

An American in Rugby

 [CR4031](#)

Labour shortages caused by men joining the Armed Forces during the First World War led to many companies seeking help from overseas. One such organisation was Rugby-based engineering firm Willans & Robinson.

In 1915 a number of Americans came over the Atlantic to work at Rugby. One of these was Joseph McLean who travelled on the Anchor Line ship *Cameronia* that docked at Liverpool in November 1915. The ship was providing a joint Anchor-Cunard Line service on the New York – Glasgow – Liverpool route. It was hazardous making such trips as earlier that year the ship narrowly escaped being attacked by a German U-boat in the River Mersey.

Name of Ship. <i>Cameronia</i>		Port of Arrival <i>Liverpool</i>	Date of Arrival <i>17-11-1915</i>	P.M. 26.							
Steamship Line ANCHOR.		Whence Arrived <i>New York</i>									
NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF ALIEN PASSENGERS.											
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
No. of Passengers	Port at which Embarked	Port at which landed	NAMES OF PASSENGERS.	CLASS.	ADDRESS OF PASSENGERS.	Profession, Occupation, or Calling of Passengers.	AGES OF PASSENGERS. (Under 16 years of age must be stated.)	Country of which Citizens or Subject.	Countries to which Through or Return Tickets are held.	Country of last Permanent Residence.	Country of Intended Future Permanent Residence.
18	<i>New York</i>	<i>Liverpool</i>	<i>Edmund Evans</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>G. Lynch.</i>	<i>Housewife</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>U.S.A.</i>		<i>U.S.A.</i>	
19			<i>Capt. Walter Cook</i>		<i>Birmingham</i>	<i>Engineer</i>	<i>28</i>				
20			<i>Joseph Toomey</i>		<i>Edinburgh</i>	<i>Engineer</i>	<i>33</i>				
21			<i>Harvey Louder</i>		<i>Rugby</i>	<i>Engineer</i>	<i>30</i>				
22			<i>Joseph McLean</i>		<i>Rugby</i>	<i>Engineer</i>	<i>55</i>				
23			<i>John Smith</i>		<i>London</i>	<i>Engineer</i>	<i>25</i>				
24			<i>John Smith</i>		<i>London</i>	<i>Engineer</i>	<i>25</i>				
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No. 195-199

Reported by

Immigration Authorities.

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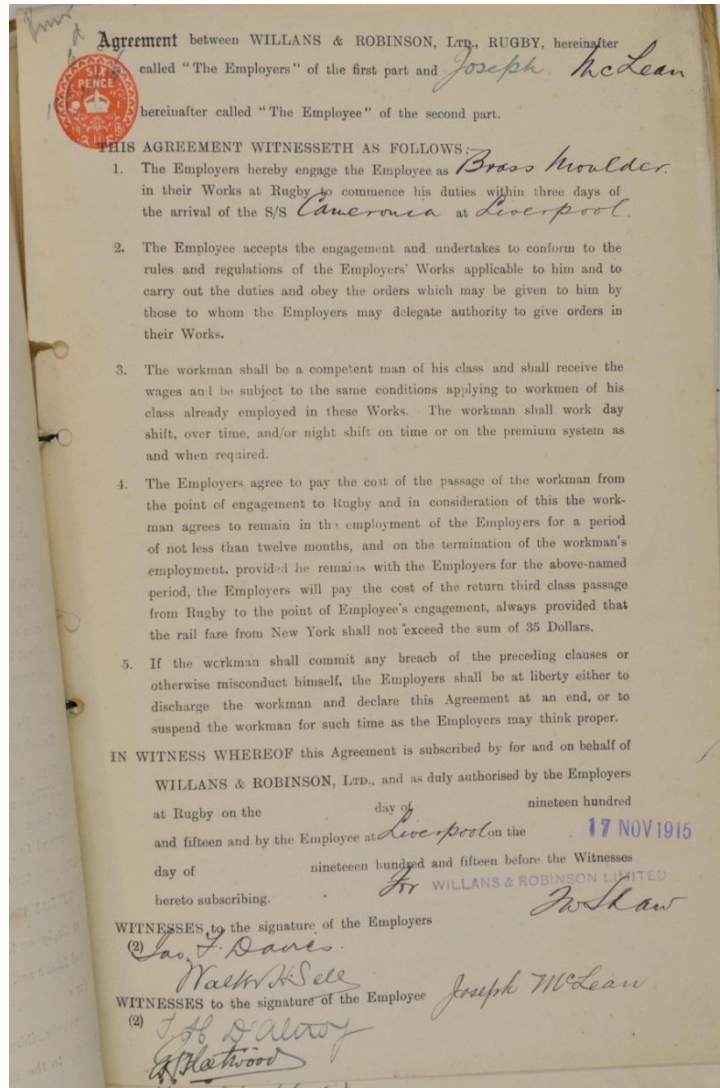
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Part of the passenger list for the ship *Cameronia* that docked in Liverpool in November 1915. It includes four Americans to be employed by Willans & Robinson: Walter Edward Cook (aged 28); Joseph Patrick Toomey (aged 33); Joseph McLean (aged 55); and Harvey Louder (aged 30).

The passenger lists for arrivals in Liverpool show that Joseph had arrived with three other men to work for Willans – Joseph Patrick Toomey, Harvey Louder, and Walter Edward Cook. Joseph was the oldest at 55 and the others were in their late 20s or early 30s.

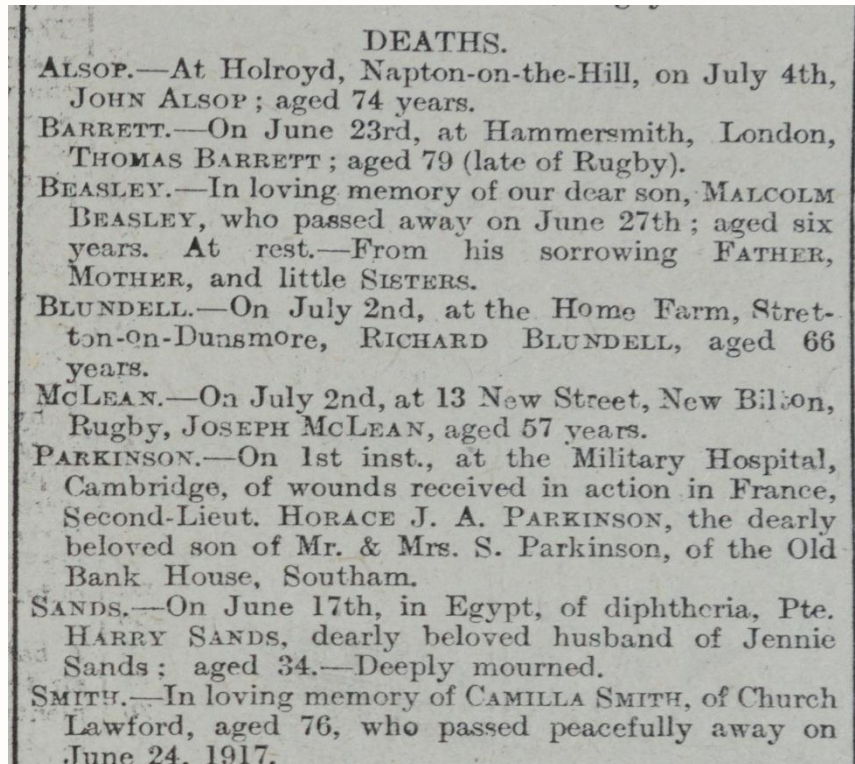
Joseph's contract shows that his occupation was 'brass moulder', someone who made moulds for casting metal in the Willans foundry. The others were machinists (operating equipment such as lathes and grinders).



The agreement dated 17 November 1915 between Willans & Robinson and Joseph McLean for the company to employ him as a Brass Moulder.

The file that holds the contracts for these four Americans also includes agreements for almost 40 others and has related correspondence. One of the items in the file is a list requested by Willans & Robinson showing sailing times and routes of ships coming from North Americas and operated by Canadian Pacific.

The next time we encounter Joseph is an entry for him in the *Rugby Advertiser* death notices, indicating that he died on 2 July 1917 and lived at New Street in New Bilton, Rugby. Willans & Robinson got permission from Bilton Parish Council to bury him at New Bilton Cemetery in Addison Road, Rugby. The cemetery is now known as Croop Hill and is looked after by Rugby Borough Council.



Notice in the *Rugby Advertiser* of the death of Joseph McLean at New Street on 2 July 1917.

The Willans Works site in Rugby is now part of the Alstom group. Its archive deposited at the Record Office (CR 4031) is being catalogued as part of a two year project so that details of the collection are made available online. Volunteers are making significant contributions to this project by identifying and re-packaging glass plate negatives, and getting details from staff and apprentice records.