

Leonard Williams

Leonard Williams was born on 29th September 1893 in Braintree Essex. He was the son of Charles and Sarah (nee Stanley).



Just a few years after Leonard's birth the family moved to Grays, settling at 7 Cement Block Cottages Little Thurrock. After working on the land as an agricultural labourer, in 1910 Leonard joined the Territorials. His father had served in the military in the R.E.M.E as an army bandsman and it may have been this that gave Leonard an interest in the army. When war was declared Leonard as a territorial was expected to join up. He joined the field artillery which involved moving cannons and horses to where they were needed. He was sent to the Somme in about 1915 and one day while moving a cannon, the horse which was pulling it went down a shell hole. Leonard was trying to pull the horse out when he felt a shell skim his helmet, he turned around to speak to his friend Bert who was just behind him, and sadly Bert had been decapitated by the shell. What a terrible thing for a young man of 22 to witness and obviously he saw many other dreadful things during this time.

After spending 2 years at the Somme he was given leave which he spent in Paris. After this respite he was told that he was being sent to Passchendaele.

Here he lost many more friends but after 9 months of fighting he was offered the post of Quartermaster, Sergeant Major and this is how he spent the rest of the war.

All the time he was away he was sending money home to his girlfriend Louisa Carter who he refused to marry during the conflict in case something happened to him. They eventually married on 26th December 1919 at St Peter and St Paul Church in Grays. They went on to have 5 children all born locally.

After the war Leonard went to work at Thames Board Mills at Purfleet. He worked there until he retired. Family members also worked there as it was one of the largest employers in Thurrock at the time.

Leonard was very lucky that he suffered no injuries during WW1 but he was always a bit deaf which was probably caused by the constant shelling.

He died on 16th July 1972 just 2 years after his wife Louisa.

Story provided by his grandson Phil Edgar.