



Three Borrett brothers killed within seven months during 1917

Frederick Arthur Borrett

201963 Lance Corporal, 1st/4th Battalion Norfolk Regiment

He was killed in action on 19th April 1917 in Mesopotamia, aged 29

Frederick is buried at Gaza War Cemetery, Israel

Daily List:
28th May
1917.

FULLISON, 20330 W. P. (Limerick Openishaw);
NORFOLK R.—Allen, 241068 S. H. (West Lynn); Barber, 200083
G. T. (Norwich); Barnard, 200905 A. (Oulton); Borrett, 201963
F. A. (Wortwell); Bowen, 200082 Co. Sgt.-Maj. D. J. (Banham);
Bowes, 200915 S. J. (Lenwade); Browne, 241058 F. W. (Norwich);
Buckingham, 201440 E. E. (East Bradenham); Bunn, 240111 W. A.

John Samuel Borrett

85513 Sapper, 209th (Norfolk) Field Company, Royal Engineers

He died on 10th July 1917 in France, aged 31

John is buried at St. Hilaire Cemetery, Frevent, Pas-de-Calais, France

Stanley Frank Borrett

29773 Lance Corporal, 7th Battalion Norfolk Regiment

He was killed in action on 14th October 1917 in France, aged 22

Stanley is buried at Vis-en-Artois British Cemetery, Haucourt, Pas-de-Calais, France

ROYAL FUSILIERS.—Dunrobin 4351 S. (Longbridge);
NORFOLK REGIMENT.—Ansell 12801 G. (Guist); Blyth 22748
F. A. (Norwich); Borrett 29773 L.-Cpl. S. F. (Harleston); Chandler
9709 F. J. (Norwich); Cooper 14695 H. (Long Stratton); Els-good
T. (Norwich); Goddard 18172 A. (Great Yarmouth); Green

Daily List: 16th November 1917

Stanley's 'Soldier's' Will

18
WILL.

In the event of my death
I give the whole of my
property and effects to
my Mother.

Mrs J. Borrett
Wortwell
Nr Harleston
Norfolk

Signature Stanley Borrett
Rank and Regiment L/Cpl 7th Norfolk
Date 5.12.16

James and Harriet Borrett had done well to raise all 10 of their children to adulthood, a major achievement in a time before vaccination, when running water did not exist and maintaining a degree of cleanliness was a constant uphill struggle. However, when their boys went off to war, there was nothing they could do except pray for their safety. Many of the families detailed on the memorial were closely linked so one family might lose several nephews and cousins as well as their own son, the Borretts, with the loss of three sons, was the hardest hit of any family in the town.

In the 1911 census, when he had been married 35 years, James declared himself to be a 'Carpenter, building trade', probably what we would describe as a carpenter and joiner today. The three youngest boys still at home in 1911, John, Frederick and Stanley, were also all Carpenters – he had passed on his valuable trade- ther was another son in the middle of this group but he was then in the Navy. Previous censuses reveal his two oldest sons had also taken up carpentry, a fourth son decided to become a 'whitesmith', also known as a tin man, the fifth joined the Navy appearing at HMS Achilles, Spithead, Portsmouth in 1911.

The given birthplace of the lads' father, James Bryant Borrett varied between Homersfield and St Cross Suffolk; the latter was basically an accident of circumstance. Back in 1851, when he was a 4-month-old baby sailing under the name of Bryant (not James) his parents and 5 of his older siblings¹ were all living on his 70 years old Grandfather George Borrett's farm – at St Cross. Jame's father, John, was born in Wortwell, whilst most of the children were born in Homersfield. The family, with the two older children now having left home had returned to Wortwell by 1861 by which time father John Borrett was a Drillman (seed planter). James' older brother was not working on the land though, he was a wheelwright giving the first hint of the carpentry trades that were to dominate in this family. I think we can assume that old George Borrett, 70-odd at the time of the '51 census had retired from farming, one way or another.

Sometime between 1861 and 1865, the family ambled back to St Cross where John, diversifying from agriculture, had the Fox and Hounds before transferring to the Swan at Homersfield where the

PETTY SESSIONS, THURSDAY, OCT. 5.
Before J. L. Bedingfield, Esq. (Chairman), Major Mar-
gitson, and Richard Mann, Esq.
Mr. Bellman, Clerk to the Justices, was instructed to
notify to the Secretary of State the appointment of Mr.
Chas. Grimmer, of Bungay, veterinary surgeon, as Inspec-
tor of Cattle, under the further orders of the Lords of the
Privy Council, dated 22nd Sept., 1865.
The license for the Swan Inn, Homersfield, was trans-
ferred from Mrs. Elizabeth Church to Mr. John Borrett,
of Southelmham Cross; and the license for the Fox and
Hounds, at St. Cross, was transferred from John Borrett
to George Howell.

d family appeared in 1871.

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The Suffolk Chronicle
7 Oct 1865

In 1871, James, like his older brother, also gave his trade as carpenter; James' mother, two sisters and a couple of his nieces were also in residence at the Swan. Four years later, in 1875, James married Harriet Gowing from Haddiscoe.

She was one of at least 8 children of a Thatcher; in 1871 she was working as a servant in London, very common for a girl of her time and class. Some of our local youths wound up in startling grand establishments, she was working in a solidly middle-class area for a wine merchant, his wife, two children and the wine merchant's welsh born father.

By 1881, James and his wife Harriet had established their own home on the Bungay Road in Wortwell, their three children, aged 4, 2 and 11 months were all born in Wortwell. The family moved from Wortwell to Redenhall sometime between 1885, when George was born in Wortwell and 1886 when John was born. The 1891 census shows the family were living next door but one to The Yew

¹ Their ages, 16, 14, 12, 10 and 5 followed by Bryant 5 months really show him to be the baby of the family!

Tree, with the oldest son, Edward, at age 14 already a Carpenter's Apprentice and oldest daughter, Jessie, age 12, giving her trade as school monitor.

The family do seem to have gravitated to the environs of pubs; in 1901 the family were living next door to the Bell Inn, Wortwell by which time the oldest son Edward was a fully qualified Carpenter and the next two lads also had apprenticeships, to a Whitesmith (Tinman) and again to a Carpenter. By 1911 the family were at Tunbeck by which stage the three sons who were all to die within 6 years were described as carpenters.

John Day Borrett, of Homersfield, innkeeper, pleaded guilty to selling beer to a boy named Joseph Bedwell, under 14 years of age, the same not being in a corked and sealed vessel. Police-constable Nolloth stated that on 23rd July he saw the boy coming from the house with a bottle under his jacket. He stopped him, and found he had a pint of beer. Witness had previously cautioned defendant's wife in respect of the same boy. The bottle was fastened with a cork only. Mr. Borrett said he himself had never been cautioned before, and he did not know the boy had been previously served by his wife. The Bench fined defendant 10s. and costs 11s. 6d. Mrs. Elizabeth Bedwell, the mother of the boy Joseph, was summoned for sending her son for the beer, and pleaded guilty. Police-constable Nolloth said the boy told him his mother sent him. The mother admitted to him that she knew it was wrong. When she sent the girl first they would not serve her, so she sent the boy. The husband was not at home at the time. The boy was 11 years of age. Defendant was fined 2s. without costs.

On the eve of the war, the Borretts were quietly getting on with life, they were not the sort to appear in the magistrates courts. The only minor waywardness I found was accidental when our Harleston Heroes' grandfather got into trouble, not for selling a young lad beer but for not selling it in a properly sealed bottle! Standard practice for a mother to send a child out to bring beer home but the idea was that the child should be prevented from taking a slurp of the top!

Eastern Daily Press
23 Aug 1907

Instead, when the Borretts did appear in the news it was mostly for prize winning entries in produce shows.

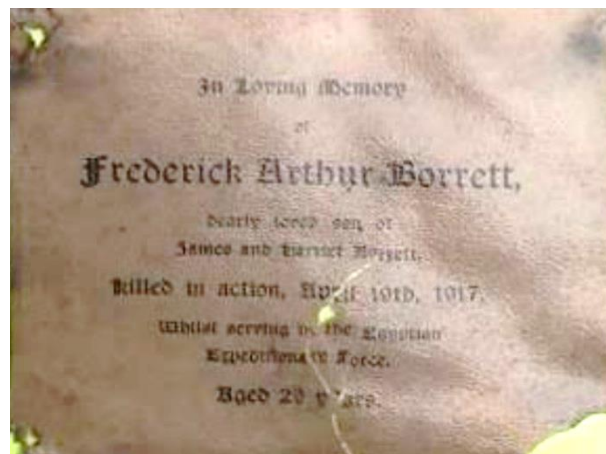
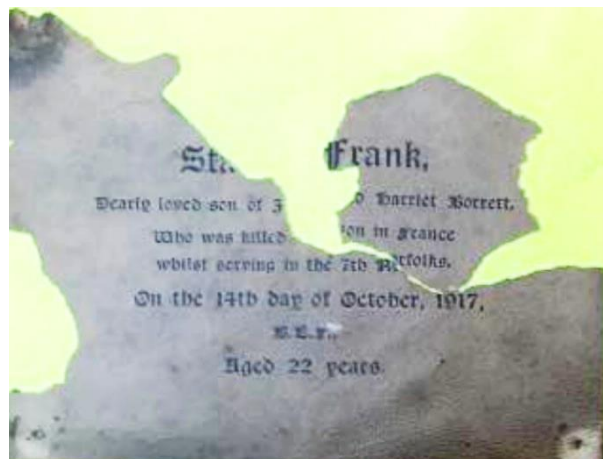
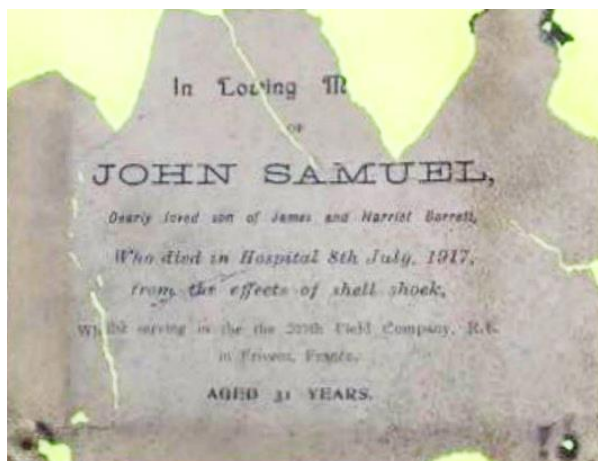
Tragically, in 1917, within the space of 6 months, three of their four youngest sons, (Thomas was between John and Frederick) who had been so proudly following in their father's trade 6 years, earlier had died.

Stanley, the youngest of the boys, was killed in action in mid-October in France at the age of 22, he had already been slightly injured 6 months before his death. Lance Cpl Stanley 'Barrett' had been brought in by Ambulance train from the Mouchy No6 Stationary Hospital on the 13th of April 1917 after his initial admission on the 11th of April 1917. He was diagnosed as having a slight Gunshot wound and was transferred to to the No20 General Hospital on the 14th of April. What he would not have known, as he was recovering from this slight wound (and possibly wishing it was a 'Blighty' that would get him sent home for a while,) was that his older brother Frederick, many hundreds of miles away in what is now Israel, was meeting his death in one of the more futile attacks of the war.

Frederick's Regiment, The Norfolks, attacked a heavily defended outpost, gained some ground then withdrew to wind up where they started, having lost many men, including three from this town:- Frederick Borrett, George Frost and Reginald Ward.

Stanley was transferred to the General Hospital on the 14th of April 1917, Frederick was killed in action on the 17th of April 1917, he was buried out in Gaza, aged 29. The oldest of the three boys, John, aged 31, was also buried out in France, dying on the 10th of July, 3 months before Stanley died on 14th of October. Whilst the boys' mother requested 'Have Mercy' on Stanley's head stone as he was buried amongst ranks of unknown soldiers and Thy Will be Done' on John, the oldest of the three's headstone. Frederick does not seem to have had an additional epitaph. Having said which, this could be a record keeping error and I would not be surprised if his headstone bore the legend 'Gone but not Forgotten'. I am sure the family could have afforded the 4d per letter it cost to have this personalisation.

However, all three brothers, along with a number of other local lads, had memorial cards preserved in Wortwell, which migrated, eventually, from Wortwell Hall to the RBL Archives.



These memorial cards reveal that John Samuel Borrett actually died of 'shell shock' although this may have been the effects of shell concussion rather than then what is now described as PTSD. Frederick was, as might be expected, described as being part of the Egyptian Expeditionary force.

The parents, Harriet and James lived on until their 80's. One gets the impression of a very steady family, who avoided trouble and got on quietly with their respectable lives. Perhaps being a (founding) member of the Friendly Society, a combination of a social club and Health Insurance, had helped Harriet and James raise their 10 children to useful adulthood.

HARLESTON

FUNERAL.

The funeral took place at the Redenhall Church on Thursday week, of the late Mr. James Bryant Borrett, of Wortwell. Mr. Borrett, who was 88 years of age, was the first member of the Court Earl of Waveney, No. 4301 Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society, being admitted in April 1872. The service was conducted by the Rector, the Rev. B. M. Pickering.

The family present were Mr. and Mrs. E. Borrett, Mrs. W. Elwin, Captain J. Borrett, Mr. George Borrett, Mr. Thomas Borrett, Mrs. A. Hunter, Mrs. A. Canham, Mr. and Mrs. S. Debenham and Mrs. Myson.

Others present included Mr. F. G. Aldis (secretary), Mr. F. W. Gower (trustee) and Mr. C. G. Chaney (representing the Foresters' Society), Mr. and Mrs. H. Blackburn, Mrs. Henery, Mrs. G. Gibbs, Miss Marshall, Mr. J. J. Davey and Mrs. Short

Diss Express
17 Mar 1939

When Harriet died two years before her husband, 4 of her sons and 3 of her daughters attended the ceremony which does at least answer the question as to whether anymore of her sons died in the war. Three was more than enough; I cannot imagine with what trepidation she started each day during the war, in fear of another telegram bearing bad news, but I hope she took some consolation in her extended family.