

JOSEPH DUNNING

Joseph Dunning was very much a local man; born in Tholthorpe on 1st December 1883 and christened at St Mary's on Christmas Day of that year. In 1891, the census sees him living with his parents Hannah and George, a farm labourer, and five siblings on Main Street in Alne. In 1901 he was living and working on Main Street in Tholthorpe as a horseman in the employ of Charles Wood, a farmer and butcher, and by 1911 he'd moved to Tollerton as a farm wagoner for John Twineham of Fleet Bank. However, at some point between 1911 and 1914 he had moved again, this time to Sadberge, and for this reason it was at Darlington that he signed up.

Enlisting on 8th September 1914, he was described as 5 feet 6 ½ inches, with a fresh complexion, blue eyes and brown hair. He was drafted into the Army Service Corps, serving in the Yorkshire and Durham Brigade as a driver attached to the Casualty Clearing Office, which organised the return of men injured abroad. Having signed up as a member of the Territorial Force, he could not be obliged to serve overseas. However, he obviously forewent this concession as he sailed to Boulogne on 16th April 1915, where he was attached to the 4th East Yorkshire Regiment in a 'nominal role'. During Joseph's time with the regiment, it was involved in the battles of St Julien, the Frezenburg Ridge, and the Battle of Bellewaarde Ridge in 1915; the battles of Flers-Courcelette, Morval and the Transloy Ridges in 1916; and the First and Second Battles of the Scarpe, the Capture of Wancourt Ridge and the Second Battle of Passchendaele in 1917.

Joseph's service record provides very little information regarding the details of his duties, such as what sort of vehicle he was driving; it may have been horse-drawn, although his previous experience as a farm wagoner may possibly have given him experience of motorised vehicles in the form of tractors. Therefore, he may have been transporting men and equipment or he may have been an officer's motor driver. The information that is included in his service record does record that he was granted a week's home leave in January 1915 as well as ten days in September 1917, although it is not recorded whether the latter period was spent in Britain or France. He was also admitted to hospital for a week in April 1916 for dental treatment, which presumably must have been fairly serious to warrant such a long stay in hospital. The only negative comment on his record involves the forfeiture of three days' pay for 'using disrespectful language to an N.C.O [non-commissioned officer] when given an order'.

His army career came to an abrupt end when an accident befell him on January 5th 1918 in Ypres; 'while walking through a ruined village he was struck by falling timber on the chin'. This broke his jaw on the left hand-side and knocked out some teeth, resulting in him being shipped back to Britain and on to the Croydon War Hospital on 11th January where he had more teeth extracted and some dead bone removed. We are told that splints attached and he was provided with dentures, but the pain was still so bad by 1st

May that he could only eat minced food and he was classed as having 40% disablement. As a result he was discharged from the army as 'no longer physically fit for war service'.

Joseph Dunning was awarded a war pension, originally of 27 shillings and six pence for four weeks and 11 shillings a week for the next 48 weeks. On 15th April 1919 his disablement was assessed as 20% and his pension was reduced to 5 shillings and 6 pence per week until it expired on 25th May 1920, although he was also awarded a lump sum of £48.15s.- in January 1920, presumably due to his being assessed as have a 5% permanent disability.

According to his pension records, being unmarried Joseph returned to his father's house at Youlton, but I cannot find anything to say what became of him after that except he died in the York area in 1960, aged 78.

BEN HOULDEN



By kind permission of Jenny Johnson

Ben Houlden was born in Alne on 1st December 1873 and baptised at St Mary's that Christmas Day. The son of a railway labourer, he was at school and living at home in 1881. However, by 1891, possibly due to being one of ten children, he was living with a relative in Gainford, Durham whilst apprenticed to a shoemaker. However, this occupation obviously didn't suit him as, by the age of 27 in 1901 he is found living in Armley with his wife and two sons, with his occupation listed as 'coal merchant'. By 1911, the family was living in the same area and also had two daughters. The coal

business obviously did very well as in 1914 he gave his occupation as 'retired coal merchant'.

However, it is possible that Ben found the retired life too quiet for his liking as he lied about his age – claiming to be 33 when he was actually 40 – in order to sign up on 11th September 1914. He is described as 5 feet 5 inches with a clear complexion, hazel eyes and dark brown hair. It is also noted that he suffered from varicose veins in his left leg. If he was looking for excitement, he was presumably disappointed: his apprenticeship ensured he remained in the country working at his original trade. Having originally joined the Leeds City Battalion, he was transferred to the 9th Local Reserve Battalion, West Yorkshire in September 1915 and promoted to Shoemaker Lance Corporal in February 1916. In September 1916 he was granted professional pay Class II and transferred to the Training Reserve Corps, and in December he was made Acting Shoemaker Sergeant and transferred again – to the 7th Battalion, Royal Defence Corps. As there is no record of his being granted leave up to this point, and as he was serving in his local area, it is possible he lived at home during this period. One would hope this was the case as it would have allowed him and his wife Alice to mourn together when their youngest daughter Vera, born in June 1914, died of pneumonia on 15th February 1918.

Ben would have presumably had to move into barracks when he was transferred once again in April 1918 – this time to the Durham Light Infantry, 3rd Battalion – although he was therefore granted Christmas leave from 31st December 1919 until 11th January 1919. He proceeded to the dispersal unit at Clipstone, Nottinghamshire before being demobbed on 18th March 1919. On discharge he complained of rheumatism in his arms and legs as well as piles, and applied for a disability pension. However, it would appear this was not granted as the army did not feel his army service contributed to his conditions.

As with Joseph Dunning, I can find nothing more about Ben Houlden's life after the war, except that he died in the Leeds area in 1958 at the age of 84. Although I do not have picture of Ben himself, the above photo of his parents and most of his siblings was kindly provided by Jenny Johnson : *"Backrow: Robert, Jinnie (Jane), Alice Maud, William Edward; Front: (Perhaps) Arthur, William, Edith, Alice, James. The picture is in front of Alne village store/ post office on the main street, where Jinnie was postmistress and Jim messenger boy. It was still there in the 1950's when I visited as a child and Jim was an 'under cover' bookie, as well as shopkeeper. He moved to a bungalow in about 1973 in the back lane - now Gale road."*

[Please note the next instalment will be in November]