

In Memory of Gunner Alfred Thomas Smith

1883 - 1917

(Royal Field Artillery, 6th Reserve Brigade)

Age: 34

Parents: William Alfred Smith & Elizabeth Bones

Conflict: World War I, The Great War

Country Enlisted In: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

Country of Death: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

Relation: Paternal 4th Cousin 2X Removed



At 34 years old, Alfred Thomas Smith was a mature soldier compared to many of the young men who joined the ranks during the Great War. He served as a Gunner with the Royal Field Artillery, 6th Reserve Brigade, a unit that provided vital firepower and support across the front. Like so many others, his service brought him not only into contact with the violence of war but also with its invisible enemies — disease and exhaustion.

While performing Military Police duties in France, Alfred's health began to fail. The trenches and billets were rife with illness — damp dugouts, smoke-filled shelters, and the constant strain of long hours wore men down. Amid the roar of artillery and the rattle of wagons hauling shells forward, another quieter battle raged in his body. He contracted tuberculosis, a disease that spread easily in the unsanitary conditions of wartime France.

By the spring of 1917, his illness had grown too severe to ignore. In April he was sent back across the Channel to Scotland, admitted to a hospital in Edinburgh. There, far from the front lines, he exchanged the sounds of shellfire for the quiet corridors of a military ward. The coughing fits, fever, and weakness of tuberculosis marked his final days. Perhaps, as he lay in his bed, he thought of home, of peace, and of life beyond the war.

On 4 May 1917, Alfred Thomas Smith succumbed to the illness. Though not struck down by a bullet or shell, his death



*6th Reserve Brigade, Royal
Field Artillery, Gunner*

was no less a sacrifice of war, the cost of service in a conflict that claimed lives in many ways.

He was laid to rest in Comely Bank Cemetery, Edinburgh. His grave, among those of other servicemen, stands as a reminder that the toll of the Great War was not confined to the battlefield alone.



*Comely Bank Cemetery
Edinburgh, City of Edinburgh, Scotland*

-photo courtesy of Dave Howie