



# Woodford Remembers



## John James Taylor

1896 – 14 May 1915

### Family

John's Grandfather - Samuel Taylor (the son of farmers Samuel and Ann) was born in Little Hallam Derbyshire. At the age of ten he was 5 feet 10 inches, ultimately reaching 7 feet 4 ½ in his late teens. Finding employment was not easy but on a visit to the Castle Donnington Fair he went into a sideshow to see a "giant", expecting someone over 8 feet. The "giant" was in fact only 6 feet 3. Becoming the centre of attention himself, Samuel was immediately engaged by the fair owner, Mr Reader, as a replacement and was advertised as the "Ilkeston Giant". He eloped with the owner's daughter, known as Mademoiselle, who was part of a "Glass Blowing Act". They had at nine children, but by his accidental death in 1875 only two still lived, one of whom was William. Samuel was buried with full ceremony following a procession through the town at the Stanton Road Cemetery, Ilkeston.

William worked in the fairground industry and acquired a number of sideshows of his own. On 30 December 1889 he married his late brother's widow, Louisa Taylor nee Proctor, daughter of circus proprietor Robert Proctor. In 1897 William Taylor became the second travelling showman in the country to purchase a bioscope. Bioscopes were travelling cinemas which comprised a tent like structure with a wagon mounted stage and seating for up to 1000 people in Taylor's model. Entertainment included silent movies, stage acts and mechanical exhibits. The entrances were each side of a large fairground organ playing loud popular music, painted in bright colours and lit by 4,000 coloured lamps. The power was generated by a small generator mounted on the showman's (steam) engine. Taylor's Bioscope travelled to fairs, large and small, including Woodford through the summer months.

The couple had four children, Maria, John (b1896), Victoria (b1900) and Alexandra (born on Woodford village green at the Woodford Feast). Victoria and John received their schooling in Woodford, boarding photographer Mr Fred Knighton of Addington Road. John was also a member of the Church Choir.

William and Louisa continued touring the country frequently appearing at the larger fairs alongside the Thurston family. With the advent of cinemas by 1914 popularity of the bioscope show declined. With foresight in 1913 William had a built a cinema in Calne Wiltshire, and it was to here, he and Louisa retired in 1914 to run the New Electric Palace.

### Army Service

John is known to have joined the Essex Yeomanry soon after the War started enlisting in Chelmsford (Reg. no. 1681). The regiment landed at Le Havre on 1 December 1914, and fought alongside the Household Cavalry. John was a machine gunner. He is recorded as being killed in action on 14 May at the 2<sup>nd</sup> battle of Ypres after being initially being reported as wounded in action, then missing in action.

### Burial / grave

No known grave

### Dependants

None

### Commemoration

Woodford War Memorial  
Menin Gate Ypres Panel 5



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If you can help with more information please contact

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ESSEX YEOMANRY	
LIEUT. COLONEL	PRIVATE
BRADY E.	CHRISTIE D.W.
MAJOR	COOPER G.
ROOPEK A.	DAY W.
LIEUTENANT	DEIGHTON F. J.
BRUNTON G. J.	DARRELL E. C.
REID G. F. N.	GARDNER W. E.
	GREEN S. E.
	HILL E. A.
	HURST R.
SECOND LIEUT.	JONES W. E.
SWIRE A. C.	LADDIE E.
	MOTTER H. A. D.
SERGEANT	MARRI B.
BROCK C. E.	MANSFIELD H.
BUTCHER L. E.	MILBANK W. R.
CLARK T.	MILLER H.
DEARM I. C.	NEWMAN S. E.
LEDGER D.	MUNN W.
NEWMAN S. F.	PETCHER S. J.
PEARCE A.	PHARASH E. J.
	PRIME E. J.
CORPORAL	PROPERT E. W.
ALLEN T.	RIDGWELL E.
APPLETON E.	ROBERTS W.
BIRD F. E.	ROWELL H. R.
DIGGENT S. L.	SEAROOK E. H.
LANCE CORPORAL	SMITH H. C.
LEABROOK F. M.	SOUTH A. T.
	TAYLOR C.
	TAYLOR D. H.
PRIVATE	TAYLOR H.
ASKEW O. C.	TAYLOR J. J.
BARKER J.	TAYLOR J. W.
BIGGIN B. W.	TRUEFIT C. J.
BELL F. E.	WILD A. J.
BLINCOE S. W.	WILLIAMS E. C.
BRIDELL C. H. G.	WRIGHT H. G.

Official records relating to fairground families are rare consequently this evidence has been gathered from publications by G W Essex and Sheffield University, local newspapers and the memories of the late Cyril Wilson. The photograph is courtesy of Imperial War Museum.