

Arthur May (1879 – 1938)

Arthur May was born in 1879 in Chesterfield. His parents were William May (1850 – 1929) and Hannah Eliza Short (1850 – 1926). On the 1881 Census, Arthur was living with his parents and siblings at Brampton Wharf, Walton, a suburb of Chesterfield. His father was employed as a miner. There were several mines in the area, including Brampton Colliery.

On the 1891 Census, Arthur was shown as twelve years old. They were living at 16 Church Lane in Chesterfield. His father, and two older brothers were all miners. His slightly older brother, Frederick at the age of 14, was working underground as a pony driver. Arthur was still attending the local school.

Arthur is 'missing' from the 1901 Census. His parents were 'visitors' to the household of their oldest son, Thomas, who has three young children, but is a widower. Probably his parents and the rest of the family were helping Thomas with his young children. Thomas was living in Attercliffe in Sheffield.

Arthur was not on the 1901 Census, because at some point he had joined the regular army, probably straight from school. He had joined the 1st Notts & Derbys – The 'Sherwood Foresters', around 1892 and had served 16 years, before retiring from the army around 1907. He married, Emily Pilkington in the same year.

On the 1911 Census, Arthur was living with Emily and their two children, Arthur May and Edna Lillian May. Two other children had died. They were living on Brockwell Lane in Chesterfield. Arthur, on leaving the army had become a miner. The Census showed him to be a 'Coal Miner – Filler'

In the summer of 1914, the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austria-Hungary throne, triggered a series of events that led to the start of World War 1. Britain declared war on Germany on the 4th August 1914, after German troops marched into neutral Belgium, and then refused to withdraw.

The United Kingdom did not have a large army and did not operate a policy of conscription, but did have a small professional army. Therefore, there was a urgent need for volunteers. As Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener launched a recruitment campaign, looking initially for 100,000 volunteers to join the regular forces. This campaign appealed to the sense of duty and patriotism of the country's men.

They also called up retired soldiers, and Arthur appears to be first in line when he joined the newly created 9th (Service) Battalion of the Sherwood Forresters on the 15th August 1914, only eleven days after the declaration of war. He signed up in Derby. The movements of this Battalion are as follows:

History of the 9th (Service) Battalion

Formed at Derby in August 1914.

Moved initially to Grantham.

Moved to Frensham in April 1915.

Sailed from Liverpool in early July 1915 for Gallipoli, landing at Suvla Bay 7 August 1915.

Evacuated from Gallipoli December 1915, moved to Egypt via Imbros.

Moved to France in July 1916

Arthur would have been part of these actions.

Arthur was made a sergeant on 27 June 1916, just a few days before the start of the Battle of the Somme. On 19 October 1916, Arthur was transferred to the 12th (Service) Battalion, which was a Pioneer Battalion.

Pioneer battalions, were not only trained infantry, but were also able to conduct pioneer duties. Infantry Pioneer battalions were frequently in front of the infantry digging saps, new trench lines, sorting barbed wire etc. Arthur, with his mining skills would have been an ideal candidate for such activities.

Arthur survived the war and was honourably discharged on the 28 September 1918, less than two months before the end of the war. He was 39 years old.

Arthur returned to Derbyshire, and renewed his employment in the mining industry.

In 1937, Emily died at the age of 54, leaving Arthur a widower. They had been married for thirty years.

In 1938, Arthur was working at Markham Colliery as a contractor, when he was killed in the disaster of 10 May. He was 59 years old

At the time of the disaster he was living at 45 North Crescent in Duckmanton. A number of his children were still living with him.

Arthur had his will published in July 1938

***May Arthur of 45 North-Crescent Duckmanton near Chesterfield Derbyshire
Died 10 May 1938 at the Markham Colliery near Chesterfield. Probate London
22 July to George Frederick May and Arthur May coal miners. Effects £114.***

A year after Arthur was killed, his children placed an In Memoriam notice in The 'Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald'

*In memory of our dear father,
ARTHUR MAY
accidentally killed in Markham Pit Disaster
May 10th 1938
"Rest after toll"*

-From All at Home.

Parents

Father – William May (1850 – 1929)

William was born in Barlborough in 1850. His parents were Anthony May (1823 – 1889) and Hannah Higginbotham (1828 – 1910). Both his parents came from Wingerworth in Derbyshire. On the 1851 Census, William was eight months old. They were living on a farm at Nitticar Hill and his father was a farm servant.

On the 1861 Census the family have moved back to Wingerworth and were living at Salem Place. His father was now a coal miner. William is a scholar at the local school.

On the 26 April 1869 he married Hannah Eliza Short in Chesterfield.

On the 1881 Census they were living in Walton and Arthur is two years old

By 1911 William and Hannah Eliza had been married for 41 years, had seven children, of which five were still alive. William at the age of 62 is still working as a miner.

William died in 1929.

Mother -Hannah Eliza Short (1849 – 1926)

Hannah Eliza was born in 1849 in Darley Dale, Derbyshire. Her parents were Thomas and Ann Short. Thomas came from Brampton and Ann from Chesterfield. On the 1851 Census, there are living in Darley Dale and Thomas is farm labourer. On the 1861 Census Hannah is eleven years old and her father is now a railway labourer. The railway line that he probably worked on, is now the historic Peak Rail line. On the 1871 Census Hannah, who had married William in 1869 is shown as married, but living with her parents. There is no sign of William. Her father, is again a farm labourer, reflecting that the building of the Peak line was completed.

Hannah Eliza died in March 1926 in Chesterfield.

Wife – Emily Pilkington (1882 – 1937)

Emily was born in Chesterfield in 1882. Her parents were Thomas Pilkington (1855 – 1919) and Mary Ann Elliott (1858 – 1927). On the 1891 Census, Emily at the age of eight, was living on Hipper Street in Chesterfield. Her father was employed as a tanner. Emily is attending the local school. In 1901, at the age of eighteen, Emily is working as a dressmaker, while her father is still employed as a tanner. They were living at 49 Lordsmill Street in Chesterfield.

Emily married Arthur in 1907, after he had completed 16 years of service in the regular army.

Emily died two years before Arthur is killed at Markham Colliery.