



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.

James and Harriet Borrett were parents both effective and lucky. The 1911 census reveals they had brought 10 children into the world during their 35 year marriage, all of whom were still alive, 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. James declared himself to be a 'Carpenter, Building trade', probably what we would describe as a carpenter and joiner today. The three boys who were still at home in this census, John, Frederick and Stanley, were also all Carpenters – he had passed on his valuable trade.

James Bryant Borrett's birthplace of St Cross Suffolk is a little deceptive, basically an accident of circumstance. Back in 1851, when he was a 4-month-old baby sailing under the name of Bryant (not James in this entry) his parents and 5 of his older siblings¹ were all living on 70 years old George Borrett's farm – at St Cross. James 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 when his father 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.

In 1871, James gave his trade as carpenter, at the time he was living at the Swan, Homersfield where his father, diversifying from agriculture, was the landlord. His mother, two sisters and a couple of nieces were also in residence.

By 1881, James and his wife Harriet had established their own home on the Bungay Road in Wortwell with their first three of their children in residence; aged 4, 2 and 11 months they 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 Tree, with the oldest son, Edward, at age 14 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 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 with 6 years were described as carpenters.

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

Tragically, in 1917, within the space of 6 months, three of their four youngest sons, (Thomas was between John and Frederick) 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 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

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

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10 legend 'Gone but not Forgotten'. I am sure the
12 family could have afforded the 4d per letter it cost to
st have this personalisation.

Diss Express
17 Mar 1939

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.

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 trepidation she started each day in possible fear of another telegram bearing bad news, but I hope she took some consolation in her extended family.