

CONSTABLE 305 GEORGE ARCHER

By Terry Cox

George Arthur Archer was born to Clara and George Cedric Archer in 1890. George Cedric had been a soldier in the British Army serving in Burma, West Africa and Gibraltar. He married Clara on 6 April 1890 but sadly died some eight weeks later so never saw his son. The family resided in Sandridge near St Albans.

The 1891 census shows Clara living with her widowed father and a brother, herself a widow aged 25 years old and with two children, Kate, an older sister to George born in 1886 (of unknown father) and George then aged 8 months.

Clara met Amos Lawrence and the couple married on 6th August 1894, so George aged almost 4 years and Kate aged 8 acquired a stepfather. George gained a half-brother, Frederick, in 1898 and a half-sister Sophie, in October 1901. The growing family were still living with Clara's father Charles in Sandridge. Charles worked as a farm labourer whilst Amos was employed as a bricklayer's labourer. Kate, like so many people in the area, worked from home in the flourishing straw hat trade centred on Luton although she went on to become a domestic servant before marrying David Springs at Sandridge on 17 April 1911.

On 1 December 1914, four months into the Great War, the 24 year old George joined the Hertford County Constabulary as Constable 305 stationed in F Division. With just seven months police service, on 17th June 1915, George enlisted as Trooper 2546 in the Hertfordshire Yeomanry - the mounted branch of the Territorial Force. He was one of 23 Hertfordshire Police Officers who joined the Hertfordshire Yeomanry and posed for the below photograph in 1915 believed to be at Colchester. Under later reorganisation George was assigned the serial number 105805.



Herts Yeomanry (1915).
Members of the Hertfordshire Police who volunteered for service.

The Hertfordshire Yeomanry was posted to Egypt where sadly George contracted meningitis. He was hospitalised in Alexandria but succumbed on 20th July 1917. He was buried at the Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery in Egypt. Plot D 160.



1/1st Herts Yeomanry and the Bikaner Camel Corps the Sinai Desert, February 1915.

The Imperial War Graves Commission record shows: Private George Archer 105805, 1st/1st, Hertfordshire Yeomanry died on 20 July 1917 Age 26. He was the son of Mrs. Amos Lawrence, of High Street, Sandridge. Herts and is remembered with Honour at the Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery.



Hadra War Memorial Cemetery Alexandria

Police General Order 76 of 28th August 1917 stated The Deputy Chief Constable (the Chief Constable was serving in the Staffordshire Regiment) regrets to announce the death of Trooper 2546 George Archer Herts Yeomanry at Alexandria on 20th July 1917.

George qualified for the Victory Medal and British War Medal but records show his family never claimed his medals.

George Archer is commemorated on the Hertfordshire Yeomanry Memorial within St Albans Cathedral and on the Lychgate of St Leonard's Church, Sandridge.



The Memorial Plaque in St Albans Cathedral



Sunday 24 April 1921 Dedication of Sandridge Lychgate War Memorial

TO THE GLORY OF GOD THIS LYCHGATE WAS ERECTED IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF THE MEN OF THIS PARISH WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE GREAT WAR 1914 - 1918

The information for this article was kindly provided by Sarah Burns of Herts at War, assisted by Christine Nutton, Jonty Wild and the Great War Society's own Paul Watts.