

## JAMES H. MEECHAN, Driver 44256, Royal Army Service Corps, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1940, Age 30

Tracking down the story of “our” James Meechan could have been a bit difficult as there are three casualties listed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission with that name, and none had an obvious connection to the village from what I could tell.

<b>JAMES MEECHAN</b> Private Service Number: 7757803	Royal Army Veterinary Corps United Kingdom	<b>Died 13 February 1944</b> 25 years old	<b>CASSINO WAR CEMETERY</b> II. F. 15. Italy
<b>JAMES MEECHAN</b> Driver Service Number: 44256	<b>1 Corps Ammunition Park</b> Royal Army Service Corps United Kingdom	<b>Died Between 30 May 1940 and 02 June 1940</b>	<b>DUNKIRK MEMORIAL</b> Column 137. France
<b>JAMES MEECHAN</b> Driver Service Number: T/84381	Royal Army Service Corps United Kingdom	<b>Died 16 August 1940</b> 20 years old	<b>BROOKWOOD 1939-1945 MEMORIAL</b> Panel 17. Column 1. United Kingdom

However, I asked my Dad (Geoffrey Hodgson) and he knew!

He told me that “our” James Meechan was the first husband of Mrs Susan Fear of the village and that her maiden name was Susan Harker. She would later marry Charles “Charlie” Fear in 1948, becoming landlady of the King William IV. During the war Mrs Meechan as she was then, ran the café near Catterick Bridge Station and was injured in the train explosion in 1944.

I found that a James Hugh Meechan was also listed as being commemorated on a war memorial at Bolton-on-Swale, even though some web sites had this an entry for WW1, cross checking other records showed this James Hugh Meechan was born in 1910 - far too young for serving in WW1, but old enough for service in WW2. Further cross checking showed James H. Meechan marrying Susan Harker in Richmondshire in the last quarter of 1931. There is only one James Meechan on the list that is the correct age and that’s Driver James Meechan of 1<sup>st</sup> Corp Ammunition Park, RASC.

I have not yet been able to find out much more about James death. Units of the RASC were assigned and re-assigned to other units as support and it’s pretty difficult to establish where exactly James was at the end of May. His date of death is not entirely clear either, which again is typical of the chaotic retreat to Dunkirk and the channel ports.

The Army moved on wheels in 1940 and, except for the railways and unit transport, the wheels were provided by the Royal Army Service Corps. They carried troops and their equipment, they carried and distributed ammunition, stores, rations, petrol and mail; they provided transport alike in back areas and at the front for almost every purpose, driving often under most difficult conditions and at time in danger where convoys of trucks and vehicles were often the target or air attacks.

James has no known grave and is commemorated on the Dunkirk Memorial which stands at the entrance to the Commonwealth War Graves section of Dunkirk Town Cemetery. It commemorates more than 4,500 casualties of the British Expeditionary Force who died in the campaign of 1939-40 or who died in captivity during this campaign and who have no known grave.



Sources:

- (1) CWGC Link to James Meechan, RASC Driver 44256 died between 30<sup>th</sup> May and 2nd June 1940. Northern France. No known grave. Commemorated on the Dunkirk Memorial Column 37.

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2773001/MEECHAN,%20JAMES>