

THE BRANDISH FAMILY

George and Louisa Brandish came to **Drybank Farm**, Ettington in the mid-1890s when George took the job of farm bailiff for **Mr. John William Lowe**. They brought their family of six boys and one girl. A second daughter, Frances, was born in 1896.

They were evidently a close family and as the children became adults they all remained at home at Drybank. The 1911 census records them all together in the 10-roomed farmhouse. It is also evident that they were a hard-work family. George had relinquished his bailiff's duties and was employed as a cowman on the farm. Louisa was working in the dairy. The sons were all employed; **Charles** as a coachman, **John** and **Percy** as domestic grooms and **William, James** and **Fred** as domestic gardeners. The elder daughter, named **Louisa** after her mother, was working at home and **Frances**, aged 15, was still at school. (In fact Frances stayed on at the school as a pupil teacher and remained at the school as a teacher throughout her working life.

Charles was the only one married before the war. He married **Lizzie Harper** from Mickleton in 1912 and their son **Leslie** was born in 1914, a first grandchild for George and Louisa.

When the war started all six sons were eligible to serve, the eldest then being 32 years old and the youngest aged 20. John, James, Percy and Fred were among the first batch of Ettington men to volunteer when the appeal went out in September 1914. John was initially rejected after medical examination, but in fact was called up in 1916 when the army's need for extra men became more pressing. At the time he was working as a cowman and was one of several men for whom his employer, Mr. Lowe, sought exemption at a tribunal hearing in Stratford. At that point he was granted conditional exemption, but it is quite likely he joined the ranks later. We can say for sure that Charles also served as after the war he became a member of the British Legion. Bill was the other son and we have no knowledge of his military service.

So at least four of the sons in this seemingly inseparable family left to fight in the war. Their parents and siblings would have experienced great anguish in the same way as most families whose loved ones had gone to war. George Brandish was already 60 years old when the war started and sadly he lived for only one more year. Following his death on 16th October 1915 he was buried in the churchyard at Holy Trinity church.

The headstone marking his grave also commemorates his son Fred, who was killed in action in France on 11th August, 1916, aged 22. Fred had been serving with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment on the Somme and died during an attack on the Intermediate Line. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Fortunately the others all survived the war and continued to live in Ettington and were well-known and well-respected members of the community.

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