

## William Edward "Bill" FENDICK

<b>Born</b>	1873
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	3rd March 1915 age 42
<b>Commemorated</b>	Panel 21, Menin Gate Memorial, Ieper, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
<b>Unit</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 3/9883
<b>Awards</b>	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

The local press of 19th March 1915 contained the news of William's death:

*"Ely railwaymen have heard with much regret of the death of their fellow worker Private W. Fendick of Waterside, Ely, killed at the Front whilst serving his country. The news of the sad event was communicated to Mrs Fendick, the widow, by her brother, Private J. Lane, who is also with the Expeditionary Force in France.*

*Private Lane in a sympathetic letter, states: "He was killed in action on March 3rd. So far as I can gather he suffered no pain; the end was swift and sure, but it was peace. Poor Bill's death is only one out of many that have occurred during the last month. He was very much liked by his comrades, and being a member of St John Ambulance he was very much missed by his company."*

*Private Fendick, who was a horseman at the Ely G.E.R station, and had been in the Company's service for about 20 years, was in the National Reserve, and responding to the call for men, joined the 2nd Suffolks on enlistment early in the autumn (1914). He had been at the Front for some time, and his experiences included a slight accident. In December he slipped in a shell hole, spraining his foot, but recovered from his injury and resumed his work in the trenches. Lately he was attached to the ambulance department, but it is not known whether he was killed whilst so engaged.*

*Private Fendick, who was aged 42, leaves a widow and two children, residing in Waterside in Ely. He was highly respected by his Ely comrades."*

**Bill Fendick** had been born at Denver, Norfolk, in 1873 to William Fendick (1843 Wimbotsham, Norfolk) and Elizabeth (nee Wright, 1843 Denver). William senior was a farm labourer and initially Bill and his brothers and sisters all did farm work too. Bill's siblings were all born in Denver: John (1867); Ellen (1874); and Alice (1877).

Bill's father William died in 1890 and his mother Elizabeth in 1913.

Bill moved to Ely in 1897 to find employment with Great Eastern Railways, and as a result of his work on the farms was put to work with the horses as a truck horse driver.. He married local girl Harriet Lane (1868 Ely) in 1899 and they had two children William George (1900 Ely) and Alice (1911 Ely). The family lived at 41 Waterside, in convenient proximity to Ely Railway Station. Bill worked as a platelayer (1901) and later a shunter (1911) for GER. He was a prominent member of the GER Ambulance Corps and in 1914 even competed with them in Great Eastern Competitions at Stratford and in the Isle of Ely Competition at Wisbech, where his team was placed.

The newspaper report tells us that Bill did not die in a major battle but in the day to day life of the trenches. The Battalion was then in the lines in the Vierstraat area and there had been no major engagements, but sniping and artillery fire was simply part of the routine. His burial place was "lost" and he was consequently listed on the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing.

Bill was commemorated on the Holy Trinity Roll of Honour, the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Great Eastern Railway Memorial now at Liverpool Street Station. He is also remembered on the war memorial in his birthplace of Denver.

The Ely Standard reported that in June 1915 members of the N.R.V union placed an enlarged and coloured photograph of Bill in the ticket collector's office at Ely Railway Station with the dedication: "Brother W. Fendick N.V.R who was killed in action March 3rd 1915. he gave his life for others."

William's son William George was also working for Great Eastern Railways at the time of his father's death and would have seen the commemorative photograph constantly at the railway station. As soon as he was seventeen he enlisted with the Royal Navy and was on HMS Marlborough on the Russian convoys. He later saw service in the Far East and was chauffeur to Sir A Edmonstone and Prince George. Following the War he emigrated to Australia where he became a motor driver with the Melbourne Police Force.

## James William FITCH

<b>Born</b>	1890
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	26th September 1917 age 27
<b>Commemorated</b>	Panel 148, Tyne Cot Memorial, Zonnebeke, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
<b>Unit</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 326418
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**James William Fitch** appears not only on the Ely Market Place Memorial, but also the war memorials at Stuntney and Littleport –all places where he had lived and worked on the farms. He was one of a large family of farm workers as his parents had thirteen surviving children who took on rural trades.

James' parents were George Fitch (1855 Ely) and Ellen Selina (nee Leonard, 1861 Soham). James was born in Soham in 1890 and his siblings were: Mary Ann (1880 Soham); George (1881 Burnt Fen, Mildenhall); Ada (1886 Soham Fen); Flora (1889 Prickwillow); Ethel (1892 Soham); twins Charles and Ernest (1893 Soham); Arthur (1896 Soham); Georgina (1899 Soham); Maud (1902 Ely); Dorothy (1904 Ely); and Hilda (1911 Ely). James' sister Lily (1895 Soham) died young.

James was probably born in a tied cottage on Metlam Drove, Soham, which was where his family was living at the time of the 1891 and 1901 Censuses while George was working on Metlam Farm. In 1901 George was a yardkeeper on the farm and James' brother George was the horsekeeper, there was also a second Mary Ann Fitch in the household, who was George's wife from Littleport.

In the 1911 Census James was living at Woodberry Hill, Queen Adelaide with his parents and eight younger siblings in a five roomed house. At this stage James was working as a horsekeeper on a farm, Charles was a shepherd, and Ernest and Arthur, like their father were farm labourers.

In 1912 James married Eva Fitches and they had children Alice (1913 Littleport), Elsie (1913), Joyce (1914) and James (1916).

During the War James was working as a scavenger (i.e. a refuse collector) and horsekeeper for farmer Mr John Hamey and living in Fieldside. When his age group was called up Mr Hamey attempted to have James exempted from serving. There was a short reprieve, to cover the harvest period, but only until 30th November 1916. When called up thereafter, James enlisted in Cambridge in the 1st Battalion of the Cambridgeshire Regiment (originally with Service Number 3724).

James fought on the Somme, and was finally killed on a day of fierce action when the British advanced on a six-mile front east of Ypres; Polygon Wood was cleared and Zonnebeke stormed and the forces advanced towards Passchendaele. Four hostile counter-attacks by the Germans failed after fierce fighting. The Cambridgeshires were attacking at Tower Hamlets Ridge, an area of flat ground pitted with shell holes which was still being shelled. When they advanced at 5.50 a.m. the German machine guns took a heavy toll and James was just one of the 54 soldiers of the Cambridgeshire Regiment who fell on that day and who are now commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing,



although he is probably buried in the cemetery itself as 70% of the bodies there are unidentified.  
Ely men Albert Prior and Frank Lambert fell in the same attack.

On James' death Eva received an authorised payment of £6 4s 11d from his effects.

## William FLETCHER

<b>Born</b>	1895
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	24th January 1916 age 20
<b>Buried</b>	Grave II. B. 32., Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Poperinge, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
<b>Unit</b>	2nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 3/9573
<b>Awards</b>	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

**William Fletcher** was born late in 1895 somewhere on Soham Fen (he later described his birthplace as Prickwillow—the nearest village). He was the eldest son of John Francis Fletcher (1871 Soham Fen) and Sarah Elizabeth (nee Miller 1869 Swaffham Prior) and his younger surviving siblings were Jack (1897 Soham Fen), Annie (1901 Soham Fen), Fred (1904 Soham Fen) and Louie (1908 Soham Fen).



In the 1901 Census the family's address was given simply as "Fen"! The 1911 Census was clearer, as the family was at Great Fen Drove near Soham and here John and his two sons William and Jack were all farm workers. It seems that after this date William's parents moved the family into Prickwillow itself.

William was in the Special Reserve before the War. These reservists were not originally intended to fight abroad, but were volunteers like the Territorials. Nevertheless the Suffolk Regiment called up the special reservists as the War commenced.

Fighting with the 2nd and then the 3rd Battalion of the Suffolks in the War, William was in the Front around Bellewaarde and the Ypres Salient. In July 1915 he was wounded in the right shoulder by a German shell and hospitalised at Felixstowe. Returning to the Front, was badly injured on the Ypres Salient, possibly by the great mine explosion on "The Bluff" where his Battalion was positioned on 22nd January. William was transported to the British Base Hospital at Lijssenthoek where

he died of wounds on 24th January 1916.

William is commemorated on both the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Prickwillow Memorial.

John was sent William's effects of £1 7s 2d, with a final £5 10s in 1919.

## Percy Ernest Cecil FOX

<b>Born</b>	24th August 1896
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	8th December 1917, age 21
<b>Buried</b>	Grave B. 53., Jerusalem War Cemetery, Israel.
<b>Unit</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> (Suffolk Yeomanry) Battalion, Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Corporal, Service Number 320315
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal



**Percy Ernest Cecil Fox** was the youngest son of Edmund George Fox (1857) and Sarah (nee Beazley 1852) of 64 Broad Street, Ely. He had the misfortune of losing his father before he knew him, as Edmund died within weeks of the birth of his son. The Foxs were an Ely family and Percy's older siblings were: Eliza (1877); Frances (1879); Edith (1880); Annie (1882); Edmund (1886); Charles (1888); Constance (1890); Gladys (1892); and Dorothy (1894). Percy himself was born in 1896.

In the 1901 Census Percy's mother Sarah gave her occupation as jeweller and sub-postmistress. The oldest child still at home was Annie, who was a shopwoman, while fifteen year old Edmund gave his employment as cathedral chorister. They must have been a musical family, as Percy was also to become a cathedral chorister in his turn. As in the earlier censuses Percy's father had been described as a watchmaker and postman and his mother as assistant postmaster, it is clear that Sarah

was keeping the family business afloat for her children. The family also had a boarder living with them, this was Joseph Beerham, the manager of a local bookshop, and his rent would have helped supplement the family income.

Percy attended the Broad Street Infants School and then on 8th June 1903 became a pupil at Needhams School on Back Hill. He continued here for just two years before he was chosen to be a cathedral chorister and moved to the choir school on 19th May 1905. In the 1911 Census just four people are shown living in the house on Broad Street, namely Edmund, Constance, Dorothy and Percy. Edmund was working as a jeweller in the family business, Dorothy was an apprentice milliner, and now this time it is Percy who appears as a cathedral chorister, as he actually occupied this role from 1905 to 1912.. Sarah was normally resident in Broad Street with her youngest children, but happened to be visiting her daughter Edith and her husband William Eaden at 40 Adams Avenue, Northampton on census night.

Percy found employment with Barclays Bank, working first in Ramsey, then in Cambridge.

When the time came to enlist Percy joined the Suffolk Yeomanry Territorial Force (Service Number 2325) at Bury St Edmunds. On 5th January 1917 the Yeomanry formed the 15th Suffolk Battalion in Egypt and were sent to fight the Ottoman Turks in Palestine. During 1917 Percy fought at Gaza and Beersheba. By 21st November 1917 the Suffolks were about three miles west of Jerusalem. The Holy City was deliberately spared direct bombardment and so extremely severe fighting followed, lasting until the evening of 8th December, when the city's defences were finally captured. The Turkish forces abandoned Jerusalem overnight, and on the morning of 9th December the Mayor officially surrendered the city to the Allies. The surrender came too late for Percy, who had been killed in action on the final day of fighting.

The newspaper reports that "from letters written home it was (Percy's) desire to be present at the taking of Jerusalem." and certainly his family believed he had his wish. A later letter from his commanding officer gave more details of Percy's career and death:

*"..he was in my company a long time and was greatly liked. He was an expert with the Lewis gun and was the best instructor in the regiment. He deserved his promotion long before he got it, but*

*owing to lack of vacancies I was unable to promote him until recently. The company was in action about two miles north of Jerusalem at a village called Bell Iksa and your son was in the act of trying to put a machine gun out of action with his Lewis gun when he was killed. I cannot tell you how sorry I am as he was a personal favourite."*

The details suggest that Percy did not live to see Jerusalem taken, but at least he was buried on the outskirts of the city, which must have been some comfort to his parents.

Percy was commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial, the Holy Trinity Memorial and the Choristers Memorial in Ely Cathedral. On his gravestone in Jerusalem his mother Sarah requested the wording "Dearly loved and fondly remembered". When Sarah herself died in 1927 Percy's name was added to her gravestone in Ely Cemetery. Percy's distinctive name is also on the War Memorial in his former workplace of Ramsey, Huntingdonshire.

## John FRUIN

<b>Born</b>	1860
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	17th September 1914, age 54
<b>Buried</b>	Grave D.103., Great Yarmouth Cemetery, Caister-on-Sea, Norfolk
<b>Unit</b>	No. 4 Depot, Royal Garrison Artillery
<b>Rank</b>	Company Sergeant Major, Service Number 2141
<b>Awards</b>	<i>Did not serve abroad</i>

The Cambridge Independent Press of 25th September picked up an article from the Eastern Daily Press entitled "Ely Man's Suicide", this was the sad tale of **John Fruin**, one of the oldest men commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial, and the first of the volunteers / reservists to die:

*"An inquest was held on Monday at the Town Hall, Yarmouth, upon the body of John Fruin (53), company-sergeant-major, who died under tragic circumstances on Thursday having thrown himself from a window of the Artillery Barracks, 25 feet from the ground.*

*The Coroner told the jury that the deceased, who belonged to Egremont Street, Ely, left the Army in April 1907, and had since been a night-watchman at the Cathedral, until Lord Kitchener called for old soldiers as drill instructors, when he applied and was appointed to the Barracks at Yarmouth where he had been about a week. On Wednesday evening, just before six o'clock, some children playing outside the married soldiers' quarters heard him shout loudly from a window, "Clear off," and almost the next moment he fell to the ground. He was taken to the garrison hospital, but his injuries were so serious that he was conveyed to the general hospital where he died next day. When he left home he appeared in good health. His pay had been 18s 6d a week, and he had an Army pension. He had addressed a letter to his wife which was in such extraordinary terms that it showed his mind must have become unhinged. Another statement was found in his room, in which he said, "Cannot stand it. Going through the window. That will finish it." he also spoke of something being raked up for which he had been punished, but whether that was in the Army or in civil life the Coroner said he did not know. He had a long service and good conduct medal, and first class school certificate. His parchment discharge was marked, "Character exemplary; thoroughly trustworthy."*

*The widow said deceased formerly belonged to the Royal Garrison Artillery, in which he served for 26 years....He had been a good husband and father, and witness did not know that he had any troubles..... She had the following letter from him; "My Dear Wife—Just to let you know I am much better in my health than I was last night. It is my nerves. The least bit of excitement upsets me ..Called at four chemists, then I got one to mix me a draught, 2d, felt better. I have had no pay yet, nor have I been sent to the office. I know you will say fancy, but the old thing has been raked up again. (Asked to explain this his wife commented "He had been to India twice and had sunstroke.").. I am the only instructor over 30 except Tommy Bond, so somehow I think the general will not keep us, so I may be sent a long way off. They might revert me to lower rank; if so I shall try to get away, as I don't intent to lose anything because I am old... I ought not to have come, but it is wicked to bring up what occurred 14 years ago. I was punished and have duly suffered. (his wife agreed it was probably the sunstroke that was meant "it happened at Harwich").... My poor head is drumming round. They are going to show me a rogue's march. God forgive them. You know I did not want to come, as I felt sure this would crop up at Yarmouth. God forgive me, I have done nothing wrong, and forgive me dear wife, and my darling children, God help us. My head is awful. I have touched scarcely any spirits. God bless you, forgive me. John Fruin"*

*Witness said deceased was very bad for a time when he had sunstroke, and had frequently complained of his head. The only thing she could think of to which deceased referred as the old thing being raked up was this sunstroke.....*

*Gunner Charles Frederick Goff said he saw a group of children rather excited, and heard one of them say, "He is going to jump." then one child called him, and, running towards her, saw deceased in a huddled-up position in the ground.....When they first picked him up the deceased said "I wish I was dead."...*

*Company Sergeant Major Charles Harwood said he knew the deceased, whom he found to be a very*



*good and nice man, who was able to do his work properly. Witness never had any occasion to think he was queer in the head. His duties were nothing more than ordinary. Major C. W. Allport, R.A.M.C in charge of the military hospital said...deceased said "It's all right. I have done it myself. I cannot understand why people have brought this disgrace on me. I was going to be drummed out of the barracks tonight, and I could not stand it. I have done nothing wrong to anybody so far as I know." he asked witness to remove a letter from his pocket and send it to his wife. The statement that deceased was to be drummed out was a delusion. Dr A. K. Roche, house surgeon at Yarmouth Hospital, said deceased was conscious when admitted, though suffering from shock. Both ankles had a double fracture, and there was also fractures below the knees. There were also two fractures of the pelvis which were the most serious. He had a scalp wound but there was no fracture of the skull or spine. He died on Thursday morning. A verdict of "Suicide during temporary insanity" was returned, the jury expressing sympathy with the deceased's family."*

John Fruin was born in Wokingham, Berkshire in 1860, His father Thomas Fruin (1807 Holton, Oxfordshire) was a yeoman farmer. His mother Caroline (Gable nee Evans, 1824) was originally from Marsh Baldon in Oxfordshire which is where the two oldest children of the family were born (Thomas 1853 and Alma 1856) while Maria (1858) was born in Wokingham like John. In the 1861 Census the family lived at Billhill Cottage in Wokingham. By 1871 the family was sadly depleted; John was living with his brother Thomas in Wokingham and Thomas described himself as an "unemployed bank clerk". John's father had died in 1865, his mother had also passed away.

John does not appear in the next two censuses, and this can be explained by his long career with the army, serving with the Royal Garrison Artillery in which he rose up the ranks to Company Sergeant Major.

John married Mary Ann Rudkin (1864 West Bergholt, Essex) in 1893 and the couple had three children: Alma (1894 Ipswich); Bertha (1896 Ipswich); and John William (1897 Ipswich). In 1901 the Fruins were together at 4 Abney Cottages, Walton, Suffolk; John was with his family although he was then still a Company Sergeant Major in the Royal Artillery. The Fruins came to Ely after John left the army and in the 1911 Census, as the article above shows, John was drawing his army pension and working as Ely Cathedral's night watchman. The only child still living at home at this point was Bertha who was a shop assistant in an Ely fancy goods store. John's son John William had left Needhams School just a few days earlier and left Ely to join the army.

John had been in Yarmouth for about a week when he killed himself, in fact the Ely Standard "Roll of Honour" had recorded his name amongst those who had enlisted only the week before it recorded his death. He was buried in the burial plot of the Yarmouth Royal Naval Hospital in the cemetery at Caister-on-Sea, Norfolk. Mary asked for the inscription on his gravestone to read "'Til every foe is vanquish'd and Christ is Lord indeed". A message which may be an oblique reference to John's fits of mental instability. Following John's tragic death the army sent Mary his effects of £3 5s 1d.

Ely Cathedral housed a written Roll of Honour which listed the name of every local man who enlisted—a cross with R.I.P on it was drawn against John Fruin's name, one of the first of many.

Mary chose not to remain in Ely, perhaps to avoid whispering tongues; after the War her address is recorded as 154, Villiers Rd., Willesden Green, London. John's daughter Alma also settled in Willesden where she married Ernest Orman in 1922 and his son John married Edith Perkins there in 1925. Bertha remained in East Anglia, but settled in the Basildon area where she married George Carr in 1920. However, the family asked for John to be remembered on the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Memorial in St Mary's Church.

The question remains open—what was it that really haunted poor John?



The Fruins in happier times:  
John and Mary Ann with their  
children Alma, Bertha and  
John William.

John Fruin at work  
(standing centre)  
with the cathedral  
bedesmen



## James Claud Fuller

<b>Born</b>	1886
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	20th April 1916, age 30
<b>Commemorated</b>	Panels 31 & 33 Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Belgium
<b>Unit</b>	8th Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 17217
<b>Awards</b>	1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

**James Claud Fuller**, like several of the soldiers on the Ely Market Place Memorial, also appears on the Prickwillow War Memorial. He was born and lived in Burnt Fen, and Ely was the nearest town of any size, indeed technically some of the homes on the Fen came under the ecclesiastical parish of Holy Trinity, Ely, although they were in the registration district of Mildenhall, and as a result sometimes the inhabitants of the Fen gave their birthplace as Mildenhall, or even Lakenheath.

James was the illegitimate son of Sophia Fuller (1868 Sedge Fen) and was born in 1886. Sophia married farm worker Charles Brand (1864 Burnt Fen) in 1888 and raised a family with him; two year old James was left with his grandparents.

Thus it is in the 1891 Census James can be found living with his grandparents at Board Cottage, Burnt Fen, these were James Fuller (1836 Thorpe, Norwich) and Ann (nee Bonnett 1839 Lakenheath / Burnt Fen, Suffolk). Living in the same household were Sophia's siblings, her brothers Charles (1859), George (1863), Alfred (1867) and sister Mary Ann (1877) who were all shown as born at Mildenhall, which in this case meant Sedge Fen. In a cottage nearby were Sophia's uncle and aunt John and Susan Fuller. All the men of the family were farm workers. Grandmother Annie died later that year.

By the 1901 Census James was a farm servant and still living with his widowed grandfather, this time at Sedge Fen. James' uncle George was also living with his father, as was uncle Alfred and his wife Eliza (nee Mizen, 1876 Eriswell, Suffolk).

By the 1911 Census James' grandfather had died (in 1908), but the family was still together at Sedge Fen, as James was living with Alfred and Eliza and their children Sidney (1902 Sedge Fen) and Doris (1908 Sedge Fen). Their brother George was also still one of the household. The brothers were labourers for the Burnt Fen Commissioners and James was a general farm labourer.

Meanwhile Sophia and Charles Brand had also been living on Burnt Fen and Sedge Fen and James had several half-siblings: Annie (1889 Sedge Fen); William (1893 Sedge Fen); Walter (1896 Burnt Fen); and Emma (1901 Burnt Fen). Like James, his brothers worked on the farms and both William and Walter are shown as horsemen in the 1911 Census. James' stepfather Charles Brand was the son of a Great Eastern Railways porter, and like many sons of GER workers, he also found employment with the company; he worked as a platelayer for GER, and thus the Brands were in railway accommodation at Burnt Hill Station (1901) and later at Shippea Hill Station (1911). It is impossible to tell how close James was to his Brand family, we only know that on his grave registration record it is his "father and mother", Charles and Sophia Brand, that are listed as his next of kin and that he nominated Charles Brand as his father and legatee on enlistment.

James fought with the 8th Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment, which, after training, reached France in August 1915. James did not perish in one of the great battles of the Somme, but in one of the smaller actions near the Ypres Canal where trenches were lost and then retaken within twenty-four hours; there are just six Bedfordshires commemorated on the Menin Gate at Ypres who died on 20th April 1916.

Charles Brand was sent £8 16s 1d, and then a further £7, as his stepson's effects.