

A BRAVE MAN: P.C. JAMES HARDACRE



Promoted by the Members of the
Nursing Division St. John Ambulance
Brigade, Rishton.



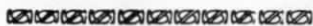
For the Benefit of
Mrs. J. Hardacre
and her Children.



"A NOBLE DEED"

(POEM)

BY KATE LEEMING,
47 LEE ROAD, BACUP.



Secretary: S. PEEL.
Joint Treasurers: Miss HAMBLING,
Miss CRABTREE.

PRICE 2d. Any further donation thankfully received.

To the Glorious Memory of
Police Constable Hardacre,



Who gave his life in the recent explosion,
on April 27th, 1917,
and was interred at Ulverston Cemetery
on May 2nd.

This memorial card was kept with the Slater family photographs at Loud Bridge. We knew the man in the picture was mother's cousin, but we never thought to ask her about the circumstances of his death. Years later, long after mother died, it occurred to us that it might be possible to discover something about the incident.

First, we approached the St John's Ambulance Brigade: they were sorry they were unable to help. We then went to the Lancashire Record Office, hoping to see the Police archives, but found there is no public access to those documents for the period we needed. We were advised to try newspapers in local libraries.

At the Harris Library, Preston, we found a brief statement in the Lancashire Daily Post for April 28th 1917 ---- a fire followed by explosions had taken place the previous day at an ammunitions factory in the North of England. One man had been killed and four injured. ---- It was disappointing to find so little, but the newspapers were working under strict censorship during the First War.

At Accrington Library, the story unfolded at last. Detailed accounts of the explosion had been published twice in the Accrington Observer, in 1976 and 1985: both times the research had been prompted by enquiries from people, who, like us, had found the card among family papers.

A number of firemen and police men received awards for courageous service at the incident and:--
P.C. James Hardacre was awarded posthumously the King's Police Medal.

The fund raising memorial card includes the title of a poem
"A Noble Deed" written in 1917 as a tribute: part of this being --
Regardless of personal danger, he tried to extinguish the flame;
But alas, it cost a noble life, yet was a hero's name."

The card had been widely distributed to raise funds for P.C.Hardacre's widow and two small children following his tragic death. At the time of the explosion P.C.Hardacre was stationed at Church, though living in Rishton.

The explosion occurred on April 27th, 1917, in Church, at the Coteholme Chemical Company, a subsidiary of William Blythe and Co. The company manufactured picric acid, then used to make high explosives. The area around the factory was covered with yellow dust from the industrial process, hence the nickname for that part of Church --- Canary Island.

When the fire started the local police and the fire brigade were called. P.C.Hardacre went into the burning building, promptly removed one magazine of explosives, and courageously returned for a second. Then the massive explosion occurred, and he was eventually found, buried beneath a collapsed wall. It was realised afterwards that a magazine of other stored explosives never detonated in the fire --- P.C.Hardacre had managed to close the door on the storage area.

There was enormous damage throughout Church: plaster cracked and every window in the town broken, including irreplaceable stained glass in the local churches. But it was considered that there would have been much loss of life and great destruction as far as Accrington and Rishton, but for P.C.Hardacre's bravery.