Effingham's Crimean Veteran, Gunner Francis Goss

JEREMY PALMER and SUSAN MORRIS

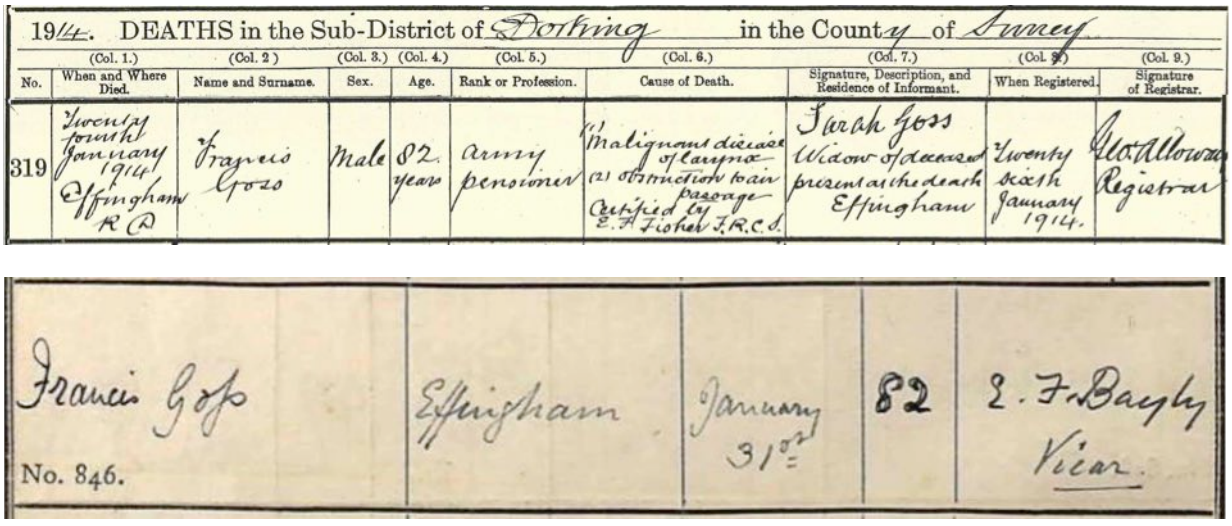
Francis Goss appears to have been the first person to receive a funeral with full military honours at St Lawrence Church in Effingham, in 1914. He had served just over 21 years in the Army from 1853 until 1874, including a brief spell in the Crimea as a siege train gunner with the Royal Field Artillery. This article examines his very interesting life both during his army service and, especially, subsequently, including some colourful details of the second of his three marriages.

Introduction

Although from the First World War onwards St Lawrence Churchyard would contain memorials to men who lost their lives in military service for their country, it is believed that the very first funeral with military honours occurred only just prior to the start of this War. The funeral was for Gunner Francis Goss, and took place at St Lawrence Church on Saturday 31 January 1914, Gunner Goss having passed away on 24 January. A description of the ceremony was reported by the *Surrey Times and County Express* on 6 February 1914:

> 'What is believed to be the first military funeral that has ever taken place in the village was witnessed by about 250 persons on Saturday afternoon when the remains of Mr. Francis Goss, of Westmoor Cottage, was [sic] interred in Effingham Churchyard. Goss, who was 82 years of age, entered the Army in 1853 as a gunner in the Royal Horse Artillery, and he served just 21 years, retiring in 1874. He was the possessor of five good conduct badges, two Crimean medals and a long service and good conduct medal. Twelve men and a sergeant of the 'J' battery of the Royal Horse Artillery were present at the funeral. Six men acted as bearers, and the other men followed the coffin on horseback. The coffin, which was of polished oak, bearing the inscription "Francis Goss, died Jan 27th, 1913: aged 82 years" was placed on a gun carriage and covered with a Union Jack and deceased's tunic and decorations. After the interment the trumpeters sounded the "Last Post". The Vicar (the Rev. E F Bayley [sic]) conducted the service, the first part of which was held in the Parish Church. The family morners [sic] included Mrs. Goss (widow) and daughter-in-law (Miss Williamson) and among those also present were Mrs Pauling and Mr Anderson (representing Lord Lovelace). Wreaths were sent from the widow and family and Mrs Saunders. The soldiers and horses were hospitably entertained by Mrs Pauling and the Earl of Lovelace.'

It is not possible to verify whether the coffin's plaque or (more likely) the article was wrong in reporting the date of death as 27 January 1913 but we can be certain that it should have read 24 January 1914, confirmed by his death certificate. The cause was listed as '(1) Malignant disease of larynx (2) obstruction to air passage'.



1914. DEATHS in the Sub-District of Dorking in the County of Surrey

No.	When and Where Died. (Col. 1.)	Name and Surname. (Col. 2.)	Sex. (Col. 3.)	Age. (Col. 4.)	Rank or Profession. (Col. 5.)	Cause of Death. (Col. 6.)	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant. (Col. 7.)	When Registered. (Col. 8.)	Signature of Registrar. (Col. 9.)
319	Twenty fourth January 1914 Effingham R D	Francis Goss	Male	82 years	Army pensioner	(1) Malignant disease of Larynx (2) Obstruction to air passage Certified by E. F. Fishel M.R.C.S.	Sarah Goss Widow of deceased present at the death Effingham	Twenty sixth January 1914.	Geo. Allowood Registrar

Francis Goss — Effingham — January 31st — 82 — E. F. Bayly Vicar.

No. 846.

Figure 1 Death certificate and burial record for Francis Goss; January 1914.

Every soldier, whether lost in combat or to natural causes, was entitled to a military funeral, so even though Goss never rose above the rank of Gunner (the Royal Artillery equivalent to Private), and had left the army in 1874, he was still accorded military honours at his passing. Goss was likely living in reduced circumstances at the time; his last known address was stated to be Westmoor Cottage, which ELHG was told [*see* https://elhg.org.uk/discovery/wartime/peter-james-patrick-nicholls/] was the small, endmost cottage in the terrace of cottages to the east of The Plough Inn public house.

Figure 2 The Plough Cottages with the protruding Westmoor Cottage appended to the right-most of them.

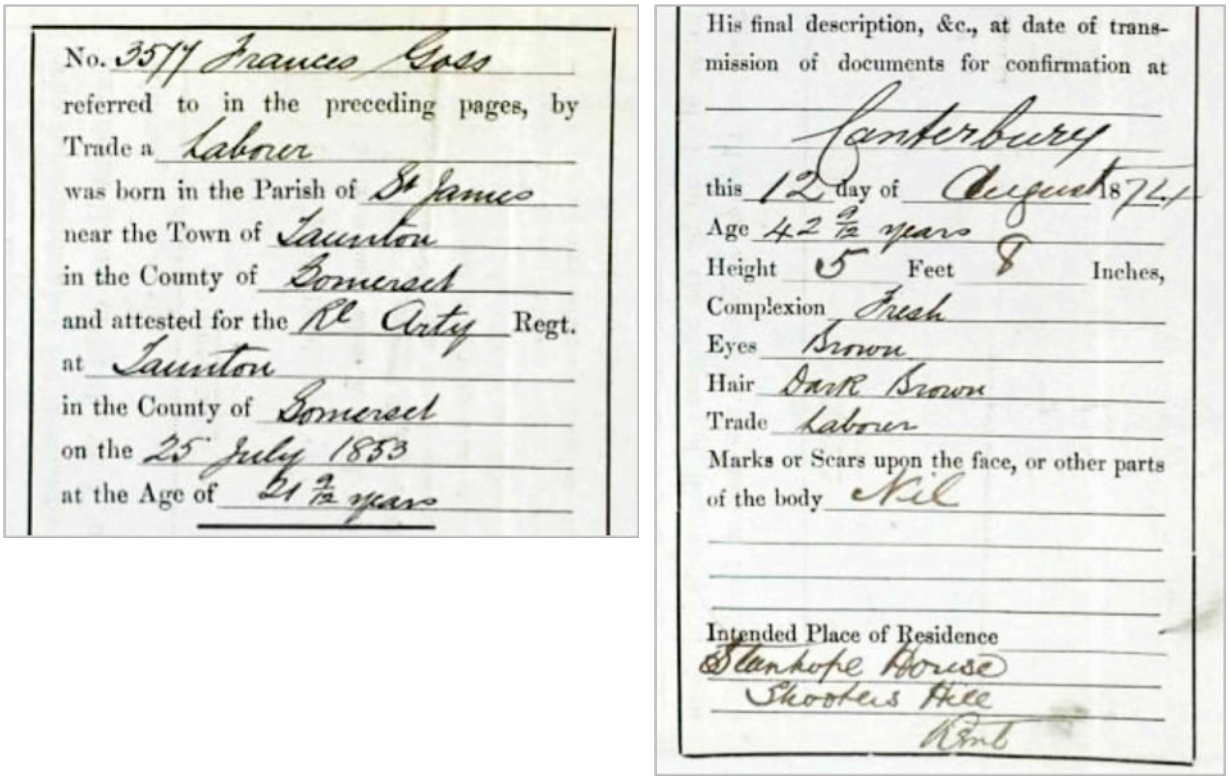
The article speculates that this was the first military funeral seen in the village, and this is likely to be correct as research in the newspaper archives has not yet identified any earlier candidates.

The *Surrey Times* article identifies by name some of the Effingham mourners. The Mrs Saunders mentioned was Emily Agnes Saunders, the wife of James Saunders. We know that between April 1912 and April 1913 Mr Saunders had replaced the previous landlord and licensee Frederick Arthur Spencer of The Plough Inn – Mr Spencer had been cited as the landlord in an article in the *Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser* on 6 April 1912, whilst the Saunders' daughter Alice Gertrude married one Frank Forehead on 30 April 1913 at St Lawrence Church and in the marriage register her father was recorded as a publican in Effingham; an article about the wedding in *The Surrey Advertiser* on 10 May 1913 confirmed that he was residing at The Plough Inn. Francis Goss was therefore probably the Saunders' tenant in Westmoor Cottage. The Saunders used The Plough Inn as their address, as seen in an advertisement on 13 March 1916 in *The Surrey Advertiser* in which they were offering a cottage for rent, possibly Westmoor Cottage. Francis Goss's widow Sarah continued to live in Effingham after his death and we will discuss later what we know of her places of habitation around the village.

We will now examine what is known of Gunner Francis Goss's military career and his subsequent life outside of the military, leading up to his arrival in Effingham. Francis Goss had already appeared in the newspapers across the country so may well have been known to villagers.

He was very likely born in 1831 to James and Mary Goss, and baptised in the parish of St James, Taunton in Somerset on 9 October 1831. His father James was described as a Labourer in the baptismal record, and the Goss family lived in Rowbarton on the north side of Taunton. It has not been possible to identify records that provide a more accurate date of birth.

Aged about 22, he was attested into the Royal Artillery on 25 July 1853, also in Taunton. Many of the details of his military career are contained in a document from the Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Service Records, variously dated 12 or 18 August 1874.

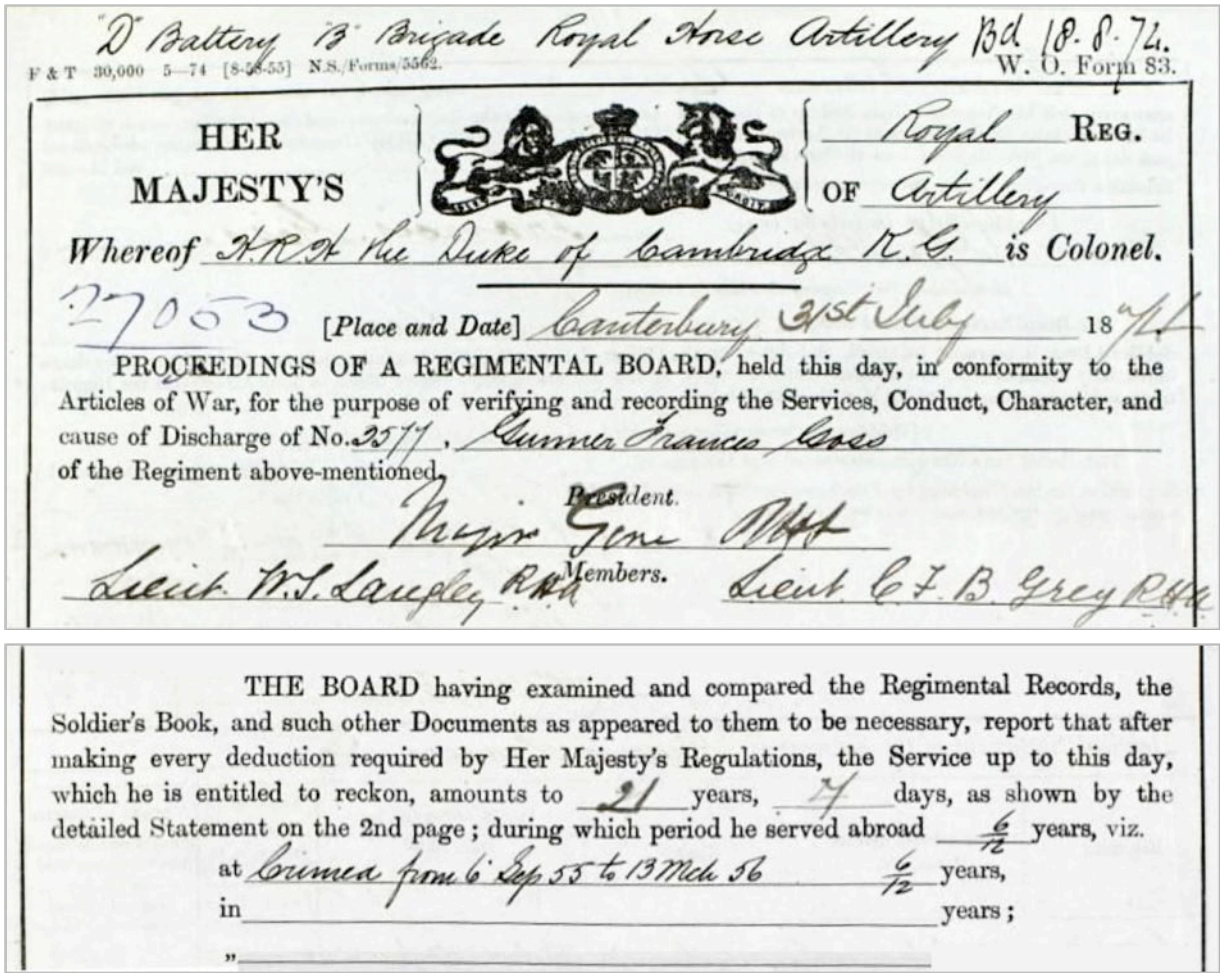


No. 3577 Francis Goss
referred to in the preceding pages, by
Trade a Labourer
was born in the Parish of St James
near the Town of Taunton
in the County of Somerset
and attested for the Rl Arty Regt.
at Taunton
in the County of Somerset
on the 25 July 1853
at the Age of 21 2/12 years

His final description, &c., at date of transmission of documents for confirmation at
Canterbury
this 12 day of August 1874
Age 42 2/12 years
Height 5 Feet 8 Inches,
Complexion Fresh
Eyes Brown
Hair Dark Brown
Trade Labourer
Marks or Scars upon the face, or other parts of the body Nil

Intended Place of Residence
Blenheim House
Shooters Hill
Kent

Figure 3 Segments (above and below) of the Service Record for Francis; 1874.



D Battery 3 Brigade Royal Horse Artillery Bd 18.8.74.
F & T 30,000 5—74 [8-58-55] N.S./Forms/5562. W. O. Form 83.

HER MAJESTY'S Royal REG. OF Artillery
Whereof H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge K.G. is Colonel.

27053 [Place and Date] Canterbury 21st July 1874

PROCEEDINGS OF A REGIMENTAL BOARD, held this day, in conformity to the Articles of War, for the purpose of verifying and recording the Services, Conduct, Character, and cause of Discharge of No. 3577, Gunner Francis Goss of the Regiment above-mentioned.

President. Major Gen Pratt
Members. Lieut. W.S. Langley R.A. Lieut C.F.B. Grey R.A.

THE BOARD having examined and compared the Regimental Records, the Soldier's Book, and such other Documents as appeared to them to be necessary, report that after making every deduction required by Her Majesty's Regulations, the Service up to this day, which he is entitled to reckon, amounts to 21 years, 7 days, as shown by the detailed Statement on the 2nd page; during which period he served abroad 6/12 years, viz.

at Crimea from 6 Sep 55 to 13 Mch 56 6/12 years,
in _____ years;
" _____

The Service Record tells us that Goss was 5 feet 8 inches tall, with brown eyes and dark brown hair, a fresh complexion and was aged 42 years and 9 months. It also states that there were no marks about his face or body, whilst the health report section of this document is entirely crossed out with no Disabilities listed. However it is clear from later photographs of Goss that at some point he had suffered a severe facial injury and had lost his left eye. In newspaper reports this was ascribed to injury from shrapnel from an exploding shell while serving in the Crimea, but this is seemingly at odds with the description in the Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Service Record document.

Two years after joining up, Goss married a woman named Sarah Ann Rouse, on 2 July 1855 at St Mary-The-Virgin Church in Dover, Kent. This was just prior to Goss being deployed to the Crimean War. The document states that Goss served at the Siege of Sebastopol in the Crimean War from 6 September 1855 to 13 March 1856. This means that he was actually present for only the last three days of the siege itself and in total was overseas for a period of just six months. Nevertheless this meant that he still qualified for the Crimea Medal with the Sebastopol Clasp. Troops who landed 3 days after him on 9 September – the day on which Sebastopol fell – did not receive the medal unless they had seen action after that date. He also received the Turkish Medal, which was a campaign medal issued by Sultan Abdulmejid I of the Ottoman Empire to allied military personnel involved in the Crimean War.

The causes of the Crimean War (which was declared on 28 March 1854) confused people even at the time. In a nutshell, the constant policy of the British and French governments had been to prevent Russia from establishing control of the Straits of the Bosphorus. If Russia were to achieve this, its navy and merchant fleet could access the Mediterranean and, from there, challenge European shipping across the globe. The Straits of the Bosphorus was within the Ottoman (Turkish Islamic) Empire, but this power was militarily very weak, sometimes referred to as 'the sick man of Europe'. In pursuit of their aim of thwarting Russia, Britain and France felt they had to prop up the Ottoman Empire. In July 1853 – coincidentally the month in which Francis joined the army – Russia made a hostile move against the Ottomans, actually in the Holy Land. Although this was nowhere near the Bosphorus it set off alarms internationally. An attack by Russia anywhere on the territory of the Ottoman Empire might lead to much bigger inroads and be fatal for Ottoman control of the Straits. Britain and France allied themselves with the Ottomans and went to war against Russia. The 'Man On The Clapham Omnibus' could not understand why Christians were allying with Moslems to declare war on Christians.

For many reasons the Crimean War was an unmitigated military disaster and hard lessons were learned too late. The soldiers who served there suffered enormous hardship. The stories of the unbelievably harsh winter, and the work of Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale to alleviate suffering, are well known.

Francis described his role in the army in the Crimea as 'siege train gunner'. The siege in question was the siege of Sebastopol, which lasted from September 1854 to September 1855. Sebastopol was a major Russian port, naval centre and barracks. It was formidably protected by its harbour on one side and by a cluster of small steep hills and valleys on the other.

Figure 4 This shows mortars and cannon being loaded and fired in a British battery, removal of the wounded and the distant fortifications of Sebastopol.

Figure 5 The fort at Sebastopol was strongly protected not only by its walls but by its natural defences, the sea and a range of hills.

The following description of what being a siege train gunner entailed was kindly provided to ELHG by John Cooper, military historian:

> 'A siege train was all the heavy kit for setting up a siege and battering the enemy fortifications. A siege train gunner would be an artillery man trained in working heavy siege guns, firing massive cannon balls eg 32, 64 lbs and even bigger mortars. This branch of artillery later became known as Royal Garrison Artillery as opposed to Field or Horse Artillery.'

The only place at which the British and French could land all the men, horses and equipment needed to support the siege was the harbour of Balaclava, some miles away. Photographs and illustrations of the time enable us to visualise what Francis would have experienced from the point at which he disembarked to his arrival at the trenches and fortifications of the siege lines.

By the time the siege was lifted following a French break-through, during the siege alone (as opposed to throughout the Crimean conflict) the British forces had lost 2,755 soldiers killed in action, 2,019 of wounds and a further 16,323 to disease, totalling 21,097 dead. Francis was very lucky not to be there earlier or for longer.

Later newspaper articles and other publications also mention that Francis Goss saw action in the Indian Mutiny. This conflict lasted from May 1857 to July 1859, and while Goss's service record does cover this period, the document does not explicitly mention service in the Indian Mutiny.

Goss appeared again in the 1861 Worldwide Army Index. This lists all other ranks serving in the April-June Quarter of 1861 together with their location. It is effectively the military version of the general population census of 1861. Goss's duty locations are listed as Curragh, Aldershot, Ballincollig, Devonport, Kinsale and Clonmel (thus mostly in Ireland) with B Brigade of the Royal Artillery. He was re-engaged at Woolwich on 11 May 1865, staying for a further 9 years until 31 July 1874, being finally discharged on 12 August.

As well as the afore-mentioned Crimea medals, Goss would also be awarded a long service medal and five Good Conduct badges. The Chelsea Pensioner Service Records mention that his name appeared only once in the Regimental Defaulters Book and that he had never been court-martialed. Somewhat incongruously it also mentions that he did not possess a school certificate.

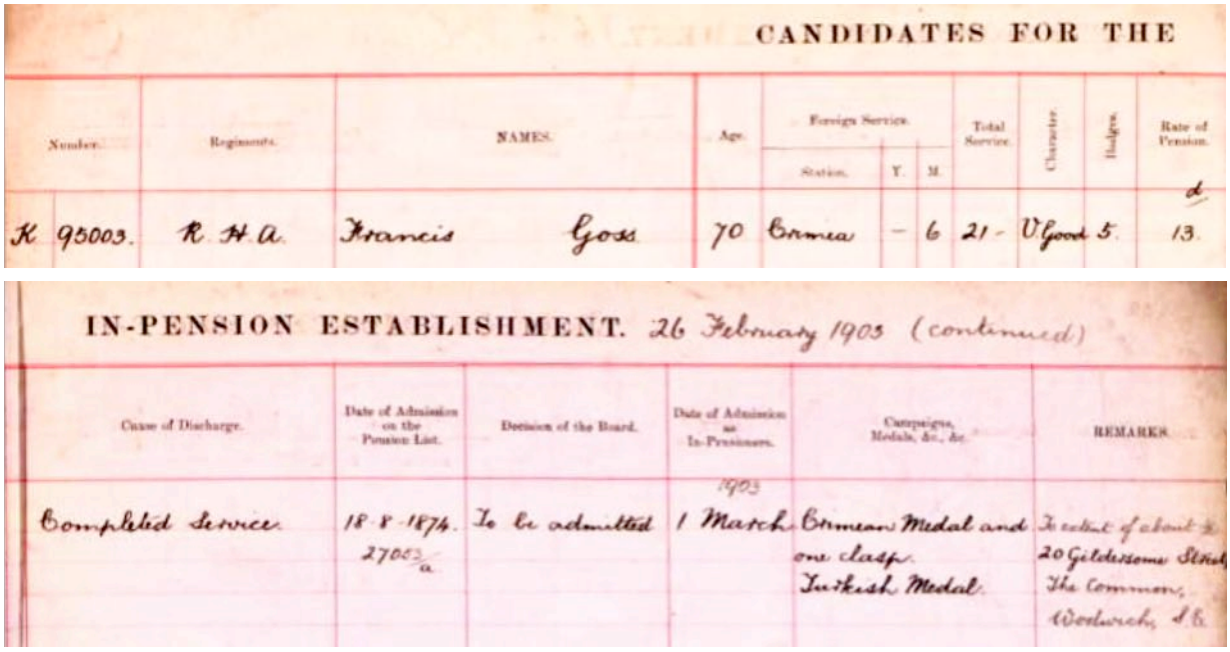
After retirement Goss's intended next place of residence was Stanhope House on Shooters Hill Road, London, which runs through Greenwich Park and is close to the Woolwich barracks. Stanhope House

seems to have been occupied by officers of the Royal Artillery so it is possible that when Goss left the Royal Artillery he went to work for one of its commissioned officers.

From the military's perspective, Goss was now a pensioner. The Royal Hospital Chelsea was the administrative office for the British army, responsible for distributing pension payments to British soldiers since the 1680s. Whilst some pensioners surrendered their pension to the hospital and lived there (termed 'in-pensioners'), many more lived outside its confines and received their pensions elsewhere (termed 'out-pensioners'). The latter is what Francis Goss chose to become, as evidenced in the Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Admission and Discharge Records with the entry for Francis Goss from August 1874. The pension rate is shown as 13 pence per day, confirmed by his later re-admission document dated 1 March 1903.

Within four years of leaving the army Francis Goss was working as the landlord of the Military Tavern in Walmer, mentioned in an article [*Deal, Walmer and Sandwich Mercury*, 28 December 1878] concerning licensing arrangements for New Years' Eve. Three years later he was the licensed victualler of The Town Arms, 29 Bridge Street, Dover, living there with his wife Sarah Ann and her niece Jane Rouse [1881 Census]. By the time of the 1891 Census he had become the Beerhouse Keeper of The Jolly Gardeners on George IV Road, Heston (Hounslow) in Middlesex.

It is not possible to place him anywhere during the 1890s with confidence. We do know that his wife Sarah Ann died in March 1901 and that Goss then went to live with his niece Annie Yardley at 4 Milton Road in Greenwich [1901 Census]. However on 1 March 1903, by which time he was about 72, he was admitted as an in-pensioner to the Royal Hospital Chelsea. His recorded pension was still just the 13 pence per day he had qualified for in 1874.



CANDIDATES FOR THE

Number.	Regiments.	NAMES.	Age.	Foreign Service. Station.	Y.	M.	Total Service.	Character.	Badges.	Rate of Pension.
K 95003.	R H A.	Francis Goss	70	Crimea	–	6	21 –	V Good	5.	13. d.

IN-PENSION ESTABLISHMENT. 26 February 1903 (continued)

Cause of Discharge.	Date of Admission on the Pension List.	Decision of the Board.	Date of Admission as In-Pensioners.	Campaigns, Medals, &c., &c.	REMARKS.
Completed Service.	18 8 1874. 27003 a.	To be admitted	1 March 1903	Crimean Medal and one clasp. Turkish Medal.	Resident of about 20 Gildersome Street, The Common, Woolwich, S.E.

Figure 6 Royal Hospital Chelsea Admission Book showing Francis admitted as an In-Pensioner on 1 March 1903.

The 1890s saw the establishment of Crimea and Indian Mutiny Veterans Associations across the British Isles. Aided by campaigns in the local and national press, they attempted to raise the profile of these veterans, many of whom had reached retirement age only to be forced into destitution by their meagre pensions. Rudyard Kipling's poem *The Last of the Light Brigade* (1890), exposed the terrible hardship faced in old age by veterans of the Crimean War, as exemplified by the cavalry men of the Light Brigade. It begins:

> There were thirty million English who talked of England's might,
> There were twenty broken troopers who lacked a bed for the night.
> They had neither food nor money, they had neither service nor trade;
> They were only shiftless soldiers, the last of the Light Brigade.
> They felt that life was fleeting; they knew not that art was long,
> That though they were dying of famine, they lived in deathless song.
> They asked for a little money to keep the wolf from the door;
> And the thirty million English sent twenty pounds and four!

Francis Goss would have needed to supplement his pension, so to this end he started appearing in military and patriotic scenes in the theatre. These were written by George Leyton, a music hall singer, songwriter and 'character vocalist'. Leyton had made his music hall debut in 1889 at the Princess's Theatre, London, and thereafter toured theatres across the country. One of his most popular songs, *The Boys of the Chelsea School*, was first performed in July 1902 [*The Era*, 19 July 1902] and this celebration of Crimean veterans seems to have been the stimulus for further fund-raising attempts. This extract is from *The Era*, 28 November 1903:

> 'Excellent charitable work is often done at the music halls, and in no way has this truism been better illustrated than in the case of Sergeant Owen Fitzpatrick, aged seventy, a Crimean veteran, whose declining days are penalised by penury and a paltry pension of 5s. 3d per week. He can boast of seven medals. He was sought out in Newcastle-upon-Tyne by the management of the Empire Palace Theatre, where he is appearing nightly in Mr George Leyton's scena, "The Boys of the Chelsea School". Mr E Leslie Conroy, the popular manager, writes to say that "we fully anticipate being in a position to hand the poor old hero a sum of over £20, realised by the sale of song-books alone, in addition to which private contributions have already started".'

The mention of 'song-books' probably refers to the song-books compiled and printed by Leyton, and sold for a penny at his shows. These contained biographical details and photographs of Crimean veterans who were benefiting from his charity. Leyton's performances incorporated veterans performing military drill, and it would have been in one of these scenes that Francis Goss appeared. Leyton's charitable fund would go on to raise thousands of pounds and would see him thanked by King Edward VII.

Francis Goss is pictured in a surviving copy of one of these song-books and described as a veteran who has benefited from receiving £1 and 10 shillings weekly from sales of the song-book at the performances.

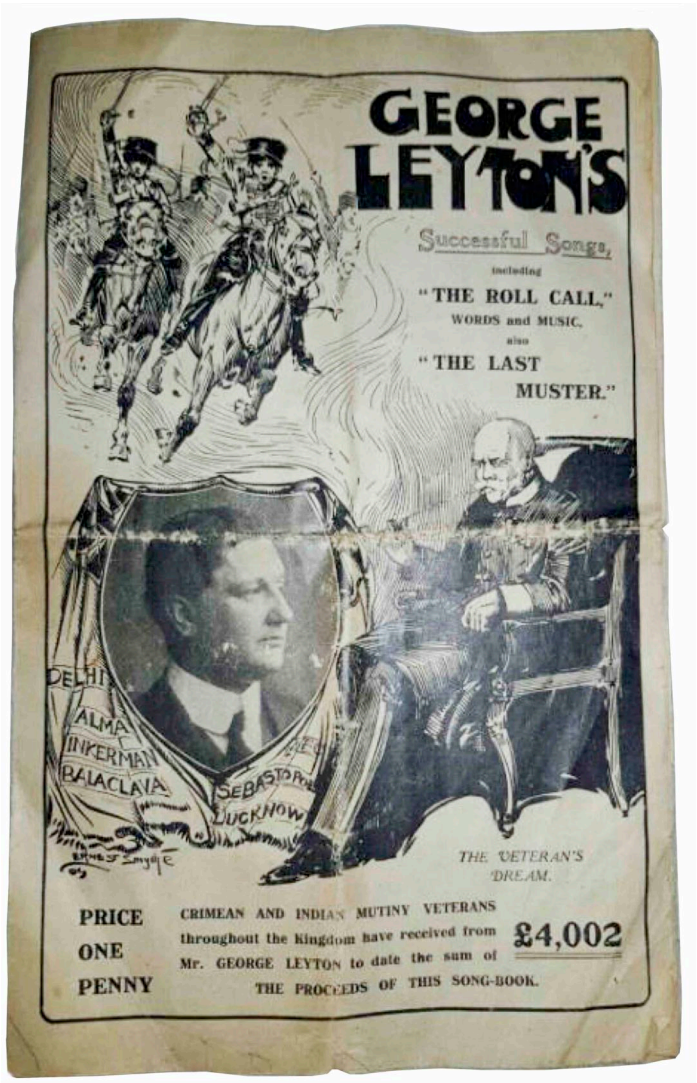



Figure 7 The cover of one of George Leyton's song-books.

Figure 8a Francis pictured in the song-book, second down on the left.

The song-book's description of Francis Goss reads:

> 'Siege train Gunner Francis Goss aged 78, whose portrait is also shown, is none other than the bridegroom of the romantic wedding which took place in St Luke's Church, Chelsea, London on July 20th 1909. One seldom hears of such a story of love and devotion, as that which encircles the old couple, in this prosaic age.'

Figure 8b (detail from 8a); the caption reads 'Gunner FRANCIS GOSS. Aged 78. Crimean and Indian Mutiny Veteran. Has received on average £1 10s. weekly'.

The reference to Goss's wedding indicates that although he had achieved a certain level of public recognition as one of the old troopers in Leyton's show, in June 1909 this was eclipsed when the national newspapers discovered he was to marry his sweetheart, Mrs Miriam Graham, aged 74. The marriage register actually shows her name as Amelia but she was most commonly referred to as 'Miriam' in newspaper articles (although at various times she also had 'Lizzie' and 'Emily' appended to her name). This is how *The Daily Mirror* described their courtship in its edition of 3 June 1909:

> 'The central figure in the romance is Francis Goss, a white-haired Crimean veteran, seventy-eight years of age, who, on July 1, will lead to the altar his bride of seventy four, Mrs Miriam Graham, whom he first met as long ago as 1853, when as a Royal Artilleryman, he was stationed at Woolwich Barracks.

At the time of enlisting Goss was already married, and Mrs Graham, then a happy, frolicsome girl, was his wife's most intimate friend. She was not a stranger to Goss, for he had known her before his marriage. In fact he had thought of her as his possible bride, but she laughed at his mere suggestion of love.

From London quarters Goss was removed to Dover, and in 1855 when war was proclaimed against Russia, he was ordered away to Sebastopol as a siege-train gunner.

Amongst those who welcomed him home was Miriam, now married, curiously enough, to Goss's regimental chum, a gunner named Kettle. Mr Kettle died, and shortly after Goss and his wife moved to Walmer, Kent, where he was left a widower. His fighting days over, Goss was glad to seek shelter in the Chelsea Hospital, where he has remained ever since. Mrs Kettle married a Mr Graham, who has since died.

The Daily Mirror found Goss on the stage of the Oxford Music Hall taking part in Mr George Leyton's military scena, "Lucknow". With tears of joy trickling down his cheeks, he told of the discovery of the girl of his youth. Quite by chance he found her last October.

The wedding is to take place on July 1 at the parish church of St. John's, Stratford Broadway.'

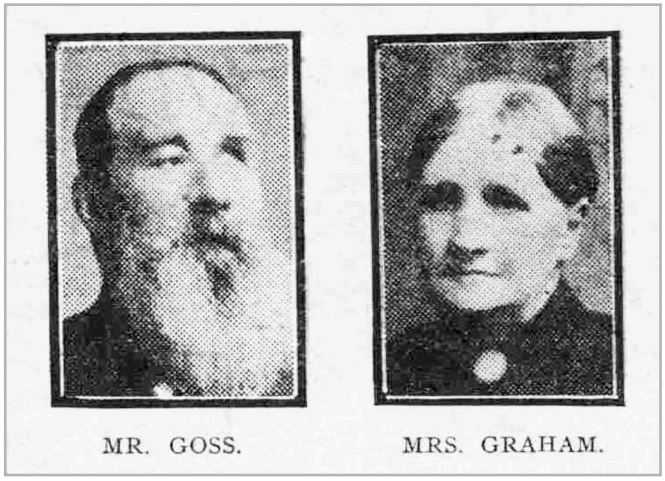


Figure 9 Francis and Miriam; *The Daily Mirror*, 3 June 1909.

Figure 10 Francis and Miriam; *Lloyd's Weekly News*, 6 June 1909.

An accurate timeline is that Goss had married Sarah Ann Rouse on 2 July 1855 in St Mary-The-Virgin Church, Dover in Kent, a few months before being posted to Sebastopol. Miriam had already married John Kettle on 17 Feb 1854, in St Mary Magdalene, Woolwich.

We know that Francis left the army in 1874 and moved with Sarah Ann to Walmer in Kent. However, from information contained in other reports it is apparent that Sarah and Miriam maintained a correspondence outside of the military. Miriam's husband, John Kettle, died probably in June 1886. Miriam subsequently remarried to a William Graham in the fourth quarter of 1887 at West Ham Register Office. We know that Sarah Ann Goss died in March 1901. We have not been able to accurately determine when William Graham died, although he and Miriam appear in the 1901 census living at 35 Janet Road in Canning Town. By the time Goss found Miriam again she was living with her son-in-law George York and her youngest daughter Alice, at 8 Devonshire Road, Custom House.

The newspapers reported that it was not until the second half of 1908 that Francis finally re-established contact with Miriam and they began to meet up, leading to his wedding proposal. As reported in *The Hampshire Telegraph*, 5 June 1908:

> 'The memory of times long past was a link between these two old people and in the evening of their years they decided to become man and wife. "We made up our minds to be pals always" said Goss on Wednesday night. "I felt a bit nervous when I asked her but she said "Yes" and I was happy. I feel now as excited as a young lad. It is fine to know there is one good soul to keep you company as the sun goes down for always." '

For her part Miriam remembered the days in Woolwich with an admirable lack of sentiment as *The Evening Telegraph and Post* (Dundee) reported in its edition of 21 July 1909:

> 'Mrs Graham herself said yesterday "I remember only too well the sufferings of the women left at Woolwich while their husbands were at the Crimea. In those days little was done for them, and some of them had to face starvation in addition to the anxieties of waiting for news of their husbands from the war".'

Maybe because the plight of Crimea veterans had continued to be newsworthy for so long, and this was a bit of good news by contrast, their romance caught the public imagination. It is difficult to overstate just how the excitement built up for it. Initially their wedding was incorrectly reported as set for 1 July 1909 at St John's Church, Stratford, leading to chaotic scenes there, as described here by the *Evening Standard and St James Gazette*, 1 July 1909:

> '**Scenes at a Church**
> **Remarkable Affair at St John's Stratford**
>
> Remarkable scenes were witnessed at St John's Church, Stratford, this morning. It had been announced in a local paper that Francis Goss, a Crimean veteran, who is in his seventy-eighth year, was to marry an old sweetheart of his named Lizzie Miriam Graham, who is now seventy-four years of age, and a large crowd gathered to witness the ceremony. The church officials, however, knew nothing about such an arrangement, and told the crowd that the wedding would not come off.
>
> Just about eleven o'clock an Army veteran named Borrett walked up to the church with his wife, and the crowd presuming that they were the couple they had come to see wedded, cheered and followed them into the church.
>
> The explanation was that Borrett, too, had seen the announcement and had brought his wife to see the wedding. The crowd, however, could not be persuaded to leave the church, and when at length Mr and Mrs Borrett were smuggled out by a side door, they were immediately surrounded by an excited crowd, but the two managed to get away on a passing tramcar.'

The real wedding finally took place on 20 July in Chelsea, at St Luke's Church.

CRIMEAN VETERAN'S ROMANCE: 78 WEDS 74.

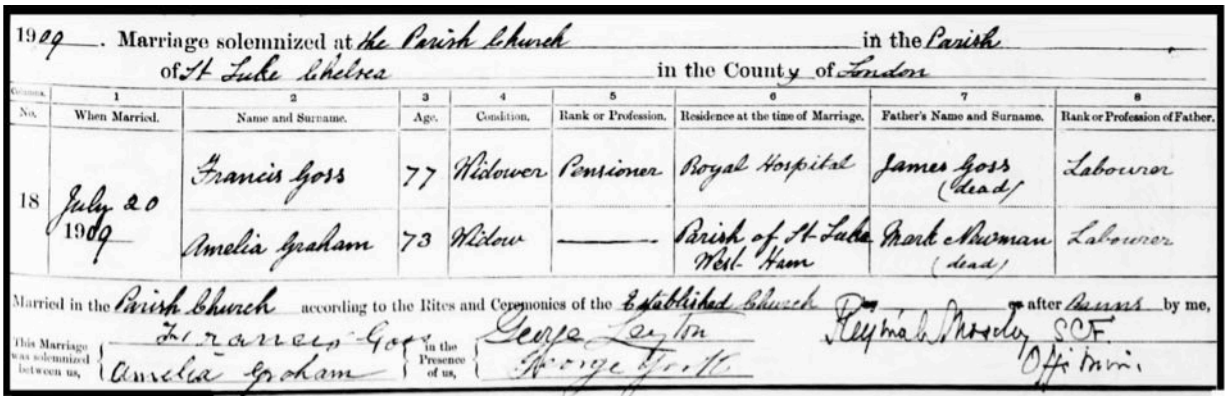
A romantic wedding was celebrated at St. Luke's Church, Chelsea, yesterday, when Mr. Francis Goss, a Crimean veteran, seventy-eight years of age, was married to Mrs. Graham, aged seventy-four. The couple first met in 1853, but lost sight of each other, and it was quite by chance that Mr. Goss again met his bride last October. The picture shows the bride and bridegroom leaving the church and the guard of honour composed of Chelsea pensioners, colleagues of Mr. Goss.

Figure 11 The wedding as portrayed in *The Daily Mirror*, 21 July 1909.

Below is an extract from a report (transcribed in full in Appendix I) which appeared three days later in *The West London Press Chelsea News*, 23 July 1909. Such was the level of interest there was even a bioscope camera (a motion picture camera) present too, although one must assume that the footage has long since vanished.

> 'Of course, there could be no parish outside of Chelsea in which a Chelsea pensioner would feel he had been "properly married" and consequently the ceremony took place at St Luke's Church on Tuesday. A number of the bridegroom's brother pensioners formed a guard of honour, and the Rev R Moseley, senior chaplain to the Forces, a genial cleric beloved of all the men at the Hospital, performed the ceremony. The veteran bridegroom looked quite gay and sprightly as he walked up the aisle, attended as best man by Mr George Leyton, a well-known music-hall artist, who often appears in scenes in which Chelsea pensioners are prominent figures. As for the bride – she was charming. A rosy-cheeked little lady, attired in a black dress and bonnet, and with a bunch of lilies of the valley tucked into her black and white bodice, she looked quite bright and happy. The bridal party was met at the west door by the choir and clergy, and at the conclusion of the service the bride and bridegroom passed through a double line of pensioners, who raised a hearty cheer as they drove away to the Town Hall, with confetti literally showering over them. A reception had been arranged at the Town Hall for them, and quite a number of the old pensioners and other friends attended to wish the couple good luck, while many congratulatory speeches were made. The reception over, Goss and his bride had to run the gauntlet of hundreds of curious women outside the Town Hall, and there was more confetti throwing as they drove off to the home of their son and daughter-in-law, with whom they will reside.'

From the Royal Hospital Chelsea Admissions Book record we can see that Goss now left Chelsea, as it noted he 'Reverts to Out-pension' two days after the wedding. The wedding was witnessed by George Leyton, as Goss's best man, and George York, Miriam's son-in-law.



1909. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of St Luke Chelsea in the County of London

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
18	July 20 1909	Francis Goss	77	Widower	Pensioner	Royal Hospital	James Goss (dead)	Labourer
		Amelia Graham	73	Widow	———	Parish of St Luke Westminster	Mark Newman (dead)	Labourer

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by me, after Banns

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Francis Goss, Amelia Graham. In the Presence of us, George Leyton, George York.

Figure 12 The Marriage Certificate of Francis and Miriam ('Amelia').

Miriam had been living with the latter and her youngest daughter Alice at 8 Devonshire Road, Custom House, and she and Francis returned there after the wedding.

One unexpected consequence of the level of public interest was that a long-lost sister, Eliza Birch of Pinner, made contact with Miriam. Eliza had seen Miriam's photograph in a *Lloyds News* article on the marriage; Eliza was quoted in the 27 June edition saying:

> 'When the photographs of Mrs Graham appeared in Lloyds, of which we have been readers as long as I can remember, my husband and I remarked how like she was to my sister, of whom I had lost sight for thirty years. We also recalled a Mr Goss had come to Pinner at the end of the Crimean war to see her.
>
> Putting it all together we became convinced that this must be my sister, and on writing to Mr Goss, for we had not Mrs Graham's address, we found that we were right. I have not seen my sister again yet, but we hope she will soon come to see us at Pinner, or that we shall meet in London after our long parting, for I have not known for thirty years whether she was alive or dead.'

It would have been as well that Eliza, the junior of Miriam by one year, did not waste any time in arranging to see her sister, as the married bliss of Miriam and Francis was not destined to last very long. With oddly appropriate timing Miriam passed away on Valentine's Day, 14 February 1910. As an article in the *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 18 February 1910 stated, an old ailment had recurred over the winter of 1909 to which she had finally succumbed. Her third marriage had lasted for a little under eight months.

Yet it would not also be the end of Francis Goss's story. We know from the report of his Effingham funeral that his widow was among the mourners, thereby showing that Francis had indeed married for a third time. This took place on 23 January 1911 when he married a Mrs Sarah Williams aged fifty – and thus thirty years his junior – at the Registrar's Office in East Greenwich. The *Lewisham Borough News*, 27 January 1911, reported that:

> 'On Monday Goss stood erect in his Chelsea Hospital uniform despite his 80 years, and gave his bride a hearty kiss after the ceremony. "I'm sure I will be very happy with my new wife," he declared to an *Evening Times* reporter.'

From the 1911 Census Francis and Sarah were living at 283 Woolwich Road, Charlton. We have not been able to find any documentary evidence to pinpoint where they lived until they reappeared at Westmoor Cottage in Effingham in early 1914, or to ascertain the circumstances that led them to move here.

It is worth considering the implicit symbolism in Goss's funeral with its military pomp, the hundreds of mourners mixing with representatives of the great and the good in this area. January 1914 was the lull before the storm, an unseen closing of a chapter. Although Europe had enjoyed a period of calm, with the Balkan Wars drawing to a close and Kaiser Wilhelm hailed as a peacemaker**,** within six months all this would be gone. The crowds at Goss's funeral would surely not have suspected that as his coffin was

lowered into the cold Surrey soil, they were also bidding farewell to the old order. Barely nine months after this funeral for a Crimean combatant, the death of the first of Effingham's Great War Fallen, Henry Bullen, occurred on 26 October.

Despite the military honours, no headstone was erected to Francis Goss. There is no mention of any grave marker being installed for him in *Some account of the Inscriptions and Memorials at Saint Lawrence Church Effingham* by Bryan R Sherwood. It is understandable if his widow Sarah had been unable to afford one, but it means that knowledge of where Francis Goss lies in the Churchyard is sadly now lost.

However, although Francis Goss had now gone from the village, Sarah Goss and her daughter (not her daughter-in-law) Miss Harriet Williams continued living here.

Information on Sarah is scant before her arrival in Effingham. Her probable entry in the 1901 census is as a cook at 87 Shooter's Hill Road in Greenwich, aged 39 and therefore born around 1862 in Eltham, Kent. We have already seen that when Francis Goss was first discharged his intended place of residence was also on Shooters Hill Road, so it is possible that he might have originally met Sarah Williams through the extensive military ecosystem that must have existed around the Woolwich barracks.

Sarah first appears in the Electoral Registers for Effingham in 1918, living in the property known as The Crossways which faces onto the lane known also as Crossways in the centre of the village. We do not know how long she had stayed in Westmoor Cottage after her husband's death, but we do know – from advertisements in *The Surrey Advertiser*, firstly on 4 July 1914 and then on 6 September 1915 – that the main house of The Crossways had become available. However, Sarah would not have lived in the main residence; it is far more likely that she occupied a separate building to the west of the house, described as the coachman's cottage. This is supported by some notes that former Effingham resident Mary Rice-Oxley made:

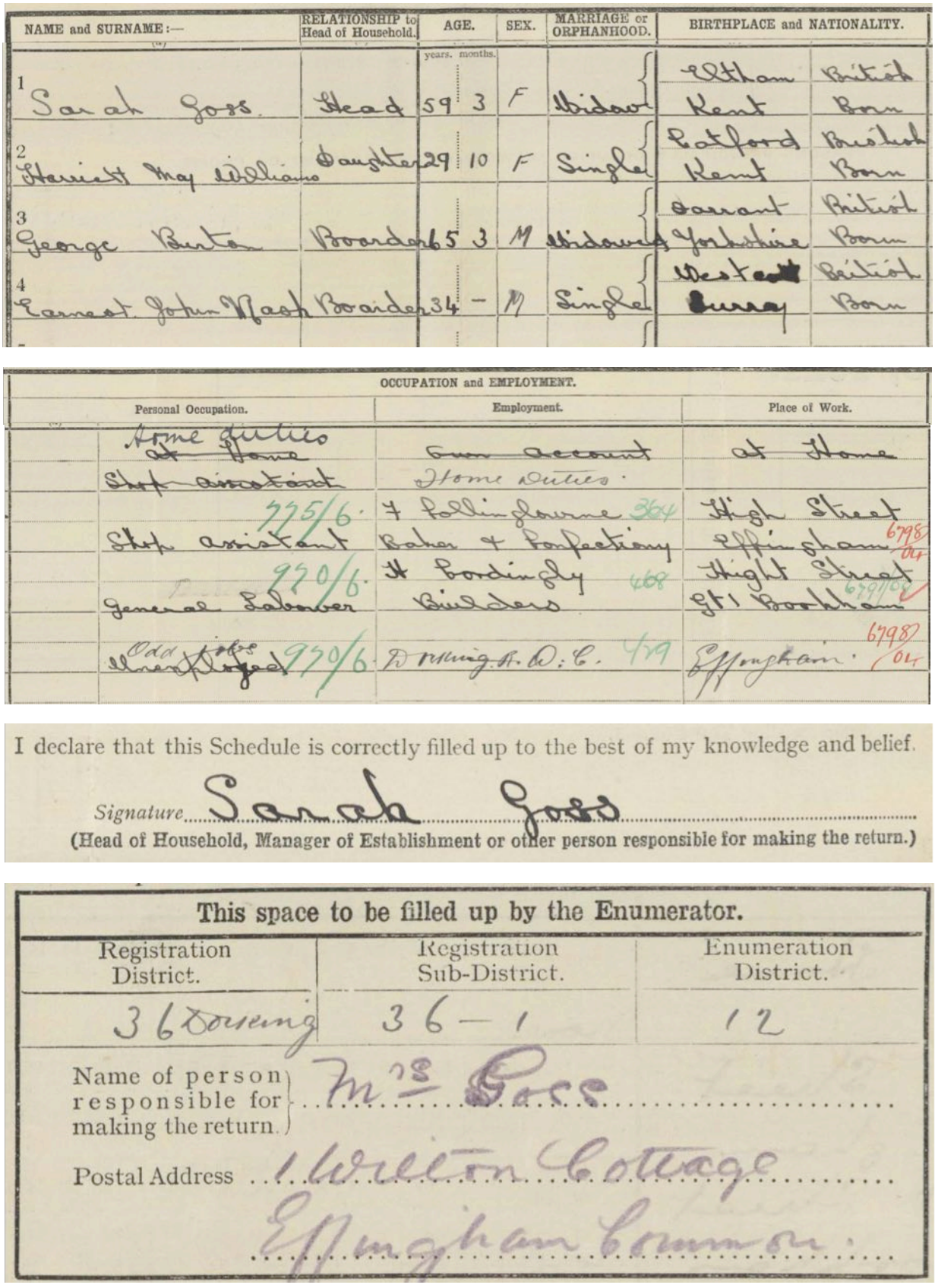
> 'Mrs Goss, who had lived on the Common, lived at Crossways with the side door onto the Street. She sold bowls of soup at 1d.'

A postcard of the coachman's cottage, dated to 1904, shows that this building did have steps leading down from a door onto The Street.

Figure 13 Postcard showing the coachman's cottage (at centre) and The Crossways (further back on the right); 1904.

The fact that Sarah was making soup for a living is consistent with her previous employment as a cook.

By the 1921 Census Sarah had moved on again, to a property on Effingham Common named 1 Wilton Cottages. Figure 14 shows relevant segments of her Census Return.



NAME and SURNAME:—	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Household.	AGE. years.	months.	SEX.	MARRIAGE or ORPHANHOOD.	BIRTHPLACE and NATIONALITY.	
1 Sarah Goss.	Head	59	3	F	Widow	Eltham Kent	British Born
2 Harriett May Williams	Daughter	29	10	F	Single	Catford Kent	British Born
3 George Burton	Boarder	65	3	M	Widower	Warrant Yorkshire	British Born
4 Earnest John Nash	Boarder	34	–	M	Single	Westerham Surrey	British Born

OCCUPATION and EMPLOYMENT.		
Personal Occupation.	Employment.	Place of Work.
~~Home duties~~ ~~at Home~~	~~Own account~~	at Home
~~Shop assistant~~	Home Duties.	
375/6. Shop assistant	7 Collingbourne 364 Baker & Confectioner	High Street Effingham 6798 Ot
970/6. General Labourer	4 Bardingly 468 Builders	High Street Effingham 6798 Ot
~~Odd jobs~~ Unemployed 970/6.	Driving A. D. C. 479	Effingham. 6798 Ot

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature Sarah Goss

(Head of Household, Manager of Establishment or other person responsible for making the return.)

This space to be filled up by the Enumerator.

Registration District.	Registration Sub-District.	Enumeration District.
36 Dorking	36 – 1	12

Name of person responsible for making the return Mrs Goss

Postal Address 1 Wilton Cottage Effingham Common.

Figure 14 Census Return for the household of Sarah Goss at 1, Wilton Cottages on Effingham Common; 1921.

The Electoral Registers refer to her address as just 'The Common' until 1927, but thereafter it is more precisely located as being at 2 Wilton Cottages. Sarah seems to have been no longer in employment,

so perhaps was living off the income received from her boarders, George Burton, a 65-year-old Yorkshireman working for a Bookham builder, and Ernest John Nash, a young odd-job man.

The most important detail from the 1921 census is that it establishes that she was living with her daughter, Miss Harriet May Williams, born in Catford in 1892**.** Details of Harriet's early life are elusive. In the 1911 Census she was working in Brockley as a maid, within a few miles of her mother and Francis in Charlton. However, trying to identify a definitive birth record for Harriet has so far proved impossible, as has finding a record for Sarah marrying the Mr Williams whom we assume to have been her husband (and thus Harriet's father) before she married Francis Goss.

The 1921 Census also shows that Harriet was working at 'F Collingbourne Baker and Confectionery', the premises shown in a photograph (Figure 15) found in an (unrecorded) magazine depicting the old bakery in The Street. This business had been taken over in 1920 by Mr Frank George Collingbourne. He made significant alterations to the shop, adding a large display window and a substantial flat-roofed extension. The shop remained under his ownership until the late 1920s.

Figure 15 The Bakery in The Street, Effingham, under proprietor Frank George Collingbourne; 1920s.

Sarah and Harriet stayed at either number 1 or 2 Wilton Cottages on The Common through the 1920s. This address has not survived into contemporary times but we have been provided with a substantial clue to its current identity by a 1936 advertisement presenting Nos 1 and 2 Wilton Cottages for sale [*The Surrey Advertiser*, 12 June 1936]. This describes the property as an 'island site' which narrows its location down to a single candidate shown in a 1924 aerial photograph of Effingham (see Figure 16).

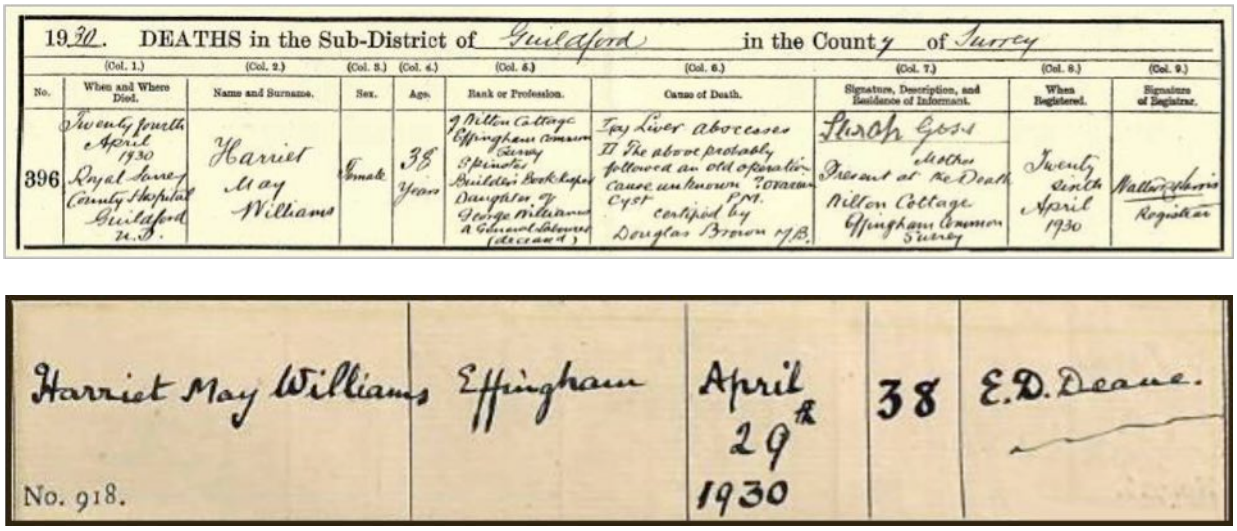
Nos 1 and 2 Wilton Cottages appeared in the Electoral Registers until 1936 – when Sarah Goss vacated it – and thereafter disappeared. The two very similar properties to the south of it are Nos 1 & 2 and Nos 3 & 4 Willow Cottages, so we might surmise that all three buildings were erected at the same time, thought to be 1851.

Although Wilton Cottages vanished from the Electoral Registers, in 1938 the house then and now known as Wise Folly appeared. Hence it is reasonable to conclude that after their sale both cottages became a single property that was renamed as Wise Folly. Although it is much extended today, some of the original building may still exist, even if the island site has long since been swallowed up by vegetation. Since then, Nos 1 & 2 Willow Cottages have been demolished to be replaced in the 1990s, whilst Nos 3 & 4 have survived albeit likewise changed in both form and name.

Sarah Goss stayed in Effingham until 1936, but for her last few years she was alone. Her daughter Harriet had died on 24 April 1930 at the Royal Surrey Hospital, from liver abscesses compounded by a possible ovarian cyst.

Figure 16 Wilton Cottages 'island site' (arrowed) from an aerial photograph of Effingham Common; 1924.

She was working as a builder's book-keeper at the time. Her death certificate also finally gives us the name of her father and Sarah's previous husband or partner, one George Williams. He is described simply as a General Labourer but beyond that we have not found precise genealogical details on him. Harriet was only 38 when she died, a spinster but with sufficient education to work in a bakery and keep the books for a builder. She was buried in St Lawrence churchyard on 29 April 1930, apparently in an unmarked grave, although one wonders whether it might have been in the same plot as her step-father.



1930. DEATHS in the Sub-District of Guildford in the County of Surrey

No.	(Col. 1.) When and Where Died.	(Col. 2.) Name and Surname.	(Col. 3.) Sex.	(Col. 4.) Age.	(Col. 5.) Rank or Profession.	(Col. 6.) Cause of Death.	(Col. 7.) Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	(Col. 8.) When Registered.	(Col. 9.) Signature of Registrar.
396	Twenty fourth April 1930 Royal Surrey County Hospital Guildford	Harriet May Williams	Female	38 Years	1 Milton Cottage Effingham Common Surrey Spinster Builder's Book-keeper Daughter of George Williams a General Labourer (deceased)	I (a) Liver abscesses II The above probably followed an old operation Cause unknown 7 days (a) Cyst certified by Douglas Brown M.B. P.M.	Sarah Goss Mother Present at the Death Milton Cottage Effingham Common Surrey	Twenty sixth April 1930	[illegible] Registrar

Harriet May Williams Effingham April 29 1930 38 E.D. Deane.

No. 918.

Figure 17 Death certificate and burial record for Harriet May Williams; April 1930.

Sarah Goss is next located in the 1938 Electoral Registers as living in East Molesey at 30 Avern Road. However, a year later in the 1939 National Register, a Sarah Goss with a date of birth of 3 March 1862 was recorded as 'Incapacitated' and living in the Central Relief Institution at 37 Coombe Road, Kingston-upon-Thames. This building had started life as the Kingston Workhouse but by 1930 had been renamed as the Kingston Central Relief Institution, with the Kingston Infirmary separated from it in a different building that would form the core of the present day Kingston Hospital.

Sarah died on 18 April 1944 and was buried in Kingston Cemetery. The Kingston Cemetery Burial Register confirms her address as 30 Avern Road and also that she had been in the Institution from 1939. It has not been possible to find a link between 30 Avern Road and her previous life, nor why Sarah chose to move away from her daughter and husband's graves in Effingham. Much remains opaque about Sarah's life, but clearly she was part of village life in the 1910s to the extent that Mary Rice-Oxley's interviewees thought it sufficient to mention her. In its way this is similar to the position of Francis Goss; although we know much more about his life and times, we have no way to identify the precise position of where he is buried. Indeed his name would be no more than an entry among many others in the St Lawrence Burial Register, were it not for the fact that he was accorded a military funeral reported in the

Surrey newspapers. From their information we have been able to piece together the life of a Crimean veteran whose final resting place is in Effingham and whom we believe to be the first recipient of a military funeral in St Lawrence Churchyard.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures 1, 17: from the General Register Office and the St Lawrence Church Burial Register

Figure 2: from the Jim Coughlan Postcard Collection

Figure 3: from The National Archives: Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Service Records, WO 97/Piece 1794

Figure 4: 'Hot Day in the Batteries', at the Siege of Sebastopol, 1855. Tinted lithograph by William Simpson

Figure 5: 'Panoramic View of the External & Internal Defences of Sebastopol and the Siege Works of the Allies', July 1855. Tinted lithograph by Frank C Hughes after Sgt Morrell

Figure 6: from The National Archives: Royal Hospital Chelsea: Admission Books, Registers and Papers, WO 23

Figures 7, 8: George Leyton Song-Book, as displayed on eBay

Figures 9, 11: by kind permission of Reach plc / Mirrorpix

Figure 10: British Newspaper Archive, © British Library Board

Figure 12: from the General Register Office

Figure 13: from the Mary Rice-Oxley Postcard Collection: Album 3

Figure 14: from Findmypast (https://www.findmypast.co.uk)

Figure 15: from an unknown publication, photograph donated to ELHG by the late Mary Rice-Oxley

Figure 16: from Britain from Above, English Heritage (https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk), detail from image EPW009803 'Norwood Farm and Lower Farm, Effingham, from the south-west, 1924'

APPENDIX I

Transcript of an article about the wedding in The West London Press Chelsea News, 23 July 1909

OLD PENSIONER'S WEDDING.
A BRIDEGROOM OF 77 AND A BRIDE OF 73.
PUBLIC AMUSEMENT AT KING'S ROAD.

There was great excitement in the King's Road on Tuesday afternoon, and the passengers who drew up at the Town Hall on a motor 'bus might have been forgiven for thinking that the King was inside, that the place was on fire, or that some other event of an extraordinary nature was happening. In a round-about sort of way such surmises would have been near the truth, for His Majesty the King was represented by red-coated old pensioners from the Chelsea Hospital, and as for the fire – well, the flames of love in the hearts of two very old people whose joint ages totalled one hundred and fifty years had been blended into one huge blaze. It was little wonder that hundreds of women, ready to see a wedding, whatever the ages of the parties, crowded around the doors, and passed not always the nicest remarks about the bride and bridegroom inside. The happy couple who were the centre of all the interest were Francis Goss, a Crimean veteran, and Amelia Graham, who hails from Canning Town, and the gallant old soldier is 77 years of age and his bride four years younger. Goss was formerly a gunner in the Royal Field Artillery, and has been at the Royal Hospital for eight years. He first met his new, yet old, wife in 1864. At that time both were married. The families became close friends until service movements separated them, and in the course of time both lost their partners. Mrs. Graham made a second venture on the troubled sea of matrimony and was again widowed, and she then went to live with her daughter and son-in-law, Mrs. and Mr. G. York, at Devonshire Road Custom House. Goss went through the Crimea, acting as a siege train gunner, and one of his comrades at the front was Mrs. Graham's first husband. He served his full time in the Army and on settling down at the Royal Hospital and learning that Mrs. Graham was in London he often went to visit her and talk over old times. Some of the old pensioner's associates wickedly suggested that he was anxious to leave the Hospital and live outside on his pension, and that this wish suggested to him the idea of marrying his "widow friend", married men not being allowed as inmates. At any rate, fortified with the experiences gained in more stern engagements in the Crimea, Goss laid siege to the old lady's heart and at length she capitulated and named the happy day.

Of course, there could be no parish outside of Chelsea in which a Chelsea pensioner would feel he had been "properly married" and consequently the ceremony took place at St. Luke's Church on Tuesday. A number of the bridegroom's brother pensioners formed a guard of honour, and the Rev. R. Moseley, senior chaplain to the Forces, a genial cleric beloved of all the men at the Hospital, performed the ceremony. The veteran bridegroom looked quite gay and sprightly as he walked up the aisle, attended as best man by Mr. George Leyton, a well-known music-hall artist, who often appears in scenes in which Chelsea pensioners are prominent figures. As for the bride – she was charming. A rosy-cheeked little lady, attired in a black dress and bonnet, and with a bunch of lilies of the valley tucked into her black and white bodice, she looked quite bright and happy. The bridal party was met at the west door by the choir and clergy, and at the conclusion of the service the bride and bridegroom passed through a double line of pensioners, who raised a hearty cheer as they drove away to the Town Hall, with confetti literally showering over them. A reception had been arranged at the Town Hall for them, and quite a number of the old pensioners and other friends attended to wish the couple good luck, while many congratulatory speeches were made. The reception over, Goss and his bride had to run the gauntlet of hundreds of curious women outside the Town Hall, and there was more confetti throwing as they drove off to the home of their son and daughter-in-law, with whom they will reside.