

## William Norris Puddy



William's father, Theophilus, originally lived in Somerset and was a Master Baker. In October 1875 Theophilus married Ann Tucker in Gloucestershire. By 1881, the couple had two sons, Joseph and Frederick and the family had moved to a Baker's Shop in Staines Road, Heston. The 1891 Census shows that, in the previous 10 years, Ann had Theophilus (junior), Frank, Mary, Annie and Bessie! However, her husband is not listed at home. He can be found in hospital in St Martin's in the Field, in London. The family had moved to a property in the Bath Road, Heston. George and William (born in 1897) are the last children born. **Both younger sons served their country. Only George came home, and also received a Military Medal for Bravery in the Field..**

By 1901 the family had moved again and the five eldest children had all left home. Their new address was 2 Church Street, Church Alley, Isleworth. Theophilus's occupation is now listed as a Baker's assistant and William is a three year old toddler. In 1910, William's brother George (19), who is a Lighterman (operates a flat bottomed barge), marries Irene Rowe (24) and they eventually set up home at 23 Worple Road with a baby son.



There are no Army Service Records for William, but it is very possible that he enlisted in September 1914 on Salisbury Plain, into 2/4<sup>th</sup> Royal Hampshire Regiment (George signed up to the Royal Field Artillery). On the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1914 the regiment sailed from Southampton for India, arriving on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 1915. After two and a half years of garrison duties, William's Regiment embarked on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1917 for Egypt to join the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. They landed at Suez in May. The First and Second Battles of Gaza were unsuccessful for the allies and thousands lost their lives. After these battles a Gaza Front line developed with both sides 'digging in'. The desert conditions were hard and unforgiving, but trenches were dug and barbed wire laid. There were day and night patrols. In general this 'line' was passive, but there were spasmodic bouts of gun fire, snipers and German planes attacking. There was little cover and a steady stream of casualties. William was probably one of these casualties. He was killed in action on September 17<sup>th</sup> 1917. **He was 20 years old.**

William was awarded the Victory and British War Medal and the 15 Star. He left his personal effects to his father Theophilus.

**William is buried in the Gaza War Cemetery. He is also remembered at All Saints Church.**



British Infantry in trenches, either in the Sinai or in front of Gaza in 1917  
Courtesy National Army Museum NZ

"...sadly the diplomatic agreements to carve up the region after the war sowed the seeds for continuing conflict. Several times in the past few years Israeli forces have fired shells and rockets that have damaged headstones in the graveyards. The British have formally complained, but Gaza remains, as in 1914-18, a heavily fought-over strategic target." ([www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-one](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-one))

