

# William Henry Crisp 1867-1929

This is the story of William Henry Crisp and the effect that the Great War of 1914-1918 had on him and his family



[Original Photo held by family member]

By Olive Miles

## Early Life

William Henry Crisp was born c1867 in Rotherwick, Hampshire.

Name:	<b>William Henry Crisp</b>
Date of Registration:	Jan-Feb-Mar 1867
Registration district:	Hartley Wintney
Inferred County:	Hampshire
Volume:	2c

His parents were Henry Crisp a labourer and Eleanor Crisp.<sup>1</sup> William had four older and two younger sisters and four younger brothers. During his childhood, the family moved around quite a bit, his father doing various jobs as an agricultural labourer, a brickyard labourer and a carter.

In 1889, William married his first wife Elizabeth, and they had six children, two boys and four girls, and they lived in the Aldershot area, Elizabeth died in childbirth in September 1907. The 1901 census shows William living at Tongham near Guildford and working as a labourer at the gasworks. By the 1911 census, he had moved to East Grinstead with four of his children and was working as a labourer.

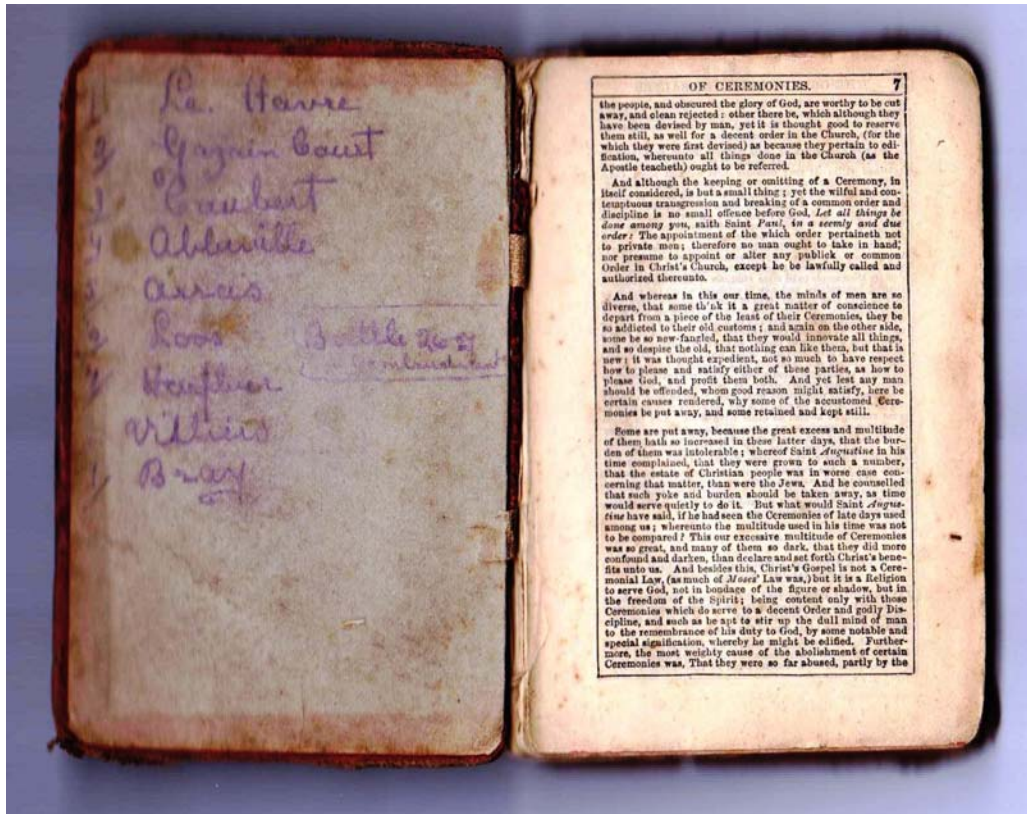
In August 1912, at Oving near Chichester, he married his second wife Martha Jenetta White who was twenty five years younger than he, although she believed the difference in age was only twenty years. On the marriage certificate, he was shown to be living in Oving. Their first child Jenetta Elizabeth Crisp was born on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1914 at West Dean near Chichester.

Soon after this in August 1914, war was declared, and although he was well above the age for serving in the forces, it is thought that William enlisted into the Army Service Corps, [ASC], and on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1915 was sent to France. He was someone who did not look his age, at the time that the above photo was taken he must have been at least 48 years old, well over the limit for serving in the army, the top age for enlistment at that time was 40, if you were already serving you could stay on up to 42.<sup>2</sup> When a daughter was born the following March, her birth certificate gives his occupation as Driver Army Service Corps.

## The Little Red Book

The family have in their possession a little red book<sup>3</sup> entitled Society Promoting Christian Knowledge. He must have been a religious man as many of the texts in this book were underlined. On the inside cover of

this book, William has written a list of French towns and villages, some of them were incorrectly spelt as they sounded. I have managed to find them all by using the French Michelin maps which are very large scale. Below is a list



### Le Havre

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. Gazain Court | Probably Gezaincourt about 20 miles from Abbeville   |
| 2. Cauliant     | Possibly Queant between Abbeville and Arras  |
| Abbiville       | Probably Abbeville, there was  |
| 3.              | a large advanced supply depot there  |
| 4. Arrass       | Probably Arras   |
| 5. Loos         | Battle 26 27 followed by a word combat?  |
| 6. Honfleur     |  |
| 7. Villiers     | Villers is a few miles from Abbeville  |
| 8. Bray         | There are two possibilities here, Bray-sur Somme or Bray-les Mareil, the latter being a small village a few miles from Abbeville |

The ASC had one of their main depots for goods landed in France at Le Havre, and the men in this regiment had the responsibility of getting the supplies to the proper places. One of the advanced depots was at Abbeville, over 100 miles away and rail transport was used to get the supplies this far<sup>4</sup> They would then be taken by motor transport to a Divisional Refueling Post from there onwards, by horse transport, to forward dumps where they would be taken over by the local Quartermaster.



William was a horse driver for the ASC and would probably have been employed taking the supplies to the forward dumps. At this time, preparation was being made for the Battle of Loos and from the little red book, it would seem that William was at Loos soon after the battle began, the nos 26 and 27 referring to 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of September, only a week or so after he arrived in France. It is known that William's horse was killed and he was wounded, which might explain why perhaps, he was sent to Honfleur, perhaps to recuperate.

Men who were not A1 medically fit for fighting were given jobs away from the main battlefields and used as a Labour corps within their own regiment. Villers is only a few miles away from the main depot at Abbeville and he may have been sent back there to serve in this capacity.

After serving with the ASC, he was transferred to the Labour Corps<sup>5</sup>, probably because his horse had been killed in battle and he was wounded at the same time and was not fit enough for front line service. He served in France and got the World War One Trio medals, 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.

Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
CRISP	A.S.C. Lab. Corps	Driver Plt	74/08099 468890
William. H.			
Medal	Roll	Page	Remarks
VICTORY	LC/101 <sup>15</sup>	17409	C7. 29-3-19.
BRITISH	LC		
15. STAR	LC/107 C2. 9/1/22.		
Theatre of War first served in (1) France.			
Date of entry therein 17-9-15.			

K. 1980.

Correspondence.

Address.

(P404-14a) W.L.F. 2347-ELP 5421 2000a. 10/10 H.S. Ed. 540/128

This document shows that he may have been in the Special Reserve or the Territorial Force as there is a T preceding his service number  
 It is believed that he was working for a tenant farmer on the West Dean Estate at the time war broke out and the family continued to live there

until after the war, during which time another two daughters were born, Grace in December 1917, and Alexandra in July 1919. Grace's baptismal certificate shows her father's occupation as farm labourer.<sup>6</sup>


### After the War

On leaving the army, he returned to West Dean where he worked on a tenant farm on the estate and in 1921 another son was born in Southbourne, followed by two more daughters and a son at Cocking, Bpton and Cocking respectively. One of the daughters Faith, born in 1927, has given an account of what she knew of her father. As she was not quite three years old when he died, she can only tell what has been passed down from her family.<sup>7</sup>

His wife worked very hard, as well as bringing up all the children, she would go hop picking locally, look after a large garden and act as midwife to local families. Faith's older sister May, who is two years older, has said that the only thing she can remember about her father is when they carried him down the stairs in a box when he died.

William died on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1929 from shell shock caused by the war; the cause of death on his certificate is given as Bronchitis, Myocardial Heart Failure and Post War Neurasthenia. His wife and his son Frederick by his first wife were with him when he died. His wife then found out that he was five years older than she had supposed and that he was in fact 25 years older than she not 20. His death was registered by his son Frederick who must have known his true age all the time as this is shown on his death certificate.

FD 845596

CERTIFIED COPY  of an ENTRY  
 Pursuant to the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953

Registration District Midhurst

Death in the Sub-district of Midhurst					In the County of West Sussex			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
Twenty third December 1929 165 Church Lane Cocking RD	William Henry Crisp	Male	64 Years	Farm Labourer	1 a Bronchitis and Myocardial heart failure b Post War Neurasthenia No PM Certified by M Fawkes M B	F Crisp Son Present at the death 363 Church Lane Cocking	Twenty third December 1929	A F Werry Registrar

Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody.

*Simons* Deputy Superintendent Registrar  
 24th January 2013

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 WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

After his death, his wife kept on working and bringing up the family, and later remarried in 1940. Faith can remember visiting some of her half

brothers and sisters, and indeed, one of her half sisters married her mother's brother. Her half brother Frederick lived nearby and often came in to help her mother. William's medals and photograph had pride of place on the mantelpiece until his wife died in 1982 when the home was broken up and they were passed on to a family member and have since been lost.

No one knows why William volunteered to go to war, he must have lied about his age. He enlisted before the Derby Scheme recruitment drive and he was too old to be conscripted. He may have been in the Territorial Force or the Special Reserve formed in 1908, his Campaign Medal Card shows his army number preceded by the letter T. His granddaughter Rita Gates asked for help in tracing his records but all that could be found was the record of his medals. Stories passed down through the family are that his horse was killed and that he was wounded, gassed and shell-shocked, probably at the battle of Loos. He must have been still serving when the Labour Corps was formed, but whether this service was in England or abroad is not known. The last entry in the Little Red Book is Bray, perhaps something happened at the battle of the Somme.

I became interested in this history when I was telling my friends Rita Gates and Faith Gravett about the forthcoming plan to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great War. Faith then told me a little about her father and Rita told me that she had done a lot of family history on [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com). It seemed to me that with so much information already to hand it would be a good idea to go ahead and do some more research for this project.

The family has been most helpful in this project, and tells me that many questions have been asked in a large extended family. His daughter Faith has said that it has brought the father she never knew more real to her and made him seem more like a person than just the name Father

## Endnotes

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### <sup>1</sup> Early life

This was researched by William's granddaughter Rita Gates and had already been done when I started this project. Sources were [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com) and Chichester Records Office and included census returns for 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911, also marriage certificate for William and his second wife on August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1912 and various other birth certificates.

### <sup>2</sup> Age for Army enlistment Special Reserve

The Special Reserve provided a form of part-time military service. It was introduced in 1908 as a means of building up a pool of trained reservists in addition to those of the regular Army Reserve. Special Reservists enlisted for 6 years and had to accept the possibility of being called up in the event of a general mobilisation and to undergo all the same conditions as men of the Army Reserve. This meant that it differed from the Territorial Force (below) in that the men could be sent overseas. Their period as a Special Reservist started with six months full-time preliminary training (paid the same as a regular) and they had 3-4 weeks training per year thereafter. A man could extend his SR service by up to four years, but could not serve beyond the age of 40. A former regular soldier whose period of Army Reserve obligation had been completed could also re-enlist as a Special Reservist and serve up to the age of 42.

<http://www.1914-1918.net/recruitment.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Little Red Book This is in the possession of Rita Gates and lists the places where he was stationed

<sup>4</sup> Moving of Supplies Information from the Army Service Corps of 1914—18 website [www.1914-1918.net/asc.htm](http://www.1914-1918.net/asc.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Labour Corps Information about the formation of the Labour Corps obtained from The Long Long Trail website  
[http://www.1914-1918.net/ASC\\_Labour.htm](http://www.1914-1918.net/ASC_Labour.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Baptismal certificate held in Chichester Records Office

<sup>7</sup> William's daughter Faith writes of her memories of her early life and her father



I WAS 2 YEARS AND TEN MONTHS OLD, WHEN MY DAD DIED. WHEN MY DAD RETURNED HOME FROM THE WAR, HE WAS A CARTER ON THE FARM HE DID WORK FOR WEST DEAN FORTATE, I THINK IT WAS MR JAMES MY MUM AND DAD HAD THREE CHILDREN, WHEN THEY WENT TO WEST DEAN ALL GIRLS, ONE BORN 1914, 1915, 1919, MY BROTHER WAS BORN THERE 1921, MY MUM AND DAD HAD TWO MORE BOYS THERE, ONE DIED 16 DAYS OLD, AND ONE DIED 18 DAY OLD, MY THREE SISTERS WENT TO WEST DEAN SCHOOL, THEY THEN WENT TO COCKING WERE MY OTHER SISTER WAS BORN 1924. THEY THEN WENT TO BEPTON WERE I WAS BORN 1927 AND MY BROTHER JAN 2 1929. WHEN MY MUM WAS AT BEPTON SHE WENT HOP PICKING I THINK MY DAD WORK ON THE FARM FOR MORRISSES WE MOVED BACK TO COCKING IN 1929 WERE MY DAD DIED ~~23~~ DEC 23<sup>RD</sup> 1929 WHEN MY MUM AND DAD MOVED TO WEST DEAN THEY LIVED UP A OLD TRACK THAT WENT UP TO TWO COTTAGES, CALLED CANADA COTTAGES I THINK MY DAD <sup>HAD</sup> A TEMPER AND GOT UP TIGHT, BUT DID NOT HARM THE FAMILY, I HAVE JUST FOUND OUT MY SISTER THAT WAS BORN 18 MARCH 1915 WAS CALLED FRANCES BECAUSE MY DAD WAS IN FRANCE

MY SISTER MAY WAS 4½ WHEN HE DIED HE CALLED HER MAY BLOSSOM, BUT SHE ONLY HAD ONE NAME MARY, MY MUM SAID I WAS ALWAYS SAYING IM GO SHUT THE DOOR POOR DADDIES COULD DONT MATTE ABOUT <sup>you</sup> AIN'D BADDY THAT WAS MY BABY BROTHER,