

13 Lance Corporal George Armstrong (R6171) d 11 January 1918

Husband of Mrs E. Armstrong, of 13, Dalton Rd., Askam-in-Furness. Formerly of Gwanda, Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. CWGC



Report in Barrow News from 17 April 1915:

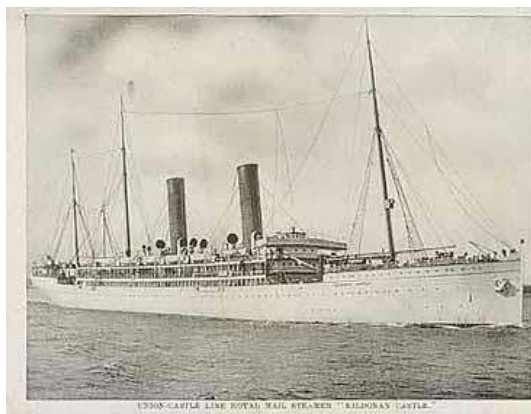
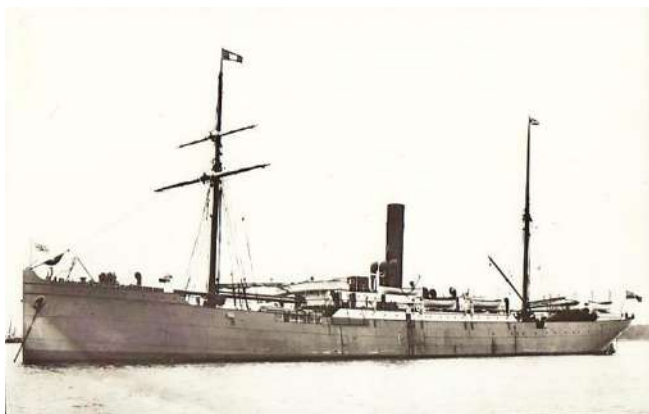
'Private George Armstrong brother of Mr Johnathan (sic) Armstrong of Lord Street, Askam has been on furlough in Askam; returned to London on his way back to Winchester on Sunday evening. Mr Armstrong, who is the owner of a mine in Rhodesia was one of the 40 men who volunteered for active service when war broke out. They paid their own expenses from South Africa and their own hotel bills on reaching England. Mr Armstrong was in France in the trenches, but was invalided home with rheumatic fever and was in hospital for some time, after which he was allowed 10 days leave'.

Jan Cumming from the Askam and Ireleth Local History Group sent me the following:

Lance Corporal George Armstrong is not named on the village war memorial, but he is buried with honour in a Commonwealth War Grave in St Peter's Churchyard, Ireleth. George was born in 1880 in Cleator Moor. In 1891 George was 11 and living with his parents Jonathan and Jane Armstrong, his siblings Joseph 10, Jonathan 8, Henry 7 and Isabella 4, his grandmother Isabella Mitchell was a widow and living with the family in Cleator Moor. Details of George's life and army career have been difficult to find. In 1895 we found

George, at just 14 years old on the SS 'Harlech Castle' sailing from Falmouth bound for Cape Town, South Africa. Although George has no occupation given on the ship's register, most of the other men on board are miners, heading for the gold mines in South Africa and Rhodesia. At this time these areas would have been very much like the Wild West and we can only imagine how a 14 year old from Cleator coped with this life. A very brave young man. When war broke out in Europe and an appeal was made for volunteers, George was one of the first to respond. He was then at Gwanda mines, Rhodesia, and with several others, equipped themselves at their own expense and paid their passage to England. We find George and his comrades on the Steamship 'Kildonan Castle' which George boarded in Cape Town and docked in Plymouth mid October 1914. George joined up on 20 December 1914 and was attached to the King's Royal Rifle Corps as a Private and received training. In an article in the Barrow News of 18 November 1916 we read that George is suffering from malaria fever and is in hospital in Malta. Malta was where soldiers were sent from Gallipoli and Salonika having been wounded or suffering from diseases such as malaria. From this we have assumed that George was with the 4th battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps who served in Salonika from November 1915. The battalion also saw action in France at the 2nd battle of Ypres. George does not seem to have recovered sufficiently to return to active service while in Malta and in December 1916 was sent home on a hospital ship to England. Sadly this is as much as we have been able to find about his military career. In the latter part of August 1917 George married Eleanor Smith in Bournemouth. Eleanor was the daughter of Mrs Margaret Smith of 21 Dalton Road, Askam. Eleanor was an Assistant Teacher and had two sisters Ada and Hannah. George was discharged from the army and was in a hospital near Leeds for some time. On the 11 January 1918 George died at the home of his mother-in-law Mrs Margaret Smith who was living at 13 Dalton Road (and lived there until her death in 1932). The cause of George's death was given as rheumatic fever. George was given a military funeral.

We believe that George's brothers were all living and working in Rhodesia at the time of George's death and had all served during the First World War, two in France and Flanders and Jonathan in South Africa, attached to the Motor Transport Section.



Out: SS Harlech Castle (above)

Return: SS Kildonan Castle (above)

Both Union Castle Mail ships on the UK-South Africa route

Barrow News 26 January 1918:

DEATH OF A SOUTH AFRICAN

There passed away on Friday afternoon week, at the residence of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Smith, 13, Dalton-road, Askam, Mr. George Armstrong, at the early age of 37 (*sic*) years. When the war broke out and an appeal was made for Volunteers, he was one of the first to respond. He was then at Guenda, (*sic*) Rhodesia, South Africa, and with several others equipped themselves at their own expense and paid their passage to England, where they were transferred to Salisbury Plain to undergo a course of training. He was attached to the K.R.R.C. The late Mr. Armstrong was a member of an old Cumberland family, and a native of Cleator Moor district. At Bournemouth he married Miss Smith, of Dalton-road, Askam, during the early part of last August. He was a genial friend with a big store of knowledge, and a fund of reminiscences which were full of interest. With his young widow, young nieces, and other relatives, the greatest sympathy is felt in their bereavement. The interment took place on Monday afternoon. The mourners were: the widow, Miss Christopherson and Miss Smith, sisters-in-law; Mrs. Jonathan Armstrong, (Lord-street), Miss Armstrong, Miss Lizzie Armstrong and Miss Mary Armstrong (nieces), Mrs. Johnson (Deepdale, Gosforth), and Mrs. Edgar (Salter House, Frizington), Mrs. J. H. Barrow (Barrow), Mrs. Martin, Mrs. E. Robinson, and Mrs. Leece (Dalton-road), and other friends from Barrow.