WILLIAM JOHN MANNING, PRIVATE 3017 AND 266297, DEVON REGIMENT

10 AUGUST 1893- 1985

William was born on the 10 August 1893 in South Molton, the oldest child of William and Emma Manning. There seems some doubt about his date of birth – it's entered as 1891 on his Army Pension form and in the 1939 Register but as 1893 elsewhere. His father seems to have had a number of jobs (as did William himself); he was an Insurance Agent in 1901, a farmer at Oakford in Devon in 1911 and then the landlord of the Eagle Tavern from sometime during the war years, when his school age daughters Gladys and Ena enrolled at BSM School. Unfortunately this last job went very wrong, as was reported in the *Western Times* of October 31 1919:

"CHARD MILK THEFTS LATEST NEWS How an Innkeeper Was Smartly Caught in the Act

William Manning, licensee of the Eagle Tavern Inn, Buckland St. Mary, near Chard, and his wife, Emma Manning, have been fined £5 each and Court costs at Chard for stealing milk from churns of which they were entrusted bailees. Several farmers in the district have been in the habit of leaving their churns outside the inn to be fetched by a motor lorry from a dairy company. Complaints as regards the purity of the milk having been communicated to farmers, suspicion was directed towards the innkeeper, who kept several calves and retailed much milk, although he only kept a cow or so. The police were informed, with the result that Inspector Edwards, of Chard, and the local constable, P.C. Gomer, Combe St. Nicholas, instituted a watch, and the male defendant was seen to fetch a pail water from the pump, to the churns with an empty pail, and when this was filled, his wife handed him the pail of water to refill the churn and remove any possible suspicion. Their little daughter was sent out look at the fourcross roads to see that all was clear. Of course, he loses his license, and the case has been widely commented upon."

Not unexpectedly, as reported in the Western Times of 14 November 1919, he lost the tenancy.

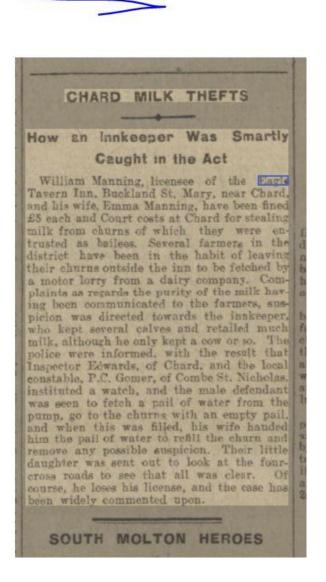
This must have been a nasty jolt for the family: both his sons, William and James, were leaving the Army at this time, William on 9 May 1919. Both had been ill; William had had influenza (very likely the pandemic Spanish flu) and had been discharged on a pension suffering from 'Disordered Action of the Heart'. We know of their existence through the Absent Voters Register of 1918.

We have no information on which Battalion of the Devons William served with, so it's not been possible to trace his war service, but his surviving pension records are detailed. An interesting point is that his Army number is close to that of his brother James: his was 266297, and James's 266175; James enlisted early, on 6 October 1914. William's pension began on 10 May 1919, when his home address was still given as the Eagle Tavern. It was 'declared final' on 10 February 1923, by which time he'd moved to Wales, to Bonvilston near Cardiff.

There was a more positive side to life. He was married on 30 October 1919 to Catherine Maud Nayland in Fulham and they moved to Bonvilston. They had two children, Sylvia in 1921 and John in 1923. In April 1925 they sailed from Southampton to Halifax, Nova Scotia on Red Star liner SS Pittsburg with the stated intention of settling in Canada. Evidently things did not ultimately work out for them, as in February 1933 they left St Johns, New Brunswick via Halifax, sailing on Canadian Pacific liner SS Montclare for Liverpool, their intended destination in England being Membury in Devon. All this time, from his marriage onwards, William was describing himself as a farmer.

By the time of the 1939 Register William had had a change of direction; the family were living in Brighton in Wentworth Street, and he was a Publican. His brother James (qv) and family were

also living in Brighton, James too describing himself as a Licensee. After this we lose sight of him till his death in the Sedgmoor area in early 1985 at the age of 91.



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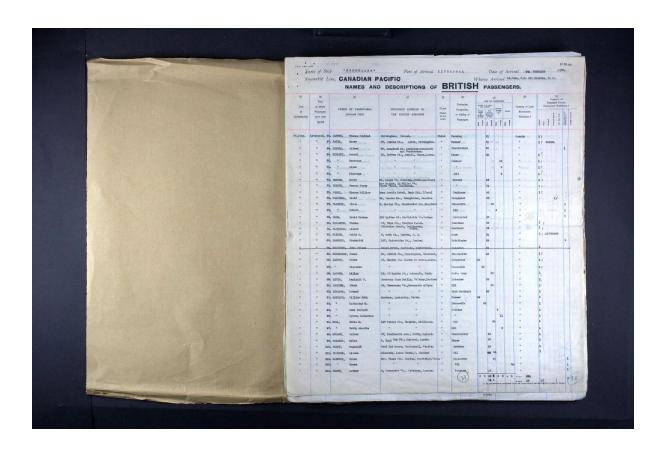


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