

Charles William (William Charles) Lane

Gunner 63130, 111th Battery / Royal Garrison Artillery

Charles William Lane's birth was registered in the period of January to March 1884, to single mother Ellen Lane. Charles (sometimes known as William) was Ellen's first born, and she went on to have more children: Albert two years later and Flora born in 1889. Flora was the only one of Ellen's children to be baptised in St Mary's Church, on 24 September 1889.¹ The records state that Ellen was then living in Bury End, Amersham. Ellen must have struggled to keep her small family together and, by the time of the 1891 Census she was living in the Union Workhouse in Whielden Street. She was occupied in straw plaiting, a poorly paid job, and had with her the children: Charles (7), Albert (5), both of whom attended school, and Florrie (aged 2).



The Union Workhouse, Whielden Street, Amersham
(from an old picture postcard).

Ellen was living in the workhouse in 1901, but her two sons were living with other families. Albert Lane (14) was living with an aunt, Rosa Richardson, in Station Road and was an apprentice basket maker. William Lane (aged 17) was living as a lodger with 51 year old Louise Toms in Broadway, in a house next to Bury Farm. William's occupation was listed as 'miller's carter'. There was Bury Mill across the road.

By the time of the 1911 Census, poor Ellen was back living in the Workhouse, (or perhaps she never left), this time with three other children: George Lane (13), Violet-Maud (10) and Grace Lillian (15)

who was a nurse and maid in the Workhouse. Ellen herself, then 46, was employed as a field worker on a nearby farm. William had found different lodgings with the family of John Redding in the London Road, Amersham and worked as a maltster's labourer, presumably at Weller's Brewery. There was a happy outcome for Ellen Lane, however, as she married William Lenford, or Linford in the early part of 1912, and moved to London Road in Amersham.

Unusually, the British Army Service Records of Charles William Lane have survived, as part of the so-called 'Burnt Documents'. He would have volunteered for the army.² His Attestation papers³ were signed in front of the Attesting Officer on 21 February 1916 and approved by the Approving Officer at Tynemouth (Newcastle) on 2 March 1916. Charles was 31 years and 9 months old and gave his occupation as a water inspector under the District Council. He was 5 ft 5½ ins tall and had an expanded girth of 36½ ins. His address was given as 61 High Street, Amersham and he was enlisted into the Royal Regiment of Artillery. Training took place at Fort Brockhurst in Gosport, Hampshire and he was posted to the Royal Garrison Artillery, 47 Company, on 25 July 1916. Much of the additional detail in the documents is illegible, but he was eventually posted to 111th Battery.

The Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA) was an arm of the Royal Artillery that was originally tasked with manning the guns of the British Empire's forts and fortresses including coastal artillery batteries, the heavy gun batteries attached to each Infantry Division and the guns of the siege artillery. The heavy guns had a devastating effect on both sides in the Great War and, with machine-guns, were responsible for the enormous carnage of the battles.

¹ The Parish Records of St Mary the Virgin, Amersham, 1561 -1901, CD *Buckinghamshire Family History Society*.

² Appeals Tribunals began in March 1916 and men attesting before that date had the right to state what regiment they would like to join.

³ The British Army WW1 Service Records 1912-1920 for Charles William Lane, from *Ancestry.co.uk*

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In the quagmire that followed the Battle of the Marne, it was finally realised that it was not the place for artillery to be in the infantry line and they were positioned further back. (*Information taken from the web-site 'The Long, Long Trail'*)



'A British Heavy Gun in Action'
Gunner Charles William Lane
would have fired a gun such as
this during his service in the
RGA.

(*Photograph from a postcard
produced in the Daily Mail
Battle Picture series*).

There is no information about the circumstances of Charles William Lane's death. We know that he died of his wounds, somewhere in Pas de Calais on 5 October 1918, aged 34, during **the Advance to Victory** leading up to the Armistice. One of the documents in his records is the letter to Mrs Linford (Charles's mother) asking her to acknowledge the receipt of his personal effects. The effects consisted of " *Disc, letters, photos, wallet, 2 knives, 2 note books, cards, badge, metal watch & chain*". The letter was sent on 10 March 1920 from the Records Office in Dover. Charles William was the brother of George Percy Lane.

Charles was awarded The Allied Victory Medal and The British War Medal, 1914-18 and these medals were received by Ellen Linford on 19 August 1921.

Charles William Lane is remembered with Honour on the
Vis-en-Artois Memorial, Pas de Calais. (Panel 3)



Photograph courtesy: Commonwealth War Graves Commission

He is also remembered on the Roll of Honour in the Methodist Church, High Street, Amersham and the Baptist Church (now part of the King's Arms Hotel).