

William Robert Bell



William was born in Poplar, London in 1889. He was one of 12 children and had five brothers and six sisters.

In 1906 he joined the Royal Horse Artillery (RHA) at the Woolwich Barracks. Unfortunately William was underage and when his parents found out they informed the army. William was discharged owing to a misstatement of age after only 99 days of service.

He re-joined in 1908 aged 18 and became part of the Chestnut troop. After a short time he joined B Battery RHA which was stationed at St John's Wood. In 1909 he took part in the Royal Tournament held at Olympia and also the Coronation of King George V.

In August 1914 William was sent to Belgium with H Battery RHA to become part of what Kaiser Bill called 'A contemptibly little army' for which he received the Mons Star. He was mentioned in dispatches in November 1915 and awarded the Military Medal in October 1916.

In April 1915 William married Emily, who later died in childbirth in 1919.

William was demobbed in 1920 and joined the Port of London Authority (PLA) as a policeman.

He went on to meet Florence Bell. Florence shared the same surname as William and worked for the PLA along with her father, who was a PLA policeman and lived in Pennington Street, Old Gravel Lane.

In 1937 William and Florence moved to Tilbury and added two more children to their family making a total of six children, three boys and three girls. Williams youngest son, Christopher joined the Royal Horse Artillery, G battery in 1956.

William died in 1970 aged 81.

Story provided by William's son, Christopher Bell.

The left picture shows William with his brother Albert, who joined the Australian army.



The right picture shows William's brother Joseph, who joined the 17th Royal West Kents. Joseph was killed in action in France 1918 aged only 19.

