

A SCARCE VICTORIA CROSS GREAT WAR PHOTO POSTCARD PORTRAYING PRIVATE JAMES SMITH. AWARDED THE VICTORIA CROSS FOR ACTIONS AT ROUGES BANS

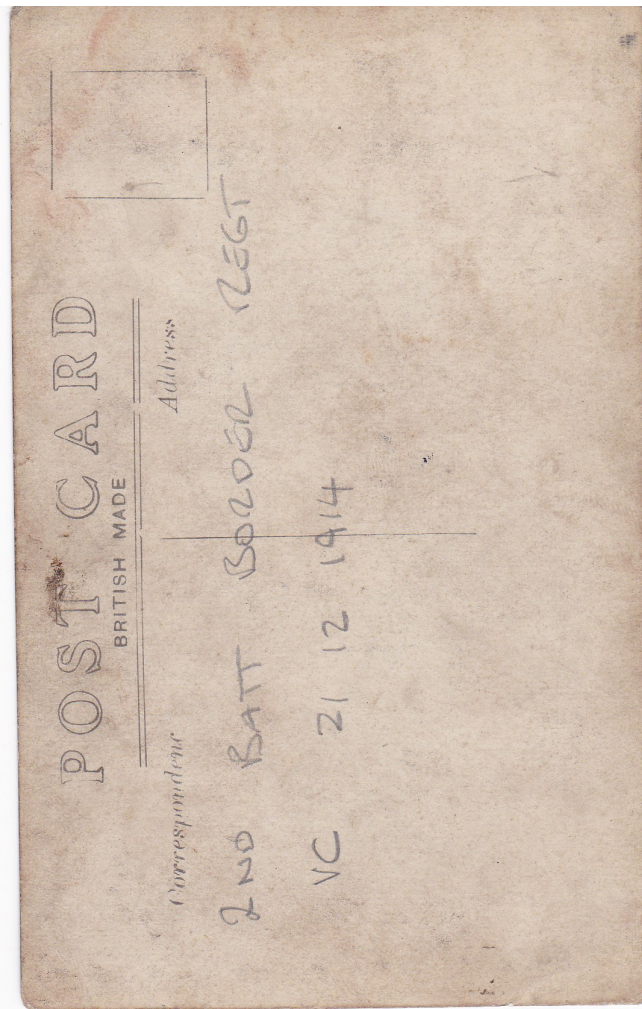


James Alexander Smith (1881-1968) was born at 17 Back Henry Street, Peels Yard, Workington, Cumberland on 5th January 1881. His birth was actually registered as James Alexander Glenn. His father was Alexander Glenn, a blast furnace labourer. His mother was Ellen nee Smith, and both his parents originally came from County Down, Ireland and his mother had previously married. James had a sister, four half-brothers and a half-sister.

It is not known where James was educated or worked, but in 1901 he enlisted under his mother's maiden name. He served in Burma 1902-1905 and South Africa 1905-1907,

following which he transferred to the Reserve. By 1911 he was a blast furnaceman working in Middlesbrough. James was recalled from the Reserve when war broke out and went to France with the 2nd Battalion on 26th November 1914, and less than a month later, had been involved in his VC action.

On 21st December 1914 at Rouges Bancs, France, Smith and Abraham Acton, voluntarily went out from their trench and rescued a wounded man who had been lying exposed against the enemy's trenches for 15 hours. On the same day they again left their trench under heavy fire to bring in another wounded man. They were under fire for 60 minutes whilst conveying the wounded men to safety.



When asked about his VC action, James replied "It was now't, just the usual thing". He was wounded by a gunshot to the arm on 12th March 1915 and was evacuated to England. His VC was presented to him by King George V at Buckingham Palace on 22nd April 1915. While he was recovering he married Eliza Jane nee Reynolds at North Ormesby Parish Church in Middlesbrough. He married under his birth name, James Alexander Glenn. He returned to the Battalion on 8th October and transferred to munitions work on 2nd January 1917.

Post-war James was employed as a labourer by Middlesbrough Council. His wife died in 1937. James served in the Home Guard in the Second World War and married Ada Parkes nee Stewart in 1949 in Middlesbrough. There were no children in either of his marriages. Ada had

had a child from her previous marriage. James attended the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

James died at his home, 73 Thorntree Avenue, Brambles Farm, Middlesbrough in 21st May 1968. At the time he is believed to have been the oldest living VC (87). His funeral was attended by four VC recipients (Edward Cooper VC, Tom Dresser VC, Stan Hollis VC and William McNally VC) and was followed by a cremation at Acklam Crematorium. His ashes were scattered in the May section of the Garden of Remembrance.

In addition to the VC, he was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-20, Victory Medal 1914-19 with Mentioned in Despatches oak leaf, 1939-45 War Medal, George VI Coronation Medal 1937 and Elizabeth II Coronation Medal 1953.

Postcard sized Approx 13.7 x 8.6 cm. The above taken from the fine vconline website:

<http://www.vconline.org.uk/james-a-smith-vc/4588269317.html>

A scarce original period VC recipient VC photo postcard