

**Driver**

**FRANK KNIGHT**

**T4/042600, "A" (Supply) Company, Army Service Corps**

**Died 31 January 1915**

**Aged 20**

**Buried Aldershot Military Cemetery**

**AF.1799**

There have been Knights in Buckland St Mary and neighbouring parishes – Otterford, Curland – for at least 2 centuries. His parents, James, 21, and Ellen Collier, 24, were married in the village on 9 February 1888. Frank Knight was born on 8 January 1895, probably at Buggs Moor, Buckland St Mary, and was baptised at Buckland on 23 May.

By 1901 the family were living in a cottage at Underhill Farm, Staple Fitzpaine. His father James was a Carter, probably at Underhill. James started school at Staple Fitzpaine, beginning at Buckland St Mary on October 27 1902; the family were then back at Buggs Moor. He left on December 22 1908, just before his fourteenth birthday. In 1911 both father and son were working as farm labourers, and living at Buggs Moor. Frank was the only son, with 2 sisters, Dorcas and Lucy. His mother Ellen was born in the Channel Islands on Alderney.

We know more than usual about Frank's army career as his Service Records have survived (60% of them were destroyed in the Blitz in 1942, and the remainder are charred and water-stained – known as The Burnt Documents), and they tell a sad story.

When Frank enlisted at Exeter on January 10 1915 he was working as a butcher in Colyton, living in the High Street. At this time enlistment was voluntary, but his Attestation form records that he was served a Notice by Sergeant Tompsett of Colyton. He was 5'3" – not then so unusually short. He volunteered for the Army Service Corps (not yet 'Royal') as a butcher, but is noted on the Attestation Form as 'Driver'.

The *Somerset County Gazette* of February 6 1915 takes up the tale:

"Much sympathy is felt for Mr and Mrs James Knight, of this parish, in the death of their son Frank, who volunteered as a butcher for the forces a month ago, and who was at that time in the best of health. He contracted a cold, pneumonia supervened, and he passed away on Sunday after a very short illness at Cambridge Hospital [Aldershot], aged 20. Deceased was of a very obliging and quiet disposition, and was much respected."



His Service Record implies that his family knew nothing of his illness before he died. His death certificate says he died of pneumonia and heart failure. He was buried in the Military Cemetery at Aldershot.

The Army, as was their custom, were at least merciful enough to award him a Victory Medal and Memorial Scroll despite the sad brevity of his service.

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