

Oliver William Frank BRITTAN

Born: 1898, Newport

Parents: Oliver Brittan and Emily Groundsell

Last known address: 30 Clifford Street, Newport

Last known occupation: worked for a firm of tobacconists

Service number: 330183

Regiment: 1st/8th Hampshire Regiment
[IW Rifles]

Service history summary:

- enlisted: not known
- rank: Rifleman
- decorations: British War Medal and Victory Medal

Died: 19th April 1917

Age: 19

Commemorated: [Jerusalem Memorial](#)

Family: Oliver William Frank Brittan was born on 20th March 1898 at 37 Elm Grove, Newport, the only child of Oliver Brittan and Emily Groundsell, who had married in 1889 at the Bible Christian Chapel (now Quay Street Methodist Church). Oliver junior was baptised in St. John's Church, Newport on April 27th 1898. Oliver senior died in 1936, aged 69, while Emily survived the Second World War to die in 1950, aged 84 years.

Northwood/Gurnard connection: the family spent Oliver's early childhood in Newport (Elm Grove and Clifford Street) where Oliver senior worked as a provision merchant carman i.e. a carter and later a self-employed fruit salesman but by 1911 they had moved to Parkhurst. When Oliver senior and Emily received news of the death of their only child they were living at 7 Parkhurst Terrace, Horsebridge Hill, Parkhurst.

War record: Oliver junior's service record has not survived but as he was not awarded the 15 Star he was probably one of the second battalion of the IW Rifles formed to rebuild the battalion which had been devastated by the losses suffered in the Gallipoli campaign. The battalion regrouped in Egypt during 1916 as they prepared for the Palestine campaign which was launched at the start of 1917. Oliver would have taken part in the epic march through the Sinai Desert and the First Battle of Gaza on 26th March where, despite victory being in sight, General Dobell ordered a retreat. Consequently, by the time of the Second Battle of Gaza the Turks had had nearly a month a month to dig and so as the allied troops, including Oliver Brittan, advanced they were mown down by artillery fire.

The following notice appeared in the *Isle of Wight. County Press* on August 3rd 1918

Rfn. Oliver F.W. Brittan, Hants Regiment, only son of Mr Oliver Brittan, Horsebridge Hill who has been missing since the battle of Gaza, is presumed to have died on or since the date of that battle. He was 20 years of age, and was employed by Messrs. W.J. Rugg and Co. before the war.

The depth of his parents' sorrow is illustrated by the memorial notice that they placed in the *County Press* on April 17th 1920.

Brittan – In loving memory of our dear son, Pte. O. W. F. Brittan, 1/8th Hants Regt. (I.W. Rifles) of Horsebridge Hill, Parkhurst who was killed on April 19th 1917 at Gaza – Still sadly missed by his sorrowing mother and father.

In the bloom of his life, death claimed him.

In the pride of his manhood days,

None knew him but to love him

None mentioned his name but with praise.