

John Godfrey

Baptised 3rd July 1887  
Died 1st December 1918 Age 31  
Royal Garrison Artillery 46 AA co.  
Gunner 36181  
West Hanney Churchyard

William Godfrey

Baptised January 1892  
Died 2nd April 1918 Age 26  
Royal Berks Reg 5th Bn  
Sgt 24046  
St. Sever Cemetery, Rouen

The Godfrey family had been in Hanney since the start of the seventeenth century. However John and William's grandparents William and Mary Godfrey had moved around the area looking for work. In 1861 they were both Toll collectors on the turnpike to Faringdon (now the 417) living at Turnpike House near the Leather Bottle Farm and Prince of Wales Inn. Their eldest child Charles (John and William's father) was nine.

In 1871 Charles, then a general labourer, was in Pentonville Prison. The records do not show his crime. His parents had moved back to East Hanney to keep the Black Horse Inn.

In 1878 Charles married Susan Tombs, daughter of East Hanney labourer Isaac. The Tombs were another well established Hanney family. Between 1879 and 1895 Charles and Susan had had seven children. John is on the 1891 census as a four year old and his eldest brother, Stanley Charles, is already a farm labourer at 13. By 1901 John is an agricultural labourer at 14, and William is eight. Stanley is boarding in West Hanney with Cyrus Willis and is a 'hay binder' on the census. Their father Charles died in 1908.

The 1911 census shows Susan living on the Green at East Hanney with her youngest three children. Frank is 22, William, 20, is a farm carter and Fanny is 17. John, still a farm labourer, is living with his eldest brother Stanley, now a 'grocer's horseman' four doors away on the Green.

In 1913 William married Eliza Collins daughter of Jonathan Collins, a mill carter, and moved to Woodbine Cottage (now Lilac Cottage, opposite Blenheim Orchard).

All four Godfrey brothers enlisted. Stanley Charles returned from the war and is on the group photograph.

John enlisted at Wantage in front of a magistrate on 1st December 1915. His medical report shows he had 'a hammer toe and rather flat feet'. He was an Army Reserve Class B and he was not mobilized until February 1917 into the Royal Garrison Artillery. Presumably when the government were desperate for young men. He was posted to Woolwich, Liverpool and Manchester.

Frank also enlisted at Reading in 1914, into the Royal Berks Reg 8th Bn, but was discharged 74 days later under section 392(III) of the King's Regulations

as 'not likely to become an efficient soldier'. The reason given was 'old fracture' on his medical report. Those found not fit to serve were issued with white armbands to save them from abuse from members of the public.

No record remains of William's enlistment. He was admitted to Barridge Road Military Hospital, Nottingham, on 16th November 1918 with pneumonia. He died on 1st December and was buried in West Hanney churchyard on 9th December.

When Susan Godfrey had to sign for her son, John's effects to be returned she also filled in an army form giving details of all his siblings. Opposite Stanley and Frank's names she has stated one of them was serving with 1/8 Hants Reg in Khartoum, Egypt, but it is difficult to see which one it refers to.

Stanley Charles Godfrey  
Royal Berkshire Regiment

b.1878. Son of Charles and Susan Godfrey. By 1891 he was a farm labourer (see picture) at 13. In 1901 he was a 'hay binder' lodging with Cyrus Willis in WH. By 1911 his brother John lived with him on EH. Green and he was a 'grocers horseman'. In 1912 he married Alice Eleanor Herman, daughter of George and half-sister of Albert and Reg. He was brother of John and William Godfrey.