

Berwick Journal, 26th December 1918

BERWICK WINS V.C.

Lieut. J.P. Huffam, Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment, son of Mr Huffam, High St., Berwick has won the Victoria Cross. A telegram reached Berwick on Monday from his Colonel, congratulating his parents on their son's heroism. The gallant Officer, who is only 21 was a Pte, in 7th N.F. (Berwick Territorials), and gained his Commission in France.

THE V.C.

We congratulate heartily Lieut. James Palmer Huffam, V.C. who is called after the late Coun Jas. Palmer, well known Spittal Native in his day and member of Berwick Corporation. Lieut. Huffam, was 21 on 31 March last, was apprentice with Mr J Cockburn, Joiner and builder, Castlegate, Berwick and joined up in the 7th N.F. On Jan 15 1916, volunteering for France to join there his two brothers, who had gone out with 7th N.F. in the memorable April & May 1915. Our gallant friend was soon promoted to Sergt, and thereafter recommended for a commission. He came home Sept, 1917 and was gazetted 2nd Lieut, Jan 30, 1918 and sent to 5th Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment. He was 3 times recommended for the Military Cross, as showing the sort of stuff Berwick's V.C. is made of. He has been in big things at Ypres on Somme, at Cambrai, at Douai and is now serving at Valenciennes. He was at the crossing of Sensae River, when the boys went through up to the neck, and he has participated in important captures of German prisoners, skilfully and daringly managed. On one occasion when on a particular job, after he had sent his 2 men back each with a batch of prisoners, Lieut. Huffam found himself left alone. He noticed a movement and on going forward 2 men came out to him first and afterwards 50 and by his prompt action in whistling for and getting assistance he secured the lot. Lieut. Huffman was home in November only a month ago – and was then in the pink. He said nothing of his fine work then, and has been remarkably quiet and unassuming over his fine work at the front.

Lieut. Huffam, who is now attached to 2nd Duke of Wellington's (of the line) took part in the great Recruiting March of 7th N.F. from Alnwick to Wooler, Norham, Berwick etc in May 1913. He joined up Jan, 1915 and in June of that year on becoming a trained soldier at once volunteered to proceed to 1/7th N.F. in France. Mrs Dorothy Huffam, wife of Mr V.E. Huffam, 119 High Street, Berwick, Ex-Col-Sergt. Black Watch, formerly in "The 42nd" for 27 years and County Court Bailiff for Berwick, is the proud mother of 4 sons and one daughter who have been on Active Service, and besides 7 nephews have been out doing their bit. It is a fine record.

Mr Huffam's daughter (Nurse Bessie Huffam) has been tending the wounded. The four sons A.M., John, I.P, and H.H. all began in the Northumberland Fusiliers. Pte. H.H. Huffman was killed in action, and John (now an Officer), was dangerously wounded recently and his parents summoned to France. Happily he rallied, and now is in Hospital in England.

The following letter is received by Mr Huffman from 2nd Battn. Duke of Wellington Regt., 19th Dec, 1918

Dear Mr Huffman, I hardly know whether to congratulate you or thank you on the occasion of the honour bestowed on your son - congratulations are on the occasion of the honour to you as

the father of such a boy and thanks for the award coming to the Regiment. We have been anxious for some time whether this well merited award was coming through for one so richly and deservedly earned it, but now we are happy to think it has and your boy is alive and well at the last of the fighting.

I cannot express a small part of the pride we all feel in having available a boy as your son as a member of our Battalion which bears such a noble name and record.

May you and your gallant son live long to enjoy the fame which he has earned so nobly. This is the highest brightest Christmas greeting I can send from my Battalion and may you enjoy many more.

J Pawlett Lt. Col. Cmdg, 2nd the Duke of Wellington's Regt.

Following telegram has been sent from Mayor of Berwick to 2nd Lieut. James P. Huffam, 2nd Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regt., B.E.R. France:-

Accept heartiest congratulations from myself and the Town of Berwick on the high military honour conferred on you –

Plenderleith, Mayor of Berwick-on-Tweed

The Mayor of Berwick (Ald. Plenderleith) will take steps to ensure Town recognition of Lieut. J. P. Huffam's winning of the coveted British Empire honour - the Victoria Cross.

2ND LIEUT. JAMES PALMER HUFFAM

James Palmer Huffam was the youngest of four sons of Mr. Edward Valentine Huffam of the firm Huffam and Michie, Coachbuilders, High Street, Berwick, an ex-colour sergeant in the Black Watch and High Bailiff for Berwick County Court.

James was a former pupil of Spittal Council School and became an apprentice with J. Cockburn, Builders and Joiners of Castlegate.

In February 1915, he enlisted as a private in the 7th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers.

On completing his training, James volunteered to join the 1st/7th Battalion in France, where two of his brothers were already serving.

James was soon promoted to sergeant and later recommended for a commission.

His elder brother, Harry was killed in action on 21st August 1915.

In January 1918, at the age of 20, James was gazetted as 2nd Lieutenant and sent to join the Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment.

THE CITATION

His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award

of the Victoria Cross to the undermentioned Officers, N.C.O.'s and Men:-

2nd Lt. James Palmer Huffam, 5th Bn., W. Rid. R. [T.F.], attd. 2nd Bn.

For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty on the 31st Aug., 1918. With three men he rushed an enemy machine-gun post and put it out of action. His post was then heavily attacked and he withdrew fighting, carrying back a wounded comrade.

Again on the night of 31st Aug., 1918, at St. Servin's Farm, accompanied by two men only, he rushed an enemy machine gun, capturing eight prisoners and enabling the advance to continue.

Throughout the whole fighting from Aug. 29th to Sept. 1st, 1918, he showed the utmost gallantry.