

# **Frank Birch**

## **Private 73245, Notts & Derby Regiment (The Sherwood Foresters)**

Born in 1895 in Amersham, **Frank Birch** was the only child of Walter John Birch and his wife, Emily Elizabeth, née Thompson. Walter, born about 1858 in Hyde Heath, came from a family that were 'in service' locally; Frank's grandfather, Richard, born about 1833 in Chesham, was a coachman living in Hughenden in 1861. His grandmother, Sarah, born about 1823, came from Hughenden and worked as a laundress. Richard Birch died in 1868; his widow Sarah became employed as nurse in the Fuller household at Hyde House, Hyde End. Although the Fuller household was substantial - Benjamin Fuller JP, born 1792, and his wife Charlotte, born about 1796, together with their son, his wife, one-year-old granddaughter and five servants were living there in 1871 - there was no accommodation for Sarah's family. Walter and his brother Charles became 'boarders' with Alfred Smith and his wife on the Berkhamsted Road, Chartridge. The Fuller family subsequently moved to Great Germains, in Chesham (address now Fullers Hill) where Walter joined his mother as a footman, as the 1881 Census shows.

By 1891 Walter was in the employ of Mrs Frances Milner, a widow living at Beel House,<sup>1</sup> Amersham Common. Mrs Milner, then 65, was a lady of independent means who retained a household of 6 servants; Walter was the only male therein and his role was likely to have been that of butler, his declared occupation in later Census returns. In that household was also Emily Thompson, b.1856 in Edmonton, Enfield, Middlesex. Emily also came from a family 'in service'; her father, Edward born in Enfield in about 1821, was employed as a gardener, whilst her mother, Elizabeth born about 1829, came from Hindon in Wiltshire.

Walter and Emily were married in 1893 in Amersham and subsequently moved to a semi-detached property, Chesham Villa, on White Lion Road, Amersham Common,<sup>2</sup> where Frank grew up as an only child. At the age of 15 he had become a chemist's apprentice. Next door lived the Caudery family and it is probable that Frank and Samuel Caudery, though older, would have been playmates and friends.

Frank survived the war, which makes him much more difficult to research than if he had died. As the war continued, men joined or were drafted to regiments other than local ones. However the *Bucks Examiner* of 25 January 1918 published information abstracted from the *War Office Weekly Casualty List*<sup>3</sup> of a Pte 73245 F Birch (Amersham Common) being in the list of wounded. With this information his medal card was located and showed that he had enlisted in the Middlesex Regiment<sup>4</sup> before being posted to the Notts & Derby Regiment, otherwise known as the Sherwood Foresters. His record of service has not apparently survived. It has not been possible to confirm details of his death.<sup>5</sup>

He was awarded The British War Medal, 1914-18 and The Allied Victory Medal.

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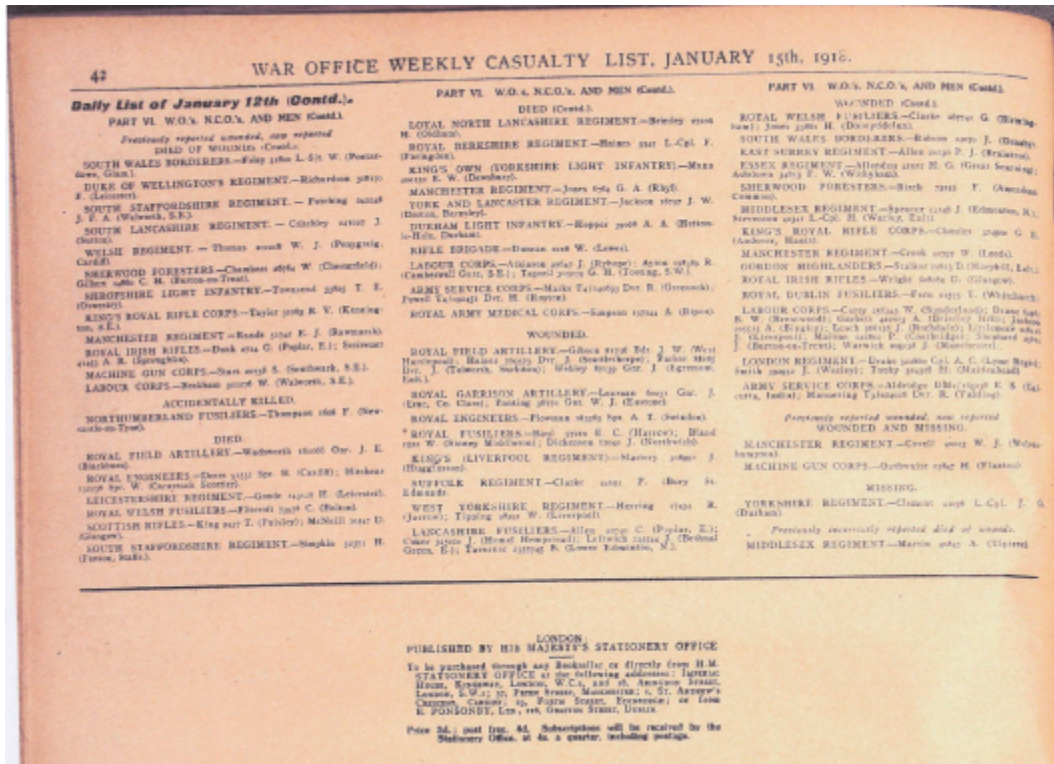
<sup>1</sup> For more details of Beel House, see narrative for West, Henry Frank.

<sup>2</sup> For photograph see narrative for Caudery, Frank Percy.

<sup>3</sup> 15 Jan 1918, p 42, 'SHERWOOD FORESTERS – Birch 73245 F (Amersham Common)'. He was the only casualty from this regiment.

<sup>4</sup> The Medal card indicates service numbers for the Middlesex Regiment 12131 & 242793.

<sup>5</sup> The GRO Index has details of the death of a Frank Birch in 1972, 1972 Q1 Wycombe 6A 1532, giving a birth date of 5 Oct 1895. This is consistent both with Frank's calculated birth year and with his baptism which took place on 4 Dec 1895 at Amersham. It is possible Frank Birch survived his wounds, returned to the community and died some years later.



Frank Birch is remembered with Honour on the Roll of Honour in St Mary's Church, Amersham.