

# Arthur James Springham

## Fireman at Harlow

Arthur James Springham was born in 1881 in High Wych to James, an agricultural labourer and Sarah Springham and had an elder brother William. At the time of his birth, the family lived at Cottage number 7, Allens Green, High Wych, Hertfordshire.

In January 1910 he marries Edith Ellen nee Wybrew and moves to Bury Road, Harlow, and shortly afterwards joins the Harlow Fire Brigade. His occupation at this time is a Postman.

On Wednesday 22nd June 1910, he is a member of the Harlow Fire Brigade who participate in the St John's Fete at Harlow, in which even though he has only been a member of the brigade for 6 months he wins two silver medals in the contests organised between different fire brigades.

In 1911 he has a daughter Dorris May, who is two months old at the time of the 1911 Census. At this time Arthur and his family are visiting his parents at Allens Green, High Wych, Hertfordshire, and the census form for Bury Road, Harlow indicates this by stating that 'Family Away' is put on the form when it is submitted.

After the outbreak of World War 1, Arthur enlists with the Essex Regiment at Harlow and is given the regimental number 30539. However, he later transfers to the 1st Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment, his regimental number here being 33388. It would appear that for the duration of the war that his wife, Edith and daughter, have moved back to Edith's parents address in The Square, Ugley, near Bishop's Stortford.

On the 4th August 1914, the first battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment was Stationed at Mullingar as part of the 15th Brigade of the 5th Division and on the 16th August was mobilised for war and landed in France and was engaged in various actions on the Western Front. In 1917, the battalion was involved in various battles including ; The Battle of Vimy, The Attack on La Coulotte, The Third Battle of the Scarpe, The Capture of Oppy Wood, The Battle of Polygon Wood, The Battle of Broodseinde, The Battle of Poelcapelle, and The Second Battle of Passchendaele. However, in December 1917 the battalion was deployed to Italy to strengthen the Italian resistance after a recent disaster at the Battle of Caporetto and the Division was positioned along the River Piave and remained there until April 1918, when they returned to France.

In September 1918 the battalion was engaged in the Battle of Drocourt-Queant. It was during this battle, on the 2nd September 1918, two months before the end of the war that Arthur was killed in action. His final resting place is unknown, but he is mentioned on the war memorial at Vis-en-Artois British Cemetery, Haucourt, Department du Pas-de-Calais France.

# Charles Driver

## Fireman at Witham

Charles drive was born in 1887 in Witham, his father James, was a Carpenter and his mother was Annie. By the 1891 Census he had 4 Siblings, Alice, Ethel, Fred and Arthur and can be found living in Bridge Street, Witham.

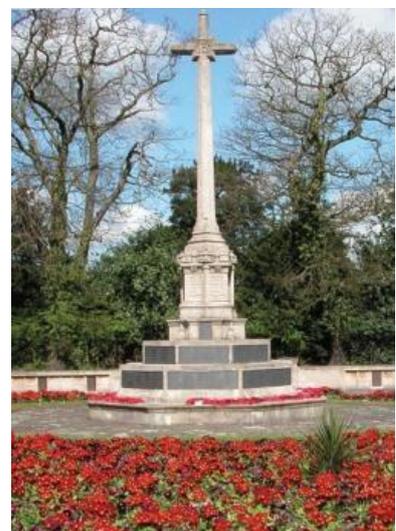
Charles was a very active and sporty person and was named on match sheets several occasions between 1904, when he was elected vice captain of Witham Albion Football Club, to at least 1907. He can be found playing for Witham against such teams as Bocking (a friendly) and league matches against Heybridge (twice), the Warren (Woodham) and many others.

By the 1911 Census, the Driver family had moved to Mill Road, Witham by which point Charles had become a coach painter and, it is believed, had joined the Witham Fire Brigade. The exact date he joined is not known, as the records of this brigade have either been destroyed or lost. However it is know that he was a member of the Brigade on the 14th February 1913 as he takes part in the fireman's dinner.

He was obviously a good singer as he was involved in a number of concerts, several of which were in connection with the Conservative and Unionist Association, as far away as Maldon. A family orientated person, he missed a concert in 1914 when he pulled out of the annual dinner of the Essex (Fortress Engineers) Royal Engineers at Shire Hall, Chelmsford, because his brother was seriously ill.

Following the outbreak of War, he joins the 5th Battalion of the Essex Regiment with a regiment number of 2238, and serves overseas during which he is awarded the Military Medal. The Military Medal was a level 3 Gallantry Medal which was established during the First World War to recognise personnel of the British Army and other services and personnel of Commonwealth countries, below commissioned rank. It was the equivalent to the Military Cross (which was awarded to Commissioned Officers and rarely to Warrant Officers, who could also be awarded the MM). It was awarded for "Acts of gallantry, and devotion under fire or for individual or associated acts of bravery which were insufficient to merit the Distinguished Conduct Medal."(Forces War Records)

Charles later transfers to the Gloucestershire Regiment and was serving with this Regiment in France, when he was Killed in Action.



# Frederick Charles Sell

## Fireman, West Ham Fire Brigade

Frederick Charles Sell was born in 1872 in Fulham to Thomas, who was a police sergeant, and Rosalie Sell.

In 1898, at the age of 26, Frederick married Caroline Louise Muntz in Great Yarmouth and he became a fireman with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade where in 1901 he was stationed at Mile End in London, his address being Jewel Street, Mile End Road.

By the census of 1911, he had left the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and joined the West Ham Brigade, which was officially in Essex. He was living at 14 Agnes Street, Silvertown, and has a family of four sons, Harold, Frederick, Thomas and Leonard and one daughter, Winifred.

Friday 19th January 1917 was a day which would have devastating consequences for the Sell family. At 6.52 pm. a blast occurred at a munitions factory that was manufacturing explosives for Britain's World War I military effort. Approximately 50 tons of trinitrotoluene (TNT) exploded, killing 73 people and injuring 400 more, as well as causing substantial damage in the local area. Initially, a fire had broken out in the melt-pot room, efforts to put it out were under way when the TNT exploded.

Seventy-three people were killed, and more than 400 injured. Up to 70,000 properties were damaged, 900 nearby ones destroyed or unsalvageable damaged, including to the Silvertown Fire Station at which Frederick was based.



Silvertown Fire

Fireman Sell and his daughter Winifred were killed in the explosion, Winifred being 15 years of age and a scholarship pupil at the Central Secondary School.



The damage caused by the explosion was extremely severe, the factory was destroyed and houses for a great distance were damaged, some beyond repair. Among the injured were a number of fireman as well as police officers and factory workers and their families.

In late January 1917, there was a public funeral service at which the King's representative, the Honourable Henry Stoner, attended as well as the Bishop of Chelmsford together with other dignitaries. There were thousands of mourners present and a great demonstration of sorrow was obvious.

At the burial of the Fire Officers, the Bishop of Chelmsford stated that he had often wished that there was a decoration given to firemen equal in importance and in value to that of the Victoria Cross.

On the 25th June 1918, Frederick's widow, Caroline Louise, attended at the investiture held at Stratford, at the West Ham Recreation Ground, where she received a medal, presented by the Town Council, in memory of her husband.

The people of Silvertown also remembered the work done by the Fire Brigade and erected a plaque in their memory.



Silvertown Memorial

# Frederick William Purchase

## Fireman at Brentwood

Frederick William Purchase was born on 20th February 1876 in Buttevant, Cork, Ireland to John Purchase and Margaret (nee Beer), He was born into a military family and in 1891, he is residing at military married quarters in Warley in Essex. Frederick was the eldest of 4 brothers and 2 sisters, one of brothers, Ernest John, being born in 1884 and dying in 1892, in Warley, Essex.

After schooling, at the age of 18 he joined the Essex Regiment on the 8th May 1894 and in 1899 he was posted to the second Boer War in South Africa with his regiment. In 1900, whilst he was away in South Africa his father, John, died. During the time he was out in South Africa, he was promoted to Corporal and was awarded the Queen's medal with two clasps showing the campaigns with which he had been involved: the Orange Free State Clasp, and the Transvaal Clasp. He was also awarded two date clasps: the 1901 and 1902 clasps and the South African Campaign medal.

After serving in South Africa, he returned home. It is not known when he left the army but he does also receive the Long Service and good Conduct medal.

In Jan 1913 he married Alice E Matthews at St Thomas's Church in Brentwood and had at some time joined the Fire Brigade at Brentwood. Following his marriage he lived at 32 Alfred Road, Brentwood.

In 1914 he rejoined the Essex Regiment 2nd Battalion (the Pompadours) with the rank of Sergeant, his regimental number being 4204. On the 4th of August 1914 the 2nd Battalion is stationed at Chatham as part of the 12th Brigade of the 4th Division and then moved to Cromer, Norwich and Harrow. On 24th August 1914 the unit is mobilised for war and arrived in Le Harve, transferring to the 12th Brigade of the 34th Division.

Frederick was soon involved in the action and was awarded the Medaille Militaire for conspicuous bravery. The Médaille Militaire (or Military Medal) is a decoration reserved for non-commissioned officers, simple soldiers and for generals who commanded on battlefields. It was created by Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, the future Napoleon III, on 22 January 1852. It is the second national award in the order of precedence and is administered by the Grand Chancery of the Legion of Honour.



He was also mentioned in Lord French's dispatches dated the 8th October 1914.

On the 1st November 1914 he was killed in action and was buried at Armentieres.

In Essex his death was reported in the Essex Newsman, together with his award of the Medaille Militaire. On the 16th November 1914 Frederick has a son, Frederick Henry, which of course he never sees.

Frederick was also awarded the 1914 Star, the Victory Medal and the British War Medal.

Unfortunately for the Purchase Family, Frederick's brother, Charles William, died at Salonika on 26th December 1915. He was a private in the Royal Army Medical Corps, Regimental Number 1960.

# George Crabb

## Fireman at Epping



George Crabb was born on the 13th June 1886, the son of Henry Wilson Crabb, an agricultural worker and Dorothy (*nee Richardson*) who in total had 10 children, 2 of whom died. George was the third youngest son of the family and at the age of 5 can be found living with the family in Hastingwood Road, Hastingwood, Epping.

In 1903, at the age of 17yrs, George joined the 4th Battalion (Territorial) Essex Regiment. Subsequently, he also became a member of the Town Band and of the Epping Fire Brigade.

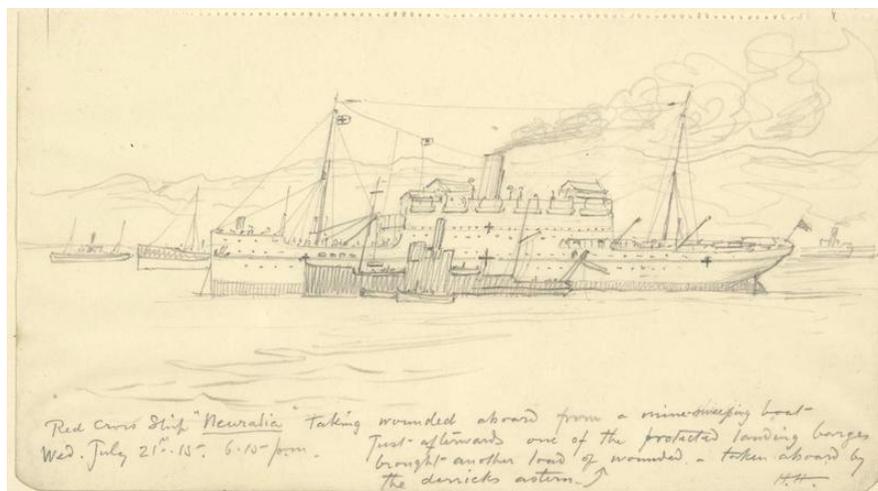
In the census of 1911 he was living with his mother and brother William in Hemnall Street, Epping and his occupation was a 'Turner'. He had also been promoted to Sergeant in the 4th Essex Regiment

On Whit Sunday, 25th March 1915, he married Ada A Butcher who was the fourth daughter of the late Mr W. Butcher and Mrs Butcher of Lindsey Street, Epping, at the Congregational Church in Epping. His Best Man was his brother William Roger Crabb, who was at that time a private in the 4th Essex Regiment.

On the 21st Jul 1915, 3 months after his marriage, George and his brother William, embarked with the rest of the 4th Essex Regiment at Devonport, bound for the Mediterranean via Lemnos. He landed on 12th August 1915 on the Gallipoli peninsular at Sulva Bay. After 8 weeks George contracted Enteric Fever and Dysentery and was taken to the military hospital in Alexandria. He returned home aboard the HMHS Neuralia, which had been converted from a troop ship to a hospital ship.

However, on the return journey and within sight of England he dies of his illness.

On the 2nd December 1915 his funeral takes place at Epping, where a detachment of the 4th Essex Regiment were present and the route was lined by the Epping Fire Brigade, who followed after the mourning coaches with the manual engine, carrying George's helmet and Axe.



His brother William also landed on the 12 August 1915 at Sulva bay like his brother George. However, he remained in Palestine and was wounded twice. He was killed on the 26th March 1917 at the first battle of Gaza, and is buried in Jerusalem, Israel.

# George Lionel Harvey

## Fireman at Southend

George Lionel Harvey was born in 1896 to William George Harvey, a publican and Ellen Harvey. At the time of his birth, his family was living at the Alexander House Hotel, 27 High Street, Southend-on-Sea. The 1911 census shows that he had a sister Minnie, who was 2 years his junior, being born in 1898.

William, in addition to being a publican was the captain of the Southend Fire Brigade so it was not surprising that, when reaching the correct age, George should become a member of the same brigade. He eventually became a paid member of the Brigade.

At the outbreak of war, George did not volunteer immediately and in September 1916 he was still in the brigade when a Mr Wardley appeals on behalf of the Brigade for exemptions for the firemen from enlisting. Before the war, the Brigade had 52 men but this number had reduced to 39 by September 1916. It must be remembered that by this time Southend had been subject of a number of bombing attacks by Zeppelins, which had caused damage and injury to people in the town. Despite the arguments put forward by Mr Wardley, the brigade are ordered to lose four men to the services.

One of these men was George Lionel, who was a member of the Mercantile Marine Reserve, who joined RFA Thrush as an assistant motor engineer.

The RFA Thrush was built in 1889 by Scotts of Greenock and was launched on the 22nd June 1889. She was one of a Class of 9 gunboats, 2 of which were converted into Salvage Ships designed by Sir William Henry White, the Royal Navy Director of Naval Construction in 1888, which were the last of the composite-hulled gunboats built for the Royal Navy. In 1889 the ship was commanded by Lieutenant HRH Prince George of Wales, Royal Navy. In June 1916 she became a RFA salvage vessel with her name unchanged. On 29<sup>th</sup> January 1917 while under the command of Lieutenant



Commander Ivo James Kay RNR, RFA Thrush attended the scene of the sinking of HMS/m K13 in the Gareloch and in the subsequent rescue of 49 of the crew including the submarine's Commanding Officer. The day following the rescue all the crew of Thrush together with those rescue received congratulatory telegrams from H.M. King George V.

However, on the 11th April 1917 less than 3 months after being involved in the rescue of HMS/m K13, she herself founders off County Antrim, Northern Ireland during a snow storm, with the loss of eight members of the crew including, unfortunately, George. The rest of the crew were rescued by breeches buoy,

His body was recovered and he was buried in Sutton Cemetery, Southend-on-Sea



# Harry Leonard Shelley

## Volunteer Fireman in Southend

Harry Leonard Shelley was born in April 1885 in Prittlewell, Southend on Sea to Joseph and Louisa Shelley, his father being a carman. Harry had 3 sisters and two brothers. However, his father did not seem too bothered about education for Harry's eldest sister as in 1883 and 1885 he was taken before the school board and fined for not sending his children to school.

By 1911 Harry was married to Mary and was living in Sunnyside Road, Epping and was a Driver/Manager of the American Anglo Oil Depot.

When the war started in 1914 Harry did not enlist immediately but became a member of the volunteers in December 1915. However, because of his occupation he was exempted until the military applied for the exemption to be lifted in November 1916 at a local tribunal. The appeal was allowed, not immediately, but from the 1st January 1917.

On January 11th 1917 Harry enlisted in the Norfolk Regiment at Warley in Essex, as can be seen from the army records opposite.

On the 10th November 1917 the following press report from the Essex Newsman in respect of Harry Leonard Shelley was published:  
*"News has been received by Mrs Shelley of Epping that her husband Pte. H.L. Shelley Norfolk Regiment died in France on October 24 as a result of head wounds received in Action. Pte. Shelley was a keen member of Epping Rifle Club and last year won two silver spoons for shooting. He belonged to the Volunteers and also the Fire Brigade before joining the Regular Forces"*

Army Form B. 2512. Epping. 1917. W8693. Card No. 37/34. No. 27311 Name: Shelley, H. L. Corp. 3rd Norfolk Regt.

Questions to be put to the Recruit before Enlistment.

1. What is your Name?	Harry Leonard Shelley
2. What is your full Address?	New Villa, New Epping
3. Are you a British Subject?	Epping
4. What is your Age?	31 Years 9 Months
5. What is your Trade or Calling?	Manager of American Anglo Oil Depot
6. Are you Married?	No
7. Have you ever served in any branch of His Majesty's Forces, naval or military, if so, which?	No
8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated?	No
9. Are you willing to be enlisted for General Service?	No
10. Did you receive a Notice, and do you understand its meaning, and who gave it to you?	No
11. Are you willing to serve upon the following conditions provided His Majesty should as long require your services? For the duration of the War, at the end of which you will be discharged with all convenient speed. You will be required to serve for one day with the Colours and the remainder of the period in the Army Reserve, in accordance with the provisions of the Royal Warrant dated 20th Oct., 1915, until such time as you may be called up by order of the Army Council. If employed with Hospitals, depots of Mounted Units, or as a Clerk, etc. you may be retained after the termination of hostilities until your services can be spared, but such retention shall in no case exceed six months.	No

SIGNATURE OF RECRUIT: H. L. Shelley  
Signature of Witness: [Signature]

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT ON ATTESTATION.  
I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs, and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, in Person, Crown, and Dignity against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE OR ATTESTING OFFICER.  
The Recruit above named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.  
The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence.  
I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me at [Location] on this 11th day of January 1917.  
Signature of the Justice: [Signature]

The army records below show that he was wounded with a fractured skull on the 25 October 1917 and died on the 28th October 1917.

Mary Shelley was informed by telegraph of the death of her husband on the 30th October 1917

On the 6th May 1918 Mary was awarded a war pension of 18 shillings and 9 pence

Harry Leonard Shelley was buried in Mendingham Military Cemetery, Poperinge, West Flanders, Belgium. He was posthumously awarded the Victory Medal and the British War Medal.



# Henry Vickers

## Sub Officer at Silvertown 1917

Henry was born to John and Charlotte Vickers in Barton, Lincolnshire in 1868.



By 1901 he had moved to London and was living in Woodstock Street, West Ham. He had also become a fireman with the local fire brigade, married Annie and had two children, William and Hilda. By 1917 he had moved to 2 Fort Street, Silvertown and was a member of the Silvertown Fire Brigade.

On the 19th January 1917 a fire and explosion occurred at Brunner-Mond's munitions factory at Crescent Wharf, North Woolwich Road, Silvertown. At 6.52pm. a blast occurred at a munitions factory that was manufacturing explosives for Britain's World War I military effort. Approximately 50 tons of trinitrotoluene (TNT) exploded, killing 73 people and injuring 400 more, as well as causing substantial damage in the local area. A fire broke out in the melt-pot room, and efforts to put it out were under way when the TNT exploded.

Seventy-three people were killed, and more than 400 injured. Up to 70,000 properties were damaged, 900 nearby ones destroyed or unsalvageable damaged, including to the Silvertown Fire Station at which Henry was based. Shrapnel from this explosion also caused a serious fire in a large gasometer at Blackwall and at the East Greenwich Gas Works on the opposite side of the river as well as triggering numerous street alarm calls to various parts of East and South East London by people who had seen the glow of the fire in the night sky.

In late January 1917, a public funeral service was held at which the King's representative, the Honourable Henry Stoner attended, as well as the Bishop of Chelmsford, together with other dignitaries. There were thousands of mourners present and a great demonstration of sorrow was obvious.

At the burial of the Fire Officers, the Bishop of Chelmsford stated that he had often wished that there was a decoration given to firemen equal in importance and in value to that of the Victoria Cross.

After the explosion, Annie and the family move to Plymouth, and the West Ham Council wrote to her expressing their sincere sympathy and stating, '...The members of the Council felt that your husband as willingly gave his life and died gloriously as any soldier on the battlefield'



She was later presented with a medal on behalf of the council, the medal described as the Corporation of West Ham Bravery Medal, obv. heraldic shield, 'Corporation of West Ham'; rev, 'Presented for Bravery', with shield bearing fireman's helmet and axe, engraved 'To Sub-Officer Henry Vickers'; edge inscribed, '19th January 1917', 38mm., silver, with silver buckle on ribbon, and presented in fitted case.

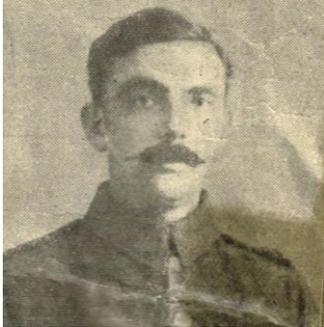
The Council also erected a memorial in West Ham Cemetery to the Fireman who were killed.



ERECTED BY  
THE WEST HAM CORPORATION  
TO THE HONOUR  
AND IN MEMORY OF  
SUB-OFFICER HENRY VICKERS,  
AGED 48 YEARS.  
AND FIREMAN FREDERICK CHARLES SELL  
AGED 45 YEARS.  
MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATION FIRE BRIGADE  
WHO WERE KILLED IN THE EXECUTION OF THEIR DUTY  
AT THE SILVERTOWN EXPLOSION ON THE  
19<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 1917.  
ALSO BY WINIFRED SELL, AGED 15 YEARS,  
DAUGHTER OF FIREMAN SELL,  
AND ETHEL ELMER BETTS, AGED 4 MONTHS,  
CHILD OF FIREMAN GEORGE BETTS,  
WHO ALSO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE EXPLOSION.

# Isaac Steer

## Fireman at Grays



Isaac Steer was born in 1879, the youngest son of Isaac and Martha Steer. The family consisted of 7 boys (including Isaac) and 3 girls and can be found in 1881 and 1891 census living in Woking, Surrey at 1 Ferndale Road, which is opposite Wheatsheaf Green.

On 2nd June 1900 he marries Harriet Welton in Walthamstow, Essex and in 1901 can be found living at 9 Quarry Hill, moving to 38 Clarence Road, Grays by the time of the 1911 census. Come 1911, he had two children, Keith Charles aged 6 and Horace Victor, aged 2, his occupation being a plasterer. During his period at Grays, he joined the Grays Fire Brigade.

At the outbreak of War, Isaac enlisted at Grays into the Royal Garrison Artillery with the regimental number 280136 and the rank of Gunner. On the 27th October he was sent to France where on the 30th September 1917 he died of wounds. Isaac Steers is buried at Canada Farm Cemetery, Ypres, West Flanders, Belgium.

He was posthumously awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



Canada Farm Cemetery

# Robert Patten

## Fireman at East Ham Brigade

In April 1915, The East Ham Brigade were returning from a serious fire at the Albert Dock in a large building known as Central Buffet. As the engine was going along High Street South, the driver misjudged an overtaking maneuver and ran into an oncoming tramcar. Before the driver could stop, the engine mounted the pavement, knocked down some railings and plunged into a field. There were five men on the engine, a superintendent and four firemen, one of whom was identified by a newspaper as Robert Patten. All were all thrown to the ground, the fireman identified as Patten fell on the back of his headland was killed.

It is believed that the newspaper report that identified Robert Patten was wrong and that the deceased's correct name was James Robert Patten, who in the 1911 census, was a Brigade fireman with the District Council in Walthamstow.

James Robert Patton was born in 1884 in Hyde Road, Hoxton, London and married Ellen in 1900. They had a daughter, Ellen, who was 6 months old. At this time they were living at 9 Truro Street, High Street, Walthamstow.

The inquest into his death was held by Dr Collins on Friday 9th April 1915. The driver of the fire engine was Robert James Holt and the Coroner's jury found that the deceased Patten's death was accidental and caused by an error of judgement on Holt's part, thinking that he had room to pass a tramcar and cutting it too fine. The jury thought that the steering gear was broken as a result of the impact of the two vehicles.

The Coroner said he could not accept the verdict as it had not been put to any of the witnesses if the driver was to blame . The jury was passing a vote of censure on a man for something which did not appear in evidence, it was not reasonable and it was not English. It was agreed to call expert evidence and Mr Edmonds, engineer who said the fracture could not have occurred without a considerable blow at one time or another, and it was possible that such an impact with the tram would have caused the fracture of the steering wheel. The Coroner accepted the jury's verdict that the deceased's death was accident and there was no gross negligence. The jury agreed that it was caused by an error of judgment on the fire engine driver's part.

# **Frederick William Lucas Sudbury**

## **Volunteer Fireman at Halstead**

Frederick William Lucas Sudbury was born in Waltham Green, Middlesex to Frank Lane Sudbury and Florence Louisa Sudbury. The 1911 census shows that the family were living at 5 Bridge Street, Halstead and that his occupation was a joiner and carpenter and that he was single. He was at this time the eldest of 4, his siblings being 2 sisters, Edith and Dorothy Kate and a brother Harry Lake Sudbury. As well as being a Volunteer Fireman at Halstead and a member of the Essex Yeomanry, Frank was also a distinguished cricketer and football player. In September 1914 he married Jessie Taylor Craig.

On the outbreak of war he was called up for service with the Household Cavalry, Essex Yeomanry Reserve Battalion and in 1915 he was serving at Hounslow Cavalry Barracks in Hounslow. He was a Sergeant Firearms instructor, instructing new recruits how to fire their weapons, his regimental number being 641.

On 25th June 1915, he was teaching his recruits to fire their weapons and in particular was instructing a Trooper Harris. He was lying about a yard in front of Trooper Harris and gave the order for Harris to fire. Unfortunately for Sergeant Sudbury, by some means a live cartridge had been placed with the four dummy cartridges in the clip in Harris's rifle. On the rifle being fired, the bullet hit Sergeant Sudbury under the eye and killed him instantly. In evidence given at the Coroner's Court held in Halstead, Major Tritton, Sergeant Sudbury's commanding officer stated that there was no explanation as to how the live cartridge got in the ammunition clip and that it was a regulation that the instructor should have examined the clip and if Sergeant Sudbury had done so he would have seen the live cartridge.

The Coroner's jury returned a verdict of accidental death from a gunshot wound to the head and found that neither Trooper Harris or the army were to blame for the death.

His funeral took place at Holy Trinity Church, and he was buried at Halstead cemetery.

His father Frank Lane Sudbury died on the 5th March 1917 and his brother Harry Lake who was a corporal in the 7th Middlesex Regiment, his regimental number being 204176, was killed in action on the 25th August 1917 in France.

# **Sidney Frank Simpson**

## **Fireman at Leigh-on-Sea**

Sidney Frank Simpson was born in 1887 in Great Wakering to George Simpson, the landlord of the Exhibition Inn and Sarah Catherine (nee Peirson). He had three sisters, Mercy, Gertrude Emily, and Maud Alice and one brother Christopher Arthur.

In the census of 1891 and 1901 he was living with his family in the High Street at Great Wakering. In 1910 he married Elizabeth and moves to 8 West Street, Leigh-on-Sea. His occupation was a Water Works Inspector. At about this time he joins the Leigh-on-Sea Fire Brigade.

On the 21st May 1916 he joined the Royal Engineers as a Sapper, his regimental number being 551059. He was posted to the 227th Field Company, Royal Engineers and was sent to France on the 26th May 1917.

The 227th Field Company (known as the Stockton Tees) served with 39th Division. Following initial training near home, the Division concentrated in the Winchester area in early August 1915 moving to the Marlborough Lines at Aldershot on the 28th of September where additional units joined and they moved to Witley in October, where the full complement was reached. The Division proceeded to France in late February 1916, concentrating near Blaringhem and on the 30th June 1916 they were in action in an attack near Richebourg l'Avoue where the Sussex battalions suffered heavy casualties. They were in action during the Battles of the Somme, including the fighting on the Ancre, The Battle of Thiepval Ridge, The Battle of the Ancre heights, the capture of Schwaben Redoubt and Stuff Trench as well as The Battle of the Ancre. In 1917 they fought in The Battle of Pilkem Ridge, The Battle of Langemarck, which came to an end on the 18th August 1917. ([www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/royalengineers227fldcoy-qw.php#sthash.97mBMNrn.dpuf](http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/royalengineers227fldcoy-qw.php#sthash.97mBMNrn.dpuf))

On the 21st August 1917 Sidney was in a working party which received a direct hit by a shell. He received severe wounds in his back, penetrating his stomach, buttocks and head. He died peacefully one hour after his admission to hospital.

He is buried at plot III row B26 at the Reninghelst New Military Cemetery, Poperinge, West Flanders, Belgium.

At the time of his death, his address is given as 17 Chinchilla Road, South Church Road, Southend-on-Sea.

# Timothy Gibson Frost

## Fireman at Hornchurch

Timothy Gibson Frost was born in 1887 to Charles, a Brewers Storeman and Sarah (nee Linsell) who were married in Bethnal Green in 1868. He was the youngest of 6 children, the others being Lydia M, Charles W, Florence K, William G, and Amelia B., although he did have another sister Mary Ann who was born in 1872 but died in the same year. At the age of 2 his father dies, leaving Sarah to bring up the family, who takes occupation as a Laundress. In the 1891 census the family was living in Church Sreet, Hornchurch. By 1901 the family had moved and are living at the Laundry in Hornchurch High Street. By 1911 Sarah has disappeared from the census register, probably by death, (although records of her death cannot be found) as have Lydia and Amelia. The rest of the family are still living in the High street and have taken a lodger Edward Pease who is a green grocer. Charles was now the head of the family, he and Timothy's occupation was shown as House Painters, whilst William was an iron moulder and Florence was noted as the housekeeper.

Between 1901 and 1909, Timothy had become a private in the H (Hornchurch)(Territorial) company of the 4th Essex Regiment, and attended the annual dinner at the Drill Hall, Hornchurch where he received a number of prizes for Prize Firing at Rainham Ranges, including being a member of the section which won the Hayes Cup.

At the Hornchurch Carnival in 1912 he wins first prize for the Donkey Turnout!

At some time he had joined the Hornchurch Fire Brigade, as in 1913 he was a member of a contingent of the Brigade who attend the funeral of PC Joseph Watt, Essex Constabulary, who had sustained fatal injuries in Romford, whilst stopping a runaway horse.

After the outbreak of war he joins the 4th Battalion of the Essex Regiment. Because of his previous service with them he becomes a Sergeant, with the regiment number of 200118.

At the outbreak of war the 4th Battalion was stationed at Brentwood and together with the 5th Battalion which was stationed at Chelmsford were both part of the Essex Brigade of the East Anglican Division which then moved to Norwich. In April 1915 the Division moved to Colchester and the formation became the 161st Brigade of the 54th Division and moved to St Albans. On the 21 July 1915 they embarked at Devonport to travel to the Mediterranean via Lemos, landing at Sulva Bay on the 12th August 195 and were engaged in various actions against the Turkish Army. On the 4th December 1915 they were evacuated from Gallipoli to Murdos due to severe casualties from combat, disease and harsh weather. On the 17th December 1915 the Brigade was deployed to Alexandria and during 1916 they formed part of the Suez Canal Defence. In 1917 they were involved in the first battle of Gaza, which commenced on the 26th March 1917 and which saw the Egyptian Expeditionary Force suffer defeat at the hands of the Ottoman Empire in their attempt to invade Palestine. On the 16th April the second battle of Gaza starts, ending three days later in another victory for the Ottoman armies.

On the 31st September 1917 the Third Battle of Gaza commences and it is during this action that Timothy was killed on the 3rd November 1917, four days before the battle came to an end when Allied troops entered the city to find it abandoned by the Ottoman Forces. Timothy is buried at the Gaza Cemetery. (*Forces War Records and World War 1914-1918 Day by Day*)

Unfortunately this was not the only tragedy which has affected the Frost Family, as his younger brother William, who had joined the 9th Battalion of the Essex Regiment, his regimental number being 21406, died of wounds in the Western European Theatre in France and is buried at Boulogne sur Mer, Department du Paas-de-Calais, France.



Gaza World War 1 Cemetery