

Elsie Janet Rush (née Cannon)

Munitions Factory Worker

Service Number: Not applicable Check-in Number 6518

Date Died: 10 April 2002 Age: 80

How Died: Liver/Pancreatic Cancer

Country of burial: Cremated at Carlisle, England

Cemetery or Memorial: Plaque at Carlisle Crematorium

Town Memorial: N/A

Extra Information



Elsie Janet Cannon was born on 30 May 1921 in Carsethorn, South West Scotland. She was the fourth of five children. She attended Kirkbean School (which covered both primary and secondary classes at the time) and, on leaving school, entered domestic service.

Her brother had joined the Royal Navy in 1937 and was lost with the Royal Oak when it was torpedoed in Scapa Flow in October 1939. Her husband-to-be volunteered for the Royal Navy and, at the same time, her younger brother volunteered for the Royal Air Force. My mother wanted to volunteer for one of the armed forces as well (from memory she was keen to join the WRENS), but, because of the loss of her brother, she was persuaded not to join one of the armed forces, and she volunteered to work in the Munitions Factory near Dalbeattie in South West Scotland.

HM Factory (Gretna) was a World War I munitions factory located near the Solway Firth in the south of Scotland. It covered a huge area, 9 miles long by 2 miles wide and stretched from Eastriggs in Scotland to Longtown in England. The factory was closed after World War I and dismantled. When World War 2 began, ICI decided to build six new factories in the south of Scotland during the period 1939 to 1941, one of which was the munitions factory at Dalbeattie.

This was in preference to building another huge factory like the one which had been at Eastriggs. Between January 1942 and June 1945, three of the factories, including the one at Dalbeattie produced one third of Britain's cordite supplies. The factory at Dalbeattie was a nitroglycerine and cordite works until 1945 and was closed and decommissioned in 1946. During its operation, the factory was staffed by 2,200 workers, of whom 2,000 were women.

My mother worked at the Munitions Factory as a blending and packing worker until the end of the war. She said she knew the war was over because, when travelling home one night after completing her shift, the street lights were on again in Dalbeattie. She held various part-time jobs during her working life, as well as raising a family. She sadly passed away in April 2002, a few weeks short of her 81st birthday.

It was down to my mother that the photos, newspaper articles and personal effects of her brother who was lost on board HMS Royal Oak were preserved. She talked a lot about him all through her life and kept his memory very much alive. She had a long-held ambition to visit Orkney and see Scapa Flow which was never fulfilled. However, after she passed away, I made the trip to Orkney and courtesy of the Royal British Legion Branch in Kirkwall, was able to be taken out to the marker buoy over the wreck in Scapa Flow and leave flowers.

(Information provided by Maureen Austin (nee Rush))

Memorials found on: