

FOUND IN AN ENGINE BED

EARLY BIBLE WITH A HISTORY

Under strange circumstances a family bible has been discovered in Earby. It was brought to light during the recent September holidays when workmen were fitting new machinery into the boiler house at Victoria Mills, Earby. The volume was found in the old engine bed. By a strange coincidence the bible is now in the hands of a certain Mr. Joseph Smith, employed at the Earby and Thornton Gas Undertaking offices, and one of the last entries in the book is of a certain Joseph Smith who was killed in action on September 19th, 1914, at the battle of the Marne. Although the present Mr. Smith belongs to an old established Earby family he can trace no connection. Extensive inquiries have not revealed anyone who can throw any light on the matter.

The bible was published in 1810 by C. Baldwin, of London, and on the front and back covers and blank pages inside the book, several generations of the Smith family are recorded.

The first owners were, apparently, a man and wife named Wilkinson and Susannah Smith. Between the years 1799 and 1815 they had nine sons and daughters, and to their eldest, William, the bible was passed on. In turn it went to William's eldest son, Joseph, and afterwards to his son, Alfred. the latter and his wife Margaret, had five children, one of whom was the soldier killed in the first World War. Their first, another Joseph, died the day after his birth, and twins Ellen and Mary Ann, died within a few months of birth.

Soldier Joseph, according to information contained in the bible was a member of the British Expeditionary Force, and of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment. Information obtained by relatives from the Imperial War Graves Commission in London shows that his grave was unknown but that there was a memorial either in his honour or in the honour of all the soldiers killed in the battle at a place called La Ferte in France.

Of the names listed, all are recorded as having died with the exception of William Dixon Smith, son of Alfred and Margaret Smith, and brother of Joseph.

There is little doubt that the copy would be a valuable heirloom, and indeed, would be at the present time if it's rightful owner could be found. The Mr. Smith who now has the book told a Craven Herald & Pioneer reporter on Monday that he would be only too pleased to let anyone see it if they could throw any light on the mystery.

Transcribed from the Craven Herald & Pioneer