

Private

John Day

124924, 51st Bn., Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)
who died on 21st March 1918, aged 29

Remembered with honour

Barrow Hill and Staveley Memorials

Midland Railway Memorial, Derby

Beaumontz-Les-Cambrai Military Cemetery No.1 I. B.



George Day and Elizabeth White were married in Dursley, Gloucestershire in 1875 and made their home at Broadland Nap, in Cam, where their eldest sons, William George and Frederick, were born in 1878 and 1880 respectively. George was employed by the Midland Railway and worked as a plate layer.

By the time that JOHN DAY was born in 1889, the family had moved to Berkeley Road where John and his two sisters, Elizabeth and Fanny were born. His older brother William was then 13 years old and was working as a farm labourer.

By 1901, both William George and Frederick had left home and were working for the Midland Railway Company. 23 year old William was boarding with several other railwaymen at Bell House Farm, Lowgates, in Staveley. He was working as a signaller and would have been based at the Barrow Hill or Staveley Depot. Frederick, 21, was a boarder in Ogle Hay, Staffordshire, and worked as a porter. Only the youngest children, John and Fanny, remained at home.

Father George was in his early sixties in 1911 and had taken on a lighter job as a yardman for the Midland Railway. Fanny was employed as a Church of England school teacher and continued to live with her parents whilst 22 year old railway porter, John, and his signaller brother, Frederick, were boarding with the Hannam family in Haunchwood Road, Whittleford near Nuneaton.

William was still working as a signaller in the Chesterfield area and was living at Hepthorne Lane, North Wingfield. He had married Mary Alice Byard in 1902 and they had 3 young children.



Researched and written by Ann Lucas as part of the Barrow Hill: A Community Remembers project

Sometime after 1911, John also moved to the area where he was employed as a shunter in the Traffic Coaching section at the Barrow Hill and Staveley depot.

John was conscripted and originally posted to the Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derbys Regiment) at Chesterfield. He was given the service number 91257 which suggests an enlistment date of around 2nd August 1917.

In late October he was renumbered as 124924 when he joined the ranks of the Machine Gun Corps. It is likely that, after the specialist training he received for this, he was drafted into one of the Machine Gun Companies within the 51st (Highland) Division who were, at that time, deployed in the vicinity of Cambrai. It was from these 4 Machine Gun Companies of the Division that the 51st Machine Gun Battalion was formed on 19th February 1918.

The Division remained in the Cambrai area until the 21st of March 1918, when the enemy launched a huge and overwhelming attack and the Division were engaged in a fighting withdrawal back to Bapaume, on the fronts of Fifth and Third Armies, the Division being in the latter near Flesquieres. The defensive front around Flesquieres formed a salient and was strongly held by the British. The enemy decided not to attack it frontally, but instead drenched it with gas while attacking on either side. The pressure grew during the day, and from early evening the Division began a fighting withdrawal that took it over the next few days back several miles, through Beaumetz, towards Bapaume. In fighting a number of critical rearguard actions, Divisional losses built up to a total of over 4,900 men.



Beaumetz-les-Cambrai Military Cemetery No.1

John Day was killed in action on 21st March 1918, aged 29 and is commemorated at the Beaumetz-les-Cambrai Military Cemetery No.1

The village of Beaumetz-les-Cambrai was captured by the enemy on the 22nd March, 1918, and retaken in the middle of the following September.

The cemetery was made by the enemy after the fighting of March, 1918, and known to them as No.9

Military Cemetery. After the Armistice the graves of 307 German soldiers were removed to other cemeteries, and 33 of the British graves were regrouped. It is composed mainly of collective graves.

A service was held at St Paul's Cathedral on Wednesday May 14th, 1919 at 2.30 p.m. "In memory of the railwaymen of Great Britain and Ireland who have died in the service of their country during the War, 1914-1918."

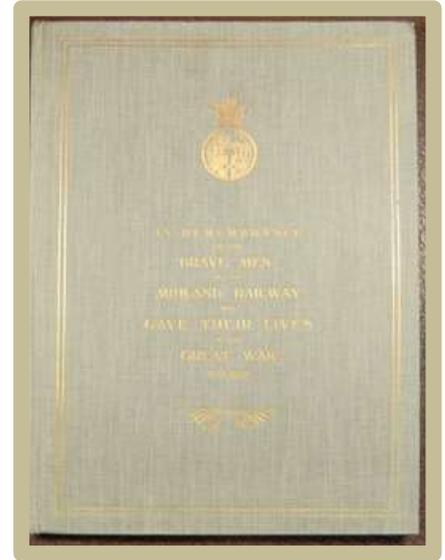
The Midland Railway War Memorial was erected in 1921 to commemorate employees of the Midland Railway killed during The Great War. As the company had its Headquarters in

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Derby at the time, the memorial is located adjacent to Derby railway station, in front of the Midland Hotel on Midland Road.

During the war, 22941 employees of the Company enlisted, 7068 were wounded and 2833 killed. The names of the dead are inscribed on the memorial and published in a contemporaneous book. A copy of the book complete with a line drawing of the memorial was sent to the families of the dead along with a free travel pass to the parents, widows and children of the fallen in order to see the memorial.



John Day was posthumously awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Sources include

1. *1881-1911 England Census*
2. *England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth/Marriage/Death Indexes, 1837-1915*
3. *England & Wales, Death Index, 1916-2007*
4. *British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920*
5. *UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919*
6. *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*
7. http://www.1914-1918.net/mg_units.htm
8. <http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com>
9. Midland Railway Study Centre: "In Remembrance of the brave men of the Midland Railway who gave their lives in the Great War 1914 – 1918"