

# William Messent

1884 - 1936

William Messent was born in Bulmer in Smeetham Hall Lane cottages in 1884. The Messent family had lived in Bulmer and the surrounding villages since at least the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Due to the agricultural depression, William and his brother Robert, went to London to seek work, and the 1911 census shows them living in a boarding house in Islington and working as Car Men.

On 4<sup>th</sup> January 1915 William registered for the army from an address in Finsbury Park, London. He joined the Royal Horse Artillery. Between 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 1915 and 13<sup>th</sup> June 1915 he was in the UK training. Then he was posted with the RHA to the Mediterranean, mainly Egypt. Unfortunately, he developed TB. He returned to the UK on 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 1916, was discharged from the army as medically unfit for duty, and sent to Preston Hall in Kent to rehabilitate. Once he was well he returned to Bulmer and rented the cottage next door to his parents, who had moved in 1916 to Beggars End Cottages, Finch Hill, Bulmer.

In 1918, William married Florence Suzanne Pilgrim and the couple had seven children who survived past infancy.

William had a small army pension and when he was well he worked tarring roads and helping with the harvest. He had an allotment at the bottom of Finch Hill where he grew vegetable, kept goats for milk, chickens for eggs and occasionally a pig. However, he was not a well man because of the TB and often slept in a hut down the allotment to avoid disturbing his family.

In 1935 the family moved to a newly built council house in Church Road Bulmer. They were slightly better off now as several of the children were working and contributing to the household.

But Florence died the next year, and Violet, the eldest daughter, who was only 18, had to take on the running of the household.

William Messent's demise came soon after. The TB, or consumption, he had contracted in Egypt during the war had weakened him, and he died of a burst ulcer in Halstead Hospital. He was buried next to his wife Florence, his sons Robert and Ronald, his parents, grandparents and the children they lost as babies in an unmarked grave on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1936. Rev. Pannell conducted the service.

Leonard, the eldest, and Molly the youngest of the surviving children of William and Florence Messent, paid for the headstone to be erected in 2009.