



Woodford Remembers



Pte. William Freer

27 January 1888 - 17 July 1916

Family

William Freer was born in Sharnbrook Bedfordshire in approximately 1842. In his adult life he worked as an agricultural labourer. In 1867 he married Ruth Sanders (four years his junior) of Islip, at Sharnbrook Parish Church. Following the births of their first four children the family moved to Woodford, where following the birth of another two children, William (frequently referred to as Willie) was born 1888. He was admitted to Woodford Infant School on 10 May 1892, leaving to attend the Mixed School (Junior School) in 1896. William senior (father) was a blast furnace labourer at the Islip furnaces, and the family lived in Mill Terrace, in one of the terraced cottages erected for furnace workers.

In the 3rd quarter of 1913 William (junior), married Emily Hewitt, daughter of David and Rachel (nee Lawson) of Little Staughton. David and Rachel in their early married life had lived in Newtown (1881 census), but in later years lived in the cottage next to the Baptist Chapel Manse (now 95 High Street). In 1911 Emily lived with her widowed father, whilst William was in the Army. Emily was also the aunt of Ernest Houghton, see Woodford Remembers.

Army Service

Willie joined the Northamptonshire Militia (3rd Battalion) at the age of 17 years and 1 month. His day job was recorded as working for Mr Wolfe in the ironstone mines at Islip. His regimental number was 7306 and he noted his parents, William and Ruth, as his next of kin. He attested on 7 March 1905 agreeing to serve for six years and joined the battalion on 27 April that year. In the 1911 census he is listed as a bandsman in the Northants Regiment- 2nd Battalion. During his war service his regimental number is given as 7696 suggesting he had transferred to the full time regiment before September 1905 ultimately serving in the first battalion. Willie died as a result of a gas attack, being unable to put his mask on quick enough, he died in hospital 24 hours later.

As a member of the first battalion, assuming he stayed with them he could well have served at Mons, Ypres, Aubers, Loos, Pozieres and the Somme. He was awarded the War and Victory Medals and the 1914 star.

Burial / grave

Grave D01 Meaulte Military Cemetery.

Dependants

Wife – Emily Freer

Commemoration

Woodford War Memorial

St Mary's Church Memorial, Woodford



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If you can help with more information please contact

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