

World War I

Birmingham City Police

PC E143 James RILEY MSM

Company Sergeant Major P/1100

Military Foot Police

Died in England 1st March 1919

James was born in Burton-on-Trent, the son of Daniel and Mary Jane (née Hartstone) of 1 and later of 10, Little Burton Street, Burton-on-Trent, his father being a house painter

He married Julia Elizabeth Jane Meadowcroft at St. James's Church, Bournemouth on 31st December 1908 and then resided at 474 Green Lane, Small Heath, Birmingham. There were four children to the marriage, Jessie Elizabeth, James Edward, Emily and Daniel Walter

James joined Birmingham City Police on 29th September 1904, and served on the E Division, with warrant number 7406 and collar number PC E143

Birmingham City Police records dated 8th April 1915 confirmed that PC E143 James Riley was struck off the strength of the force to join the Military Foot Police. He enlisted in the Military Foot Police with regimental number P/1100 at 30 years of age on 7th April 1915 and was appointed lance corporal the same day

James was drafted to France on 20th May 1915 and appointed acting corporal on 16th April 1916

James was slightly wounded at Abbeville on 29th August 1916 when he received a slight wound to his abdomen due to the accidental discharge of a firearm. He was admitted to the 5th Stationary Hospital, he was treated and discharged on 3rd September 1916

An enquiry was conducted into the incident during which Lance Corporal 9452 Horton, 2nd Battalion, Border Regiment attached Military Foot Police told the court

*With thanks to Graeme Clarke
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Royal Military Police Museum*

"At Abbeville on 29 August 1916 about 9.25pm I was sitting in the dining room at the Police Station, Rue Jean d'Arc when I heard a report. Turning round I saw Corporal Riley and Private Brunsden on the floor. Brunsden said, "I have shot that man accidentally."

Being a qualified first aid man I examined both men but could find no wound on Riley who appeared to have been hit in the stomach. Brunsden had a hole through his left hand which I at once bandaged."

Captain E.A. O'Brian, 1st Garrison Battalion, North Staffordshire Regiment found that:

"Private J. Brunsden was not on duty, but I consider that he was to blame in picking up the revolver, but the owner was equally to blame in having left the revolver loaded."

James was appointed acting sergeant on 16th September 1916 and appointed acting warrant officer Class II (Company Sergeant Major) on 24th June 1918

On 2nd December 1918 James was admitted to hospital and later diagnosed with emphysema (mild). He was invalided to England on 19th December 1918 and discharged from the Army on 10th January 1919 as being no longer physically fit for war service'. His service record indicates 'shortness of breath, giddiness and palpitations through strain of military duties'

James died in Birmingham on 1st March 1919 aged 34 years and is buried in St. John the Divine Churchyard, Burton-upon-Trent

The award of his Meritorious Service Medal was announced in the London Gazette supplement of 18th January 1919, page 1016 and the Medaille d'Honneur avec Glaives (en Vermeil) in the London Gazette supplement 29th January 1919, page 1451

