sup>24</sup> “History of the British 1st Division during the World Wars,” *Wikipedia* ([www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com): accessed 31 March 2025)
- <sup>25</sup> “Batteries and Brigades of the Royal Field Artillery,” *The Long, Long Trail* ([www.longlongtrail.co.uk](http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk): accessed 25 February 2025)
- <sup>26</sup> UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 February 2025), entry for Clifford Smith
- <sup>27</sup> “The Royal Artillery in the First World War,” *The Long, Long Trail* ([www.longlongtrail.co.uk](http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk): accessed 31 March 2025)
- <sup>28</sup> *Wikipedia* ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org): accessed 31 March 2025), search for Operation Hush. All the information pertaining to Operation Hush and *Unternehmen Strandfest* came for this source.
- <sup>29</sup> The 18 pounder was the most frequently used field gun by the British Royal Field Artillery during WW I. After these were the 4.5- and 6-inch Howitzers, and the 60 pounder guns. “Artillery and heavy guns used by the British forces during the First Battle of the Somme in 1916,” *Statista* ([www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com); accessed 1 April 2025)
- <sup>30</sup> “25th Brigade Royal Field Artillery War Diary,” *The National Archives* ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/): accessed 1 April 2025), Date: May–September 1917, Reference: WO 95/1248/4

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- <sup>31</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 1 April 2025), entry for Smith, C., Service number: 99893
- <sup>32</sup> "UK, British Army Recipients of the Military Medal, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 April 2025), entry for Clifford Smith
- <sup>33</sup> "UK, World War I Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 April 2025), entry for Clifford Smith
- <sup>34</sup> "1914–15 Star," *Wikipedia* ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org): accessed 1 April 2025)
- <sup>35</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 2 April 2025), entry for John Henry Armitage, Registration district number: 500, Sub-registration district: Kirkstall, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 33, Piece: 27086
- <sup>36</sup> "West Yorkshire, England, Marriages and Banns, 1813–1935," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Nellie Smith
- <sup>37</sup> "UK and Ireland, Find a Grave Index, 1300s–Current," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Lyndon Armitage
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for Margaret Armitage
- <sup>39</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Armitage, John Henry, Service number: 5245
- <sup>40</sup> *Global Gravestone Photograph Index, 1265–2014* ([www.gravestonephotos.com](http://www.gravestonephotos.com): accessed 4 April 2025) entry for Margaret Armitage. Note: In error, this record indicates that Margaret was buried in the One Holy and Undivided Trinity cemetery, which relates to a much larger church in the centre of Leeds.
- <sup>41</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Levy, George, Service number: 267659
- <sup>42</sup> "Pozières Memorial," *Wikipedia* ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org): accessed 3 April 2025)
- <sup>43</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Zelda Jones, Registration district: Leeds, Inferred county: West Yorkshire, Register number: K13C, District and sub-district: 0921K, Entry number: 279
- <sup>44</sup> "UK and Ireland, Find a Grave Index, 1300s–Current," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Frances Smillie
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for Nellie Armitage
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for Amy Levy
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for Nellie Armitage
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for Amy Levy
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for Mary Jane Smith
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for Frederick Smith
- <sup>51</sup> "West Yorkshire, England, Marriages and Banns, 1813–1935," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Millicent Smith
- <sup>52</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Millicent Brooks, Registration district: Leeds, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 2c, Page: 411
- <sup>53</sup> "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Robert Percival Brooks
- <sup>54</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for James Smith, Registration district: Leeds, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9b, Page: 605
- <sup>55</sup> "1939 Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for James Smith, Line number: 38, Schedule: 241, Sub-schedule:1, Enumeration district Kgeg, Borough: Leeds, Registration district: 500-1

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- <sup>56</sup> "England & Wales Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 4 April 2025), entry for James Smith, Registration district: Leeds, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 2c, Page: 1088
- <sup>57</sup> "England & Wales Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 4 April 2025), entry for Elsie Smith, Registration district: Leeds, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 5, Page: 0499
- <sup>58</sup> "West Yorkshire, England, Marriages and Banns, 1813–1935," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Barbar [sic] Smith
- <sup>59</sup> "UK and Ireland, Find a Grave Index, 1300s–Current," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Barbara Howell
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for William Albert Howell
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for Barbara Howell
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for William Albert Howell
- <sup>63</sup> "West Yorkshire, England, Marriages and Banns, 1813–1935," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Owen Smith
- <sup>64</sup> "1939 Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Owen Smith, Line number: 18, Schedule: 17, Sub-schedule:1, Enumeration district Kgnb, Borough: Leeds, Registration district: 500-3
- <sup>65</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Owen Smith, Registration district: Leeds, Inferred county: West Yorkshire, Volume number: 2c, Page: 249
- <sup>66</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 3 April 2025), entry for Alice Marguerite Smith, Registration district: Leeds, Inferred county: West Yorkshire, Volume number: 5, Page: 395