

Albert Henry Steel

Born 24th January 1884

Died 15th March 1915 Age 31

Royal Berks Reg. 2nd Btn. Pte 10030

La Touret Memorial

Frederick Steel

Born 21 June 1886

Died 28 October 1914 Age 28

Scots Guards 1st Btn. Pte 6012

Perth Cemetery Belgium

Henry, (in most records and censuses he uses his second name), and Frederick were the sons of Joseph and Mary Steel of West Hanney.

Joseph had been born in Swillington, Yorkshire, the son of a miller. By the 1871 census he had worked his way to Long Wittenham and was living in a hut pulled by the steam plough he operated. In the Parish records of 1876 he is recorded as having a son with Elizabeth Steel, and he was now a West Hanney innkeeper. In 1877 he has a daughter with Matilda Anne Steel, and is at the Lamb Inn as a publican and a machinist.

In 1880 he marries Mary Watts, daughter of Henry Watts a carpenter of West Hanney. He is still an innkeeper.

Between 1881 and 1900 Joseph and Mary have 10 children with only their eldest, William, dying as a boy. Between Henry in 1884 and Frederick in 1886 Joseph goes back to listing Engineer/Machinist as his occupation. The 1891 census shows him as a 'threshing machine proprietor', with Henry 7 and Frederick 5 living at home.

By the 1901 census they have moved to 'Canal Bank', Ardington and Joseph is a farmer. There is no record for Henry, and Frederick at 15 is now at Marlborough College as a scullion servant (kitchen assistant).

In the 1911 census the Steel family live at 'Canal Side', Ardington Wick. Joseph was a cow keeper, and verbal history notes that he also listed 'lock keeper' on the canal as one of his jobs. Henry now 26 was living at home as a farm worker. No record remains of when he enlisted in the Royal Berks Reg.

In 1911 Frederick was in Kirkdale, Lancashire, a boarder in a household of 10. The householder is the father of a police officer living there, and Frederick is also a police officer and army pensioner, meaning that sometime between the 1901 and 1911 census he enlisted in the army. It is reasonable to suppose that he enlisted in the Scots Guards then, though as most records have been destroyed (or pre 1914 not available) it is difficult to prove.

In 1912 he married at the Church of St. Paul, Greenwich, Bertha Mary Ratcliffe the daughter of a colour sergeant, William James Ratcliffe. Bertha seems to have been with her widowed mother Maria. Then she was a scholar in an institution for the orphaned daughters of army personnel. By 1911 she was in service in London. However in 1911 both her parents, her brother and sister seem to have signed her marriage certificate!

Frederick was recalled to the Scots Guards at the outbreak of war and was killed only months later.

As a serving officer with the City of Liverpool Police at the time of his recall his name is also on their Role of Honour.