

3 Sapper Wm J Coats d 17 April 1941 in London air raid



IMG_6729 Coats

Treasured memories of
CYRIL,
The dearly loved husband of S. J. Coats
Died 4th Jan. 1947, aged 60.
Also of the above Sarah Jane
Died 20th July 1973 aged 85
Also our dear son (Billy)
Sapper W. J. Coats R.E.
Killed in London by enemy action
17th April 1941 Aged 20.



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On the [16th/17th April 1941] one of the heaviest attacks was made on London since the war began. Bombing commenced shortly after 2100 and lasted until nearly dawn. Some sixty-six boroughs were affected, the main bombing being on central and southern London. Damage in the docks area was comparatively light and so far there is little damage to key points to record. In addition to H.E. and incendiary bombs a large number of parachute mines were dropped and great damage was done to private property by fire and blast. Among the public buildings damaged were St. Paul's Cathedral, the Houses of Parliament, the Admiralty, the Law Courts and the National Gallery. Many roads were blocked and the railway systems were hit in nineteen places. There were a large number of fires, the most serious being at L.N.E.R Goods Yard in Lisson Grove. Other serious fires were caused at Selfridges, Bessborough Gardens, Westminster, and the Kidbrooke R.A.F. Stores Depot. Although many fires were burning at daybreak, the situation was considered to be in hand.²

The *Barrow News* Saturday 3 May 1941:

BARROW SOLDIER'S FUNERAL KILLED IN LONDON AIR RAID

The funeral took place at the Barrow cemetery on Friday week of Sapper Wm. Coats, only child of Mr. and Mrs. Cyril Coats of 30, Richmond-terrace, Barrow, who was killed in a recent enemy raid on London. Twenty years of age, the deceased young man was brought to Barrow from Workington 13 years ago, and was educated at the Victoria and Oxford-street Schools before going to the Barrow Grammar School, where he matriculated at the age of 14. He worked for the L.M.S. Railway Drawing Office before joining the Royal Engineers in August, 1940. Previous to this he had passed Section A of the A.M.I.C.E. (London) examination, and had also been awarded the Ramsbottom Webb Scholarship in 1940 tenable for three years at the Manchester University, which he was to have taken up after the war.

There was a large attendance of relatives and friends at the funeral, the chief mourners being Mr. and Mrs. Coats, father and mother; Miss Audrey Furness; Miss Coats and Mrs. Graham. Mrs. Allenhead (Hexham), the Misses McKee, aunts; Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong (Workington), Mrs. Atkinson, Mrs. Rae (Ilkley), Mr. Jas. Ealing, Mr. Jas. Silvie, Mr. Birkett, Mrs. Bleasdale, Miss. Rae (Ulverston), Mrs. Furness, Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson (Maryport); Mrs. Stevenson (Workington) and numerous friends.

Members of the staff of the L. M. and S. Railway Engineer's Department acted as bearers.

The many beautiful floral tributes included a wreath from the deceased's colleagues in the Engineer's Department and a wreath of Flanders poppies from the T.N. Department, War Office.

Dr James Peters from the University of Manchester provided the following:

The Ramsbottom Webb Scholarship was awarded by the University. It was a triennial entrance scholarship awarded to an employee or child of an employee of the LMS. It was worth £100 (payable for the first year only), and was awarded on the basis of an examination. Recipients were required to study a degree or certificate course in engineering. At the time, fees for an engineering course were £45 10 shillings (50p), plus laboratory and exam fees. The sum excluded accommodation costs.

Carol Morgan (Archivist, Institute of Civil Engineers) told me: (Coats) became an ICE Student member 19 October 1937. At the time he had a Matriculation Certificate Joint Education of the Northern Universities – I think this was a school leaver's certificate but I am not sure. In 1937 he was training as an Assistant under agreement to the London, Midland and Scottish Railway under W K Wallace.

¹ Picture from Barrow News 3 May 1941

² <http://ww2today.com/17th-april-1941-heavy-attack-on-london>