



William Scarff

1698 Private, 5th Battalion East Surrey Regiment

He died on 3rd February 1915 in India, aged 18

He was buried in Barkacha, India and is commemorated on the Madras Memorial



It is difficult to know where to start with William Scarff, purely because of the sheer number of his family that were scattered around Harleston in the late 19th and early 20th Century. In 1891 there were 22 Scarffs living on The Common alone, all of whom were related within one or two degrees to James Scarff, grandfather of our Harleston Hero! There were also the Days, William Day being the brother of James Scarff's first wife Almina, and the Hubbards, whose daughter was William Day's first wife, the Ruth's whose daughter was William Day's second wife, not to mention the Oakleys one of whom another of William and Almina's sisters married! And that is before we get onto the Borretts, linked by the marriage of James Scarff's second wife!

Just giving you a little idea of how closely knit the families on the Common were in the late 19th Century!



Above: William James Scarff in a standard issue sunhat for the posting to the Far East. Looks liked a phot taken just after the helmets were issued – no regimental badge and still in cold climate uniform!. Photograph credit: Chris Hogger, Effingham Local History Group

Full length portrait is not officially named as Scarff, but looks to me to be the same person – but now with regimental badge on the solar topee and in hot climate uniform!



Just to confuse matters, one census taker would use the spelling 'Scarff' another one would apply 'Scarfe' yet another variation would be to add an 'e' resulting in 'Scarfe' – a fairly common conundrum at the time. Resorting to baptismal records is no great help since then the spelling would be dependent on the Parish Clerk's decision on the spelling. In this spirit I have included variations throughout this biography although since it is Williams death in military service that has led to him being commemorated we have headed with that name that is engraved on the headstone beneath which he lies and the spelling he himself used in his autograph when he joined the territorials.

'Our' William was the son of William Scarf Snr and his wife Margaret nee Self born in Colchester. Margaret may have been born in Colchester, but she appeared aged 8 in the 1871 census living on London Road in the household of a much older cousin, James Squire, 46, and his wife Rebecca. Checking out Margaret's baptism, she was logged as a Regimental Birth (Colchester being a Garrison Town), Margaret was the daughter of a serving soldier. I think the best bet is Pte. John James Self, from 'Arleston' appearing in the 1861 census at Colchester Barracks with his wife Mary, and 9 years old daughter, Augusta.

John James Self had married Mary Gardner, a servant from Singleton in Lancashire, in Colchester in 1858. She must have been his second wife, step mother to Augusta and mother of Margaret who was born in 1863, 5 years after their marriage. Sadly, this second wife, Mary Self died in Harleston in early 1865 thus explaining why young Margaret Self wound up being cared for by relatives.

Margaret's older half-sister, Augusta, had been born out in Port St Louis, Mauritius; John Self and his wife had travelled a bit with the army. At the age of 19, Augusta was working as a cook in a private school in London but, by some peculiar co-incidence, by the age of 29 she was working up in Co Durham, one of 15 house servants working for a Richard Lawrence Pemberton at Hawthorn Towers. Richard Lawrence Pemberton was to become the grandfather of Richard Herbert Stote Pemberton who died at sea in 1941 and is also commemorated on our Harleston memorial.

In 1885, Augusta married a fellow servant in the Pemberton household, William Hunter, a groom later to become a coachman. The pair remained on the Hawthorn Tower staff the rest of their working life, the 1911 census revealed they had had no children in their 25 year marriage.

Back to Harleston in 1881 and Margaret was in one of three adjacent households of Squires on the London Road, one of which was headed by James Squire's brother, the third by an elderly widow who could claim to be 'living on cottage property'. I suspect she owned the terrace and was letting out to her extended family. This widow, Henrietta Squire, was not James' mother, instead she appears to have been an aunt by marriage. In this census Margaret Self was following James' wife's profession, a laundress, hard work!

William Snr and Margaret married in 1889; although William Snr had been born in Starston he had been largely raised on Harleston Common. His parents, James and Almena nee Day, were from Starston, had married in 1858 and having there brought 6 children into the world, (during their first 10 years of marriage) then moved to Harleston Common where they produced another 6 children before Almena died three months after the birth of their youngest daughter Edith.

The practice of re-using the name of a dead child confuses matters slightly: Alfred Scarf I from the Common who died in June 1870 aged 8 months was followed by Alfred Scarf II (3 months old in 1871) who also died very young, 2 years later Alfred Scarf III took on the name and this time survived beyond childhood. The same happened with the William Scarfes; William I was baptised in '65 and died in 1866, our William Snr was given his older brother's name when he was born a few months after William I's death. So, when Almena, had died at the age of 39, three months after the birth of her youngest daughter Edith it might possibly have been of postpartum complications or perhaps just simple exhaustion – (12 known births in 17 years)!

This left their first born and oldest daughter, Emma, with the unenviable task of looking after a household of 10, including toddlers and babies when she herself was only 18 years of age.

Two of the children were caught up in a mass whipping-in of unbaptised children in July 1878 when along with another 4 children from the Common and 16 more from the rest of the town, they were all baptised at St John's Chapel of Ease in the town!

William Scarfe Snr and Margaret set up home next door to William's father, James Scarf, who had remarried in 1883, doubtless to the relief of his oldest daughter Emma who could hand over the household responsibilities to her father's new wife Letitia Borrett! 1891 had the still childless couple, William an Agricultural Labourer, next to a houseful of children; two of James and Almena nee Day's younger boys, 2 of James and Letitia ex Borretts own young children and four teenaged Borrets, James' stepsons from his second wife Letitia!

Elsewhere on the Common in 1891, William Snr's older brother (another James Scarf) already had 4 children, brother Edward, on the Rushall road had 2, brother Alfred, with his own household on the Common was still childless.

William's brother, James Jnr, and his wife Rosa went on to have 9 children in total, unfortunately by 1897 they were struggling. It is important not to be too judgemental from the comfortable perspective of the 21st century. Today when a man has done a hard day's physical work, he can generally expect to come back to a warm house, easily cooked food, television or one of many other forms of entertainment. Back in those days, a working man's home would often be overcrowded, the combined kitchen/living room would be the only warm room in the home but would be full of children, cooking, drying laundry and noise. Not too surprisingly many men chose instead to go to the pub for masculine company, peace or entertainment; then as now an expensive hobby. A woman's work was hard and unrelenting. Water had to be fetched then heated, washing was a major enterprise, cooking would take all the spare time left when other duties had been undertaken. A woman whose man chose the pub over his domestic responsibilities would be in an even more demoralised position. After 5 years of warnings from the NSPCC, in 1902, James Jnr and Rosa were taken to court charged with neglect of their 5 younger children. Evidence was given that the children were ill-nourished, filthy and vermin ridden; I am not sure that sending both parents to prison for 28 days hard labour was entirely helpful, James was fined an additional 9s for offensive language.

In 1911, James and his wife had moved out to Starston and this census reveals that of their 9 children 7 were still living, perfectly normal for the time. Again we should try being too judgemental, they certainly were not the only slightly chaotic family on the Common, there may have been lots of fun and laughter – unlike a number of his peers and neighbours, James was not a frequent flyer in the magistrates court although he was fined another 9s in 1909, once again for obscene language!

GOLDEN WEDDING.

Many congratulatory telegrams and messages of good will were received by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Scarff, Starston Street, who celebrated their golden wedding on Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Scarff who enjoy excellent health, have resided in the Harleston and Starston district all their married life and both are natives of Mendham. They were married at the Mendham Parish Church by the Rev. Mr. Brayton and then took up residence in Harleston. They have had eight children, who are now all married and apart from a son who lives in Wales, are all living in the locality and thus four generations were represented at the celebration supper; Mr. and Mrs. Scarff, daughter, grand daughters, and their grand-daughters children.

Mrs. Scarff made her own celebration cake, a three tier one, which was decorated by a daughter and altogether more than thirty guests attended the reception. Among the presents was a gold brooch, pair of glass dishes and a pair of beautifully embroidered cushions.

Concurrently, younger brother Edward Scarff and his wife Rosetta, in 1911 had 9 of their 10 children still alive. Since their youngest was then 8 months and Rosetta was only 38, there may have been more but by the time of their Golden Wedding in 1938, they had 8 surviving children. All except one, in Wales, were married and local. Four generations were able to attend their Golden Wedding.

Diss Express
22 Jul 1938

Not long after the 1891 census, William Snr changed from being an agricultural labourer and took up the more specialised task of Gardener, working for Dr Candler at the big house on the corner of Candler's Lane. In no great rush, 5 years after their wedding

William Snr and Margaret had the first of their two children, Eva, born in 1894, with our hero William Jnr being born in 1897. They then moved on to Weybread where they appeared in the 1901 census.

Living on the lane leading to Needham Mill, William Snr was a 'domestic' gardener; at this time a 'gardener' was generally taken to mean a small holder so stating 'domestic gardener' means William Snr was what we today call a gardener. His obituary reveals he had also worked at the Flixton Vicarage, further investigation showed he had worked for Robert Candler (scion of the Harleston Clanders) at their house in Needham.

The restrained number of children, just Eva and William Jnr, was in marked contrast to William Snr's father James' almost excessive fertility but possibly a good thing as, in 1911, when William Scarff Snr and his family were living up in Hertfordshire they were crammed into a very small, 3 room house. This was the Garden Hill Lodge and probably consisted of one all purpose room downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs.

Not too surprisingly they did not stay there too much longer, less than three years later, in 1913, the family had moved to Effingham in Surrey. We know this as, in 1913, William Scarf Jnr signed on for 4 years Territorial Army service at the age of 17 years 1 month. This meant he was one of the first tranche of troops to be mobilised at the outbreak of war.

In March 1915 the St Andrew's, Oxshott, parish magazine recorded that:

News has come from India that Private William Scarfe, of the East Surrey Regiment, was drowned while bathing last month. William Scarf was a resident of Effingham, and was employed at Warren Mount, Oxshott, when called up for service at the general mobilization.



Warren Mount was an Arts and Crafts house of some note. Built in 1904 it would have been both characteristic of a certain genre of houses in the Surrey Hills at the time and also at the forefront of fashion.

*William Self's Workplace
Warren Mount Oxshott*

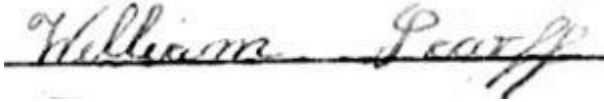
The house was the home of Ernest Lord Spencer; no, not those Spencers. Ernest Lord Spencer was a politician and lawyer, descended from men who had made their fortune in the Midlands

during the industrial revolution. In the 1911 census, he had a married French couple as Butler and Cook and another lass as a Housemaid to help run this substantial but not overwhelming household. An advert for a Gardener in 1929, gives some idea of the work that William Scarf Jnr was expected to do and doubtless would have continued to do had he returned from the war.

GARDENER (Second), very experienced with vegetables, frames; no other glass; staff two men and boy; no cottage, but single man could board and lodge with head man. -Apply, Sir Ernest Spencer, Warren Mount, Oxshott. 20412

Warren Mount was auctioned on the death of Ernest Lord Spencer.

When William Jnr joined the Territorials, he was then described as being 5'5" tall with "good" vision and "fair" physical development.



Signature courtesy: Effingham Local History Group

William's regiment was sent off to Lucknow on 30th October 1914 and was then involved in preventing a mutiny in Singapore on 6th Feb 1915. However William Jnr never got to Singapore as on 3rd Feb 1915, William Jnr drowned in India, and was buried there in a solitary grave in Barkacha, survived by his only sibling Eva.

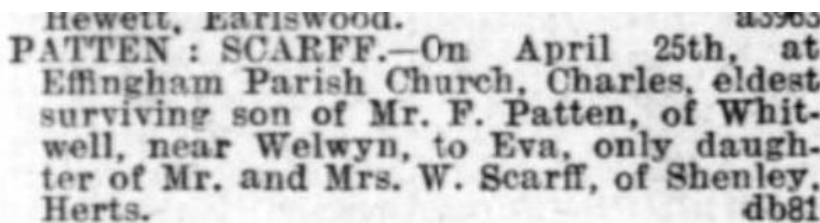
Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser
20 Feb 1915



William Scarff was buried in Barkacha, and this is where his memorial

also stands in a remote and difficult area to access. Scarff's grave stands in scrub; the Balak Nath Temple is the closest landmark, the river in which he drowned and on the banks of which his grave was constructed is now dried up.¹ Scarff's death is also marked on the Madras Memorial.

10 years later, in 1925, William Jnr's sister Eva married Charles Patten from Welwyn. This is a bit confusing as the couple married in Effingham, her parent's then home parish although on the certificate William and Margaret claimed roots in Shenley, not as you would expect Effingham or even Harleston! Eva and Charles, now a head gardener (giving a bit of a clue how the couple met?) appeared in Oxfordshire in the 1939 census.



Hewett, Eariswood. 20963
PATTEN : SCARFF.—On April 25th, at Effingham Parish Church, Charles, eldest surviving son of Mr. F. Patten, of Whitwell, near Welwyn, to Eva, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W. Scarff, of Shenley, Herts. db81

Surrey Mirror
1 May 1925

By Order of Executors.

OXSHOTT,
Adjacent to The Heath.

WARREN MOUNT.

Lounge Hall, 2 Reception-rooms, 9 Bed and Dressing Rooms, 2 Baths; Lodge; Double Garage; Chalet, etc. Well timbered Grounds of over 10 Acres.

Held under Crown Leases expiring 1999. By Auction, unless sold before, by Messrs.

CHAS. OSENTON AND CO.

At the London Auction Mart, 155, Queen Victoria-street, E.C.4, on **TUESDAY, 23rd NOVEMBER, 1937, at 2.30 p.m.**

Particulars from the Solicitors, Messrs. Minet Pering Smith and Co., 6a, Bedford Square, W.C.1, or the Auctioneers' Leatherhead Office.

SAD DEATH OF A TERRITORIAL.

A cablegram from Colonel Harvey, of the 5th East Surrey Regiment, has been received by Mr. and Mrs. W. Scarff, of the Cottage, Effingham, stating that their only son, Pte Scarff, had been drowned whilst bathing on February 3rd at Barkacha, India. This was followed by a communication from the War Office, and there was also the following note of condolence sent from the King through Lord Kitchener.—“The King commands me to assure you of the true sympathy of his Majesty and the Queen in your sorrow.” The deceased, who resided with his parents, and used to be in employment at Cobham, was a member of the Territorials, and went out with the regiment to India.

A memorial service was held at St. Lawrence's Church, Effingham, on Thursday in last week, being conducted by the Rev. E. F. Bayly (Rector). Among those present was the Hon. Mrs. Barrington, in whose employ the deceased's father is.

¹ All images from CWGC <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/1466108/SCARFF,%20WILLIAM>

Ex Guardsman Charles Patten who Eva chose to marry was both a casualty and a survivor of WW1. For a fuller story of the experiences of Charles and his brother Archibald, visit:

<https://www.surreyinthegreatwar.org.uk/story/archibald-and-charles-patten-effingham-brothers-%C2%ADin-%C2%ADarms/>

The Scarffs remained in Surrey until William Snr's retirement in 1933 when the couple returned to Harleston, appearing on Broad St for the 1839 census; sharing the house was 'companion' Grace Pearce. Having a companion may seem a trifle grand for a retired gardener and his wife but this lady was probably as much a nurse companion as a companion. The companion, Hannah Pearce, was the widowed mother of Horace Edward Pearce who also appears on our War Memorial. Another of Hannah Pearce's children, Eva, was married to Stoker Wiles another of the second world War casualties commemorated in Broad Street

William and Margaret died within 3 days of each other and were interred at Redenhall after a double funeral which their only remaining child, Eva Patten nee Scarff, was able to attend amongst other friends and relatives.

Diss Express
21 Feb 1941

HARLESTON

DOUBLE FUNERAL

The funeral took place at Redenhall Church on Tuesday of Mr. William James Scarff, of Broad Street, Harleston, who died on Thursday, aged 74, and of his wife, Mrs. Margaret Scarff, who died on Sunday, aged 78. Mrs. Scarff had been an invalid for some years and her husband's unexpected death undoubtedly hastened her passing.

Mr. Scarff, a native of Harleston, started work as a gardener with the late Dr. John Candler at Harleston and at Weybread. He was also gardener at Flixton Vicarage, and later worked in Surrey before retiring to his native town eight years ago. Their only son was killed in the last war.

A service was conducted by the Rector, (the Rev. B. M. Pickering) and the mourners were: Mr. E. Scarff, Mrs. E. Patten, Mr. and Mrs. W. Moore, Mrs E Scarff., Mrs W. Oakley, Mrs. H. Pearce, jun., Mrs. H. Scarff, Miss Seaman, Mr. and Mrs. J. Johnson, Mr. P. Scarff and Mr. J. Green.