

JAMES FERRAND DEARDEN, Distinguished Service Order, Military Cross and two Bars

Captain, 1st Battalion Royal Fusileers (City of London Regiment)

Died of illness in England, 6 October 1919, aged 23

Address: Langton House, Bath Road

He is buried in Leckhampton Churchyard (on the southern edge of Block A)

James Ferrand Dearden was born in New Zealand, the eldest son of Peregrine Robert and Annie Abbott Dearden. He attended Cheltenham College before entering the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, in 1913. On 1 October 1914 he was granted a commission in the Royal Fusileers. By 1916 he had been given the temporary rank of Captain.

He was awarded the Military Cross for the first time during the Battle of the Somme in the summer of 1916 and later earned two bars to this honour. In April 1917, during the Battle of Vimy Ridge, he jumped on to a parapet with a machine gun and accounted for many of the opposing force, inspiring his men to hold their positions. For this action he received the Distinguished Service Order – the second highest award for gallantry given to officers.

He was severely wounded in November 1917 and took no further part in the war. He died from the effects of his wounds and illness at Mostar, Queens Road, Cheltenham (near Lansdown Station). This is one of several addresses with which he and his family were associated. Langton House was demolished in the 1960s to make way for the Eagle Star building. It had earlier been occupied by families with Indian Empire connections. For example, Sir James Brooke ('Brooke Rajah,' the ruler of Sarawak) visited his married sister there in 1848. In James Dearden's Will, his address was given as Lewisham House, Suffolk Road.

James's younger brother Peregrine was a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy and was one of the few survivors when HMS Queen Mary blew up under fire in the Battle of Jutland. He was taken prisoner but survived and after his release he returned to New Zealand where he became a sheep farmer.

Continued overleaf

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The headstone on Captain Dearden's grave, erected by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 2006

Photo – Eric Miller