

## William James Brooks

25<sup>th</sup> December 1890 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 1917

William Brooks was the fourth of eight children of William and Julia Brooks. In the picture on the left he is the child at the bottom left of the group. The family lived in various houses in Upper Broughton before settling down at Corner House Farm in 1890. His father, also



called William was a coal merchant and Corner House Farm (pictured below in 1895) had plenty of outhouses, including stables for his shire horses which he always bought from Shipstone's Brewery in Nottingham and they pulled the coal to his customers.



When his sons started to leave school and to join the family business, William realised that they would have to expand the business and he began to sell wheat, oats, barley, dairy cubes, pig food, chicken food and cattle food. By 1910 William was a prosperous businessman, a churchwarden of St Luke's Church and a member of the Board of managers of Upper Broughton Board School. He was renting over 100 acres of grazing land and his four sons were working in the business. Besides helping with the carting business they helped with grazing the beasts and haymaking.

William James married Mabel Truman on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1913. The photograph on the right was taken on their honeymoon. Mabel was the daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Truman of Nether Broughton. In the 1901 census Thomas Truman describes himself as a Lace Manufacturer, by 1911 he is a Grazier and Mabel is a Dairy Worker. The report of their wedding in the Grantham Journal read:

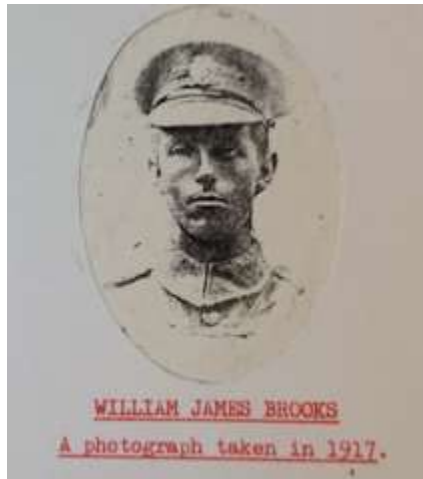
*'One of those delightful little surprises that set villages all agog with excitement occurred here on Wednesday, when the news leaked out that Miss Truman was to be married by license on the following day (Thursday). The secret had been kept so well that the nearest neighbours only heard of it on the morning the event took place. News flies fast, however before the time appointed -*



*2:30 PM - a large congregation had assembled at St Mary's Church to witness the ceremony. The bride, who was most tastefully dressed in the biscuit-coloured costume with hat to match and white veil was given away by Mr F Taylor and was attended by her cousin Miss Sarah Truman, of Nottingham, as bridesmaid. The bridegroom was Mr William James Brooks, second son of Mr W Brooks, coal merchant, Upper Broughton. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. H. W. Fitch. As the happy couple left the church the bells rang out merrily and showers of rice met them as they walked down the path. The honeymoon is being spent at Hastings and we understand their future home will be at Frisby. Miss Truman has been a member of the Church choir and a Sunday School teacher for some years and is well known in the neighbourhood as an excellent vocalist. Her services have been given freely in most of the villages around when social gatherings and concerts were held, while she has given valuable assistance to local funds by organising entertainments. Miss Truman is the only daughter of Mr and Mrs Truman of this parish.'*

William and Mabel settled in Frisby, not far from Brooksby Station and from there William James ran the Brooks business successfully. He and Mabel had two children: a daughter Mabel Noel and a son William Truman. William, Mabel and Mabel Noel all shared the same birthday, Christmas Day.

The war was to have a shattering effect on the family. In March 1916 the youngest



son Samuel Maurice was called up to the army. He sold his father the 20 pigs he had been rearing to earn some money for himself. His elder brother William James drove him to Derby in the pony and trap. That was the last time the brothers saw each other. In April 1916, William James brother Leonard Morton was called up. By the summer of 1917 things were not going well with the British Forces in France and even those men who were in essential occupations in France were being called up. Although he was married and had his own coal business at Brooksby Station, William James was called up in September 1917 and sent to Codford

on Salisbury Plain where there were no fewer than 15 different camps built to accommodate British and ANZAC troops prior to their deployment to France. He joined the Royal Garrison Artillery. The Brooks family now had three sons fighting in the war.

By the autumn of 1917 William Brooks senior was in a hopeless position. His wife Julia was very ill, he had none of his sons at home to help with his coal, coke and cake business and he was trying to run William James' coal business at Brooksby Station.

In October 1917, only one month after he had been called up William James Brooks was reported missing believed killed and on November 25<sup>th</sup> Julia received a letter from his commanding officer confirming that her son had been killed in action on

October 30th, 1917. He had died of a shell wound while storming a German gun post. William and Julia were grief stricken

William James was interred in the Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery and a memorial service was held for him in St Mary's Church, Nether Broughton on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1917. His wife Mabel had to leave her cottage in Frisby and took her two small children to live with her parents in Nether Broughton. The coal business at Brooksby Station was sold. William James Brooks is commemorated on two War Memorials locally, in Upper Broughton where he was born and brought up and where his parents lived and Nether Broughton where his wife and children moved after his death.

