

*'MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE
BRITISH EMPIRE': THE LIFE
OF ALFRED LAW, POSTMAN
BY MARY GRIFFITHS JAMES*

Alfred stood on the deck of the ship on 16th July 1864 as it left the harbour in Cork and wondered when, and if, he would see Ireland or England again. The voyage was long and boring and there were none of the social activities available to the Fishing Fleet --those upper class English girls going to India to find a husband amongst the expatriate males working in India -- or the Mensahibs returning to their husbands in India having deposited their children at boarding school in England. It was not until 20th October that Alfred was able to disembark in Calcutta and what a different place from his place of embarkation! Alfred was with his fellow soldiers from the 11th Regiment of Foot so at least he had some familiar faces in this new, noisy and exotic place. An Infantry Regiment, they would have marched to their new base no doubt to the tune 'We've Lived and We've Loved Together' to undertake garrison duty in the Empire. The British East India Company had their own army, almost twice the size of the British Army but following years of corruption and of slave trafficking from places such as Mozambique and Madagascar to India, the East India Company was nationalised in 1857 and British regiments did garrison duties in India in their place.

On 2nd September 1867 Alfred married Maria Preston, the sixteen year old daughter of Martin Preston who was possibly also a soldier. The marriage took place in Faizabad, Utter Pradesh. There were at least two children born in India and Mary, born in Bengal in 1870 is likely to have died prior to her second birthday, not an uncommon situation in India. Her sister Elizabeth was born on 9 November 1871 at Kussowlie, Guigal, India but she survived, came back to England with her parents, married and died aged eighty-eight in Newton Abbot.

Alfred's Unit had returned to Portsmouth for disembarkation on 16th April 1872 but must have moved to the Plymouth area by 1874 as his daughter Ellen Ruth was born there. Alfred was still a soldier and there must have been a barracks there but two years later he was in Exeter where his son George Edward was born. The Cardwell Reforms of the 1870s had seen the Topsham Barracks at Exeter become the depot for the Regiment. Alfred left the Army after twenty-one years and eleven days in the Regiment, having gained the medal for long service and good conduct as well as five good conduct badges. On 14th October 1879 Alfred returned to civilian life with an army pension.

The Law family moved to 19 Roseland Terrace in Exeter but with a family of five children Maria had to work as a laundress to bring in some extra money and supplement Alfred's

pension. Maria and Alfred had a further four children and as the Post Office were always happy to have ex soldiers working in the service, Alfred joined as a Postman in Newton Abbot, Devon in September 1890. The family were living at 4 Fern Terrace, Highweek and their income was increased with Elizabeth, who had been born in India, now working as a pupil teacher and son George being a telegraph messenger. Alfred's work was with the parcel post.

Aged twenty-five Alfred's son George had moved out of the family home by 1901 but he was still working as a town postman. On 17th December 1907 George was in the County Lunatic Asylum although the specific illness is unknown. George remained single all of his life but he survived until 30th April 1946 when his death was recorded in the asylum register.

After forty-three years of marriage and thirteen children-- of whom ten survived -- Alfred and Maria had moved to 49 Abbotsbury Road in Newton Abbot by 1911 and were living off Alfred's pensions from the Army and the Post Office. Their two youngest sons were living with them and both were working. Alfred's daughter Elizabeth, her husband and their nephew also lived at this address. This three bedroom terraced house with bay windows, gardens front and back, would have been a far cry from Army accommodation in India.

Alfred had been born in 1837 in the village of Charlton in Wiltshire and one wonders if he ever returned to the village after the fateful day of 25th September 1858 when he enlisted in the 11th Foot at Cirencester. Attractive though the area is, there would be little work opportunities for Alfred. His father George, born in Charlton in the early 1800s, had been an agricultural labourer and of his nine siblings, only a couple remained in Charlton and were farm labourers as there was little non agricultural trade.

By the time Alfred retired he had his own ten children and grandchildren some of whom were still in the Newton Abbot area. Alfred had a very long retirement and died on 10th November 1922, the cause of his death being senile decay. The informant at his death was his son in law Albert Andrews, husband to his daughter Elizabeth. Alfred's wife predeceased him by two years. Elizabeth, Albert and Alfred appear to have been sharing a house, but had moved to 2 Mount Pleasant Wolborough, a pleasant part of Newton Abbot.

Alfred was born in December 1837 and so the new Queen – Victoria – would have been just months into her reign. When Alfred died there had been three monarchs from the House of Hanover; Saxe-Coburg & Gotha and Windsor. During his life Alfred would have seen many changes and at the time of his death he missed by only four days the first public radio broadcast. Penny farthing bikes had been replaced by bicycles with a roller chain, developed by Hans Renold, a Swiss national who was naturalised British. Transport had further advanced with the invention of the car and the first public railway using a steam locomotive, which just prior to Alfred's birth had lead to a tremendous number of railway companies and a rail system that covered most of Britain.

Telecommunications became another way in which the world could connect and in Alfred's family this provided work for some of his nuclear family who worked as telegraph messengers and telegraphists in the Post Office. In the 1850s the first submarine communications cables were laid and Morse developed his Code which would replace the semaphore flag waving system on which shipping was reliant for communication.

From about the 1870s, Alfred would have seen the huge electric arc lights which began appearing in the streets which made life much safer outdoors after dark. Reforms in housing, health and education and a greater understanding of the body impacted on health of the individual. Medical equipment changed and whilst some sort of a stethoscope had been used since the early 1800s, Alfred would have known of the use of the binaural stethoscope from the mid 1800s.

The Great Exhibition in London in 1851 came about following a Europe that had struggled through two difficult decades of social and political upheaval and aimed to give hope of a better future. The Industrial Revolution had caused a change from an agrarian and handicraft economy to one dominated by machine manufacture and there was a hope that a better future would follow, although in reality this would depend on the social grouping of an individual. It is likely that Alfred would have heard about the Great Exhibition but unlikely that his family could afford to visit. Many of the railways had discounted tickets to enable more people to attend and indeed six million, including Darwin, Faraday, Karl Marx and Charles Dickens, did attend which was equivalent to about one third of the population. However, even the cheapest tickets at 1/- each would be out of the reach of Alfred's father George as an agricultural labourer.

Alfred's sons -- apart from George who was in an asylum -- would have been conscripted if they had not already volunteered in World War One. Alfred's son William Alfred had joined the Army Service Corps in 1903 rising to become a Corporal. He was posted to Dublin where he met and married his wife. He survived the war and having left the Army he became a licensed victualler at The Victoria Inn at Hepworth, Yorkshire where he died from pneumonia in 1927.

Alfred saw tremendous changes in both his personal life and the wider world during his eighty-three years. As he lay on his death bed, one wonders which part of his many faceted life he saw as being a priority: would it be his expanding family, or perhaps his wife Maria and daughter Elizabeth who had been with him for the greater part of his life?

Fact Sheet: Alfred Law

Pensioner Details
<i>Pensioner name:</i> Alfred Law
<i>Person ID:</i> DV1001
<i>Your name:</i> Mary Griffiths James
<i>U3A group:</i> Heaton and Reddish
Part One: Birth and Family
1: When and where was your pensioner born?
Alfred was baptised on 4 February, 1838 at St John the Baptist Church, Chalfont, Wiltshire. His parents were given as George and Mary Law, George being a labourer.
2: Who were your pensioners' parents? Record any details you can find out about them here (e.g. occupation, religious affiliation, whether they could read or write)
Alfred's father was George Law , born about 1802 according to the census returns and he was born in Charlton, Wiltshire. George in turn was the son of a George Law baptised on 29 January 1769 in Hankerton, Wiltshire. This George was married to Sarah Alsop who was baptised on 24 January 1768 at St Quintin, Stanton, Wiltshire.
Alfred's mother was Mary Godwin and she was baptised on 30 June 1805 at Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire. The Wiltshire England Church of England Marriages and Banns 1754 – 1916 gives the marriage of Mary Godwin and George Law as 12 February 1827 at St Mary Westport, Wiltshire
George and Mary had 10 known children. On the 1841 census they are shown living in Charlton with 7 of their children and George is said to be an Agricultural Labourer. All the family were born in county.
The 1851 census has George and 7 children living at Charlton Moor and he was a widower, Mary having died in the April quarter of 1846 in Wiltshire.
The 1861 census shows George at the same address and same occupation together with 2 daughters
The 1871 census shows George again at the same address and the same occupation is given but he has a widowed daughter aged 26, 2 grandchildren and a visitor with him.
George died in the April quarter of 1874, in the Malmesbury registration district.

George and Mary had 8 children, the youngest born just 2 years before her death.

3: Did your pensioner have any siblings? What were their names, and how old were they in relation to your pensioner? Use this space to record anything else you have found out about them (e.g. occupation)

Alfred had 9 siblings.

1) Sarah was born in 1827 in Charlton, Wiltshire and baptised on 30 December of that year. She died in the July quarter of 1865 in the Malmesbury registration district. Sarah married John Barnes on 5th June 1847 in the Parish Church in Malmesbury. Sarah was said to be under age. John made his mark but Sarah signed. John's occupation was given as a Labourer. Sarah is on the 1851 and 1861 census returns together with John. Sarah and John had a son and a daughter.

2) Hannah who was baptised on 15 March 1829 at Charlton and died in the June quarter of 1885 in Mitcham Surrey. She was buried on 27 March 1885 in Merton. Hannah married Alfred Knapp on 16 September 1849 in Charlton and they had 5 daughters and a son. She was living in Mitcham according to the 1871 and 1881 census returns.

3) Henry was born in October 1830 at Charlton, Wiltshire, being baptised on 10th October. Henry married Sarah Ann Hanks on 22 September 1853 in Charlton and Henry signed on his marriage certificate. Henry and Sarah Ann had 9 known children. Henry is on the 1841 census with his parents and also on the 1851 census returns when his father is said to be widowed and both father and son are occupied as Farm Labourers. Next door to them is Charles Law and his family who may be a brother to Father George Law. Henry died in the March quarter of 1897 in the Malmesbury registration district, his wife Sarah Ann having predeceased him by 9 years.

4) Reuben, the 5th child was baptised on 13th Jan 1833 in Wiltshire and is shown on the 1841 and 1851 census returns in Charlton with his father and other family members. Between the 1851 census and 1858 Reuben moved to the London area and he married Eliza Louisa Stone on 10th January 1858 at St James church, Dukes Street, London. Reuben and Eliza Louise had 5 known children. On the 1861 census Reuben is given as an Agricultural Labourer, his wife as a dressmaker and they have 2 sons with them. The 1871 census shows Reuben to be a Land Drainer and he and his wife have 4 children. In 1871 he and his family were in West Ham, Reuben and 1 son been given as Labourers, his wife and 3 other children are at the same address, as is his niece Amy Knapp who is given as 19 years of age and a dressmaker. Reuben, his wife and daughter were in Kingston on the 1891 census and Reuben's occupation is now given as a Coal Dealer. On the 1901 census Reuben, aged 68 is a Corn and General Dealer and it was the next year that Reuben died. His wife was not with him as she had been admitted to Brookwood and Holloway Mental Hospital on 22nd May 1896. Her details at that time mention that she is a Zion Baptist and stated her husband was a gardener and small shopkeeper, the address given is 37 Cambridge Grove Road, Norbiton, Kingston. Eliza Louisa was still in the asylum on 23 January 1906 when she died from bronchitis and heart failure.

Of their 5 children, the 2 youngest were girls and Amy, born on 9th Sept 1870, married and emigrated to Canada where she died in 1940.

Their other daughter was **Elizabeth Alice Law**, born on 18th February 1867 in Romford Essex. She was living with her father up to the 1901 census and in 1891 is said to be a dressmaker. On the 1901 census Elizabeth's occupation is given as **Sub Postmistress**. She is on the 1906 Surrey Electoral Registers in 1906 as living at 37 Cambridge Grove Road, the family home but she has not been found on the 1911 census. On the 1939 census Elizabeth, aged 75, was living in Bournemouth as is said to be an Apartment House Keeper but by the time of her death in March 1950 at the age of 92, she was in the Essex South Western registration district.

5) Diana was the 5th child, baptised on 14 December 1834 in Charlton. She is on the 1841 census but has not been found on the 1851 census. However, the UK Lunacy Patients Admission Registers 1846 – 1912 show her as being admitted to an asylum on 8 August 1853 and dying there on 2nd July 1854.

6) Elizabeth was baptised on 13th March 1836 in Wiltshire and on 24th May 1864 she married Thomas Hopkins where they both signed the register. Elizabeth was a dressmaker and Thomas a mason and her father George is said to be a Gardener. The marriage took place at St George Parish Church, Tredezar in Monmouthshire. Elizabeth and Thomas had 2 children and Elizabeth spent the rest of her life in Wales, dying in October quarter of 1909 in the Pontypool registration district.

7) Alfred, the Postal Pensioner was the 7th child who was born on 28th December 1837 and baptised on 4th February 1838 in Wiltshire.

8) Ann was baptised on 12th January 1840 in Wiltshire. She appears with her parents on the 1841 and 1851 census returns and also on the 1861 where she is said to be an Agricultural Labourer. Ann married Eli Godwin at Avening, Gloucestershire on 25th December 1864 and they went on to have 8 children. Ann died in Cheltenham on the last day of 1898 and Eli died in 1918 in the Stroud registration district.

9) John was baptised on 12 June 1842 in Charlton. On the 1891 census John is shown as living with his sister Ann and brother-in-law Eli Godwin in Gloucestershire and his occupation is given as General Labourer. On the 1901 census, aged 57, John was living alone in Pangbourne, Berkshire and his occupation was Carter on Farm. By the 1911 census and aged 69 John was in the Workhouse at Bradfield, Berkshire and was said to be Formerly Farm Labourer. John died in the April quarter of 1914 aged 72 in Berkshire.

10) Ruth was baptised on 4th March 1844 in Charlton and she was only 27 months old when her mother died. She is on the 1851 census with her father and on the 1861 when her occupation is given as Agricultural Labourer. Ruth married in July 1866 to Henry Beale in the Malmesbury registration district. By the 1871 census Ruth aged 26 is living again with her father having been widowed. Henry had died in January 1871, being aged 56. In the July quarter of 1873 in the Malmesbury registration district, Ruth married for a second time, this time to William Smith. The 1881 shows them living in Englefield, Berkshire together

with their son George William and William is given as an Agricultural Labourer. On the 1891 census Thomas Jones, an Agricultural Labourer is living with them, William is occupied as a Cowman and son George is an Agricultural Labourer, aged 14. They were living at Wichcroft Cottages in Englefield.

George William Smith is given as Head of the household in 1901 and he has a wife Ann born in Oxfordshire and George's parents are living with them at 11 Cromwell Road, Caversham, Oxfordshire. George's occupation is given as **Postman**. On the 1911 census Ruth and her husband are living at Gosbrook Farm, Caversham and they have 2 grandsons, one born in Oxfordshire and the other in Reading, Berkshire. These are the sons of George William Smith. **George William** is on the 1939 census with his wife Agnes and is said to be a **Retired Postman and jobbing gardener**.

Part Two: Marriage and children

1: Did your pensioner marry? What was their spouse's name, and when and where did they marry them? Use this space to record any extra details you can find out about their spouse (e.g. when/where they were born, their occupation)

The 1911 census shows Alfred Law living at 49 Abbotsbury Road Newton Abbot with his wife Mary Ellen whose age is given as 58. There are 2 children living with them.

Mary Ellen is said to have been married for 43 years, have had 13 children of which 10 were living in 1911 and her place of birth is given as Preston, Lancashire. The 1901 census gives the couple and 6 children living at 4 Fern Terrace, Highweek and Mary E. is given as Alfred's wife and her place of birth as Roscommon, Ireland. The 1891 census also shows the couple at 4 Fern Terrace and Mary Ellen's place of birth is given as Ireland. The 1881 census gives Alfred with his correct details but his wife is given as Maria, with still the 13 year age gap between the couple but her place of birth is given as Oldham, Lancashire. The 43 years married would put the marriage about 1868.

Being 13 years younger than Alfred, this would put her birth about 1851 and records for Ireland and Lancashire were searched for her birth but none has been found. From the GRO records it is possible to trace the mother of a child born pre 1900 and on 6th September 1879 the birth of a son William Alfred Law born at the Higher Barracks at Exeter gives the mother's maiden name as Preston.

Alfred joined the 11th (North Devonshire) Regiment of Foot, with a regimental number of 448, in September 1858 at Cirencester when he was described as 5'6" tall, with a fresh complexion, hazel eyes and light hair and said to be Roman Catholic. He is on the 1861 census at Portsmouth with his Regiment and in July 1864 Alfred embarked from Queenstown, Ireland, arriving at Calcutta, India on 20th October of that year. Alfred was in Fyzabad in 1867 and this would be around the time that Mary Ellen would have been married. There is a Maria Preston daughter of Martin Preston who married on 2nd September 1867. There is also a Mary Law born on 2 June 1870, parents Alfred and Mary,

in Bengal, India and she died as an infant. Mary Ellen would have been about 16 at the time of her marriage and so it is reasonable to assume that her father was also in India.

Alfred's Unit returned to Portsmouth for disembarkation on 16th April 1872. At this time Alfred and Mary had a daughter Elizabeth Ann Law, born in Kussowlie Guigal, India on 9th November 1871. 14th October 1879 Alfred was said to have been discharged to pension. He appears to have been based at the Barracks for this 8 years and he had 4 children born there at that time.

On the 1881 census Alfred and Maria (as her name is given) were living at 19 Roseland Terrace together with 5 children, with Alfred as a pensioner 11th Regiment and Maria as a Laundress.

The 2 different names could be because Mary Ellen was Roman Catholic and on their documents she would be recorded as Maria. The balance of probabilities is that Mary Ellen and Maria are one and the same person and that she is likely to have married in India with her father there also.

Mary E. Law died aged 67 in the Jan quarter of 1920 in Newton Abbot, predeceasing her husband Alfred by 2 years.

2: Did your pensioner have any children? What were their names, and when they were born? Use this space to record any extra details you can find out about them (e.g. occupation, where they lived later in life)

Alfred and Mary Ellen had 13 children according to the 1911 census, 10 of whom were living at that time. There is a Mary Law who was born in India in 1870 and died there. It is likely that there were 2 other children born and died in India.

4) Elizabeth Ann was born in Nov 1871 in India and on the 1891 census her occupation is pupil teacher. On the 1901 census Elizabeth is 29 and still living at home but her occupation is dressmaker. Elizabeth married Albert J Andrews in the April quarter of 1902 in Newton Abbot. Albert's occupation on the 1911 census is that of Leather dresser in a tannery. Albert and Elizabeth are shown with a 7 year old niece at the same address as Alfred and Mary Ellen and 2 of their children. It appears, from the number of rooms that each of them have that the property was divided. It was Albert Andrews who was the informant at his father in law Alfred Law's death.

5) Ellen Ruth was born in the July quarter of 1874 in Stoke Damerel. She is with her parents on the 1881 census but by 1891 aged 16 she was a Housemaid at Kerswell House, Chudleigh. In 1901 Ellen was a visitor in West Ham and her occupation is given as Cook Domestic. Elizabeth married Richard Parsons on 8th April 1901 at St Paul's Church, Stratford, Essex. In 1881 Richard was found on the census as a 13 year old pauper on the 'Exmouth' a training ship at Grays Thurrock. Richard's mother was Margaret Parsons and he had a brother according to the Workhouse Records. Elizabeth died in West Ham in 1929.

6) Rose born 27 September 1877 in Exeter. In 1891 Rose was a General Servant at Ashbrook Cottage, which was very near to her family home. In 1901 she was a dressmaker and a visitor together with her sister Ellen in Forest Gate, West Ham. Rose married John William Barnes in the October quarter of 1904 at West Ham, Essex. On the 1911 census John's occupation is given as a railway engine stoker and he and Rose had 3 children. Alfred, the oldest and born in 1907, died in the April quarter of 1928 aged 21. His brother George William was born in 1908 but also died young in 1931 aged 23. Francis Albert was born in 1901. In 1939 Francis Albert, born on 25 September 1909, and his wife Florence were living in Ilford, Essex. Francis died on 24 April 1950 in Essex. Rose and John had a daughter, born on 19 September 1917 in West Ham. She died in Somerset in 1998. Rosalie is shown on the 1939 census with her parents. Rosalie married Joseph F. Paddon in the April quarter of 1943 in Newton Abbot.

7) George Edward was born on 20 May 1879 in Exeter and on 22 May 1894 he became a **Postman** in Newton Abbot. On the 1911 census George was in the Devon County Lunatic Asylum in Exminster where he had been admitted on 17 December 1907. On the 1939 census he is said to be On Parish & Chief (Porter Worker) living in Plymouth. George died aged 65 in 1946 in Devon.

8) William Alfred was born in the July quarter of 1879 at the Higher Barracks, Exeter. In 1901 William was a dockyard labourer, and boarding in Devonport. William enlisted in the Army Service Corps in 1903 and 2 years later was promoted to Corporal. By 18 June 1904 he was in Dublin as that is where he married Margaret Lilian Mullarney at St Bartholomew's Parish Church, Dublin. Both of their sons were born in Dublin in 1905 and 1908 but by 1911 the family were in South Weald, Essex with William still a Corporal. William served in WW1 as can be seen from UK WW1 Service Medal and Award Rolls 1914 – 1920 being an ASQM during that time. After leaving the Army William and Margaret became the Licensees of The Victoria Inn at Hepworth, near Holmfirth and it was here that William died in the June quarter of 1927.

9) Joseph Henry was born in 1882 in Exeter and he married Bessie Ann Sercombe in August 1908 in Chudleigh, Newton Abbot. They had 3 known children. Joseph was married and living in Torquay in 1911 where he was employed as a groom. Joseph and Bessie had 2 children and Joseph died in the January quarter of 1938 in the Newton Abbot registration district.

10) Mary Augusta was born in 1886 and in 1901, aged 15, was said to be assisting at home. She married John Vine in 1904 in the Newton Abbot registration district and they had 4 children. In 1911 they were living in Highweek, Newton Abbot and John was said to be a pipe maker in a brickyard.

11) Wilfrid Patrick was born in 1888 and in 1911 he was living with his parents and his occupation was given as a Printer Compositor. Wilfrid died aged 39 on 6 May 1927 in Newton Abbot, probate being given to his sister Elizabeth Ann and her husband Albert John Andrews. Wilfred left £727.2s.8d. in his estate.

12) Catherine Theresa was born on 6 April 1889 in the Newton Abbot registration district. Catherine married Henry John Collett in 1909 in the St Germans registration district, Cornwall. Theirs was to be a relatively short marriage as John lost his life at the Battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916, aged 32. He was serving on the 'Indefatigable'. Catherine and John had 4 children, all daughters, the first whom died as an infant.

13) Francis Aloysius was born in 1894 and was a Kennel Boy living with his parents in 1911. He married Annie Taylor in 1914 in Torquay and served in the Devonshire Regiment in WW1 according to the UK British Army World War 1 Service Records.

Part Three: Work

1: What occupation was your pensioner recorded as doing in census years? Please make sure to state clearly which year you are referring to

1841 age 3 no occupation
1851 age 14 Farm Labourer
1861 age 20 Soldier with the First Battalion 11th Infantry Regiment
1871 NOT SHOWN ON CENSUS – Alfred was in India with his Regiment
1881 age 41 Pensioner 11th Regiment
1891 age 52 Parcels Post
1901 age 63 Letter Carrier GPO
1911 age 72 Army and Post Office Pensioner

2: What occupations were people living with your pensioner (e.g. spouse, children, boarders) doing in the census years? Please make sure to state clearly which year you are referring to

1841 census
George – Ag Lab.
Mary – no occupation
Henry – no occupation
Reuben – no occupation
Sarah – no occupation
Diana – no occupation
Elizabeth – no occupation

Ann – no occupation

1851 census

George – Farm Labourer

Henry – Farm Labourer

Reuben – Farm Labourer

Elizabeth – no occupation

Ann – no occupation

John – no occupation

Ruth – no occupation

1861 census

Alfred was at the 1st Battalion 11th Infantry Regiment Barracks at Portsmouth with a large number of fellow soldiers

1871 census

Not on this census – serving in the 11th Foot Regiment in India

1881 census

Maria – Laundress

Elizabeth – Scholar

Ellen – Scholar

George – Scholar

Rose – Scholar

William – Scholar

1891 census

Mary Ellen – no occupation

Elizabeth – Pupil Teacher

George – Telegraph Messenger

William – Scholar

Joseph – Scholar

Mary Augusta – Scholar

Wilfrid – Scholar

1901 census

Mary E – no occupation

Elizabeth – dressmaker

Joseph – Cab? Groom

Mary A – assist at home

Wilfrid – Errand Boy ?Post

Kathleen – Scholar

Francis – Scholar

1911 census

Mary Ellen – no occupation

Wilfrid – Printer Compositor

Francis – Kennel Boy

Part Four: Anything Else

Please use this space to record anything else you have found out about your pensioner

Alfred started his life in the small village of Charlton which lies 2 miles from Malmesbury, 11 miles from Cirencester and is on the River Avon. When he joined the 11th Regiment of Foot Alfred said that he was a Roman Catholic, however he was baptised into the Anglican Church at the Local Parish Church of St John the Baptist, Charlton on 4th February 1838. Alfred's father was George and he was born in Charlton but prior to his birth the Law family were from Hankerton which is the next hamlet.

Land in Charlton was recorded in 2 Anglo-Saxon charters and also in the Domesday book of 1066. The area belonged to the 7th century Malmesbury Abbey and post dissolution times came into the hands of the Howard family. In 1667 Dryden, who married Elizabeth Howard wrote his 'annus mirabilis' in Charlton and at that time his son, also John, was born there.

This was very much a rural community and even in 1851 the population was less than 700. The Charlton Park National School was built the year that Alfred was born and this is possibly where he and his siblings would have attended. In 1822 the Horse and Groom Inn was built in the village and in 1870 a small children's hospital.

In 1858 Alfred left this life behind and joined the 11th Regiment of Foot in Cirencester. This took him to the Barracks in Portsmouth and then to Ireland prior to setting sail for India. In 1864. He did not return to England until 1872 when he disembarked at Portsmouth. He moved to the Higher Barracks in Exeter, originally a Cavalry Barracks, but this was the time of the Cardwell Reforms and the 11th (North Devonshire) Regiment of Foot was to become the Devonshire Regiment in 1881 with their depot at Exeter. Alfred was in Exeter until he was discharged to pension in October 1879, staying on in Exeter as can be seen by the 1881 census when the family were living at Heavitree, Exeter.

In September 1890 Alfred was appointed to the Postal Service in Newton Abbot, a town about 14 miles from Exeter. By the time of the 1891 census the family were living in Highweek, Newton Abbot and Alfred stayed there for 30 years, until his death in 1922. Alfred served in the Postal Service for 10 years and may have worked out of the Highweek Post Office which was at the top of Pit Hill Road and opposite the Highweek Inn. He retired at the age of 62 and had 20 years of retirement, 18 years of those with his wife.

How Alfred spent his retirement is not known but many of his children and grandchildren were still living in the area. A library had been built in 1904 and he may have made use of this.

In 1901 Newton Abbot had a population of 12,500. There was a long standing wool and leather industry and from the 18th century quarrying of ball clay, a high quality clay used to make clay pipes and Wedgwood pottery also used this clay due to its quality. In the mid 1800s the Vicary family bought the Bradley Woollen Mill and was a big employer in the area, together with tanning and fell mongering.

From the 1540s fishermen had left Newton Abbot to fish in Newfoundland but by the 1840s this industry was in decline. However, the trade in Newfoundland cod was such that there is an Inn in Highweek named 'Newfoundland'.

The arrival of the South Devon Railway in 1846 impacted the town and particularly when the GWR bought out the South Devon. In 1876. There were workshops in Newton Abbot to repair both locos and carriages.

Mary Ellen died in 1920 and in 1922 Alfred died in his mid eighties, the cause of death given being senile decay, cerebral degeneration. Albert Andrews, husband to his daughter Elizabeth Ann, was the informant at the death and both Alfred and Albert the address for both of them was given as 2 Mount Pleasant.

Part Five: Your Sources

Please use this space to record the sources you have used

Alfred Law

The Keep Museum for information about the 11th Regiment of Foot

HO107; Piece: 1181; Book: 7; Civil Parish: Charlton; County: Wiltshire; Enumeration District: 13; Folio: 22; Page: 14; Line: 14; GSU roll: 464199

Class: HO107; Piece: 1835; Folio: 105; Page: 14; GSU roll: 220982

Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre; Chippenham, Wiltshire, England; Reference Number: 1813/4

Royal Hospital, Chelsea: Discharge Documents of Pensioners; Class: WO 121; Piece Number: 223

Royal Hospital Chelsea: Length of Service Pensions, Admission Books; Class: WO 117; Piece Number: 31

Essex Record Office; Chelmsford, Essex, England; Essex Church of England Parish Registers

General Register Office; United Kingdom; Volume: 5b; Page: 157

British Postal Museum and Archive; Series: POST 58; Reference Number: 92

Class: RG14; Piece: 12742; Schedule Number: 90

Class: RG13; Piece: 2056; Folio: 47; Page: 13

The National Archives of the UK (TNA); Kew, Surrey, England; Census Returns of England and Wales, 1891; Class: RG12; Piece: 1699; Folio: 74; Page: 18; GSU roll: 6096809

Class: RG11; Piece: 2143; Folio: 76; Page: 34; GSU roll: 1341517

George Law

Class: RG 9; Piece: 639; Folio: 85; Page: 13; GSU roll: 5426

Class: RG 9; Piece: 1277; Folio: 42; Page: 5; GSU roll: 54278

The National Archives; Kew, London, England; 1871 England Census; Class: RG10; Piece: 1890; Folio: 28; Page: 4; GSU roll: 830862

England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915

England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975

England, Select Marriages, 1538–1973

Gloucestershire Archives; Gloucester, Gloucestershire; Gloucestershire Church of England Parish Registers; Reference Numbers: P29 in 1/11

London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: P69/JS1/A/002/MS07894/008

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