



This photograph shows William with his horse 'Kitty'. William rode Kitty into many battles over a three year period but sadly she was shot from under him in 1918.

A Leytonstone Soldier

William George Hurley



William's medals from left to right: the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the Meritorious Gallantry Medal.

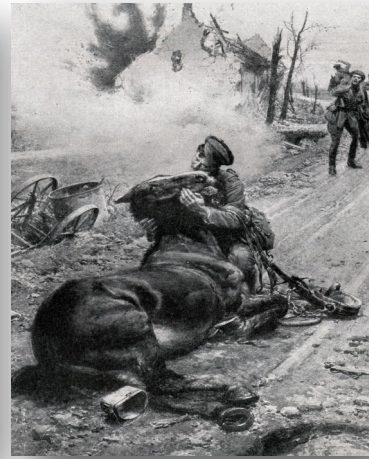
William Hurley was born in Leytonstone in 1892, the second of nine children with only one of these being a girl. His father Frederick ran a stonemasons yard and had married a Jewish refugee called Emma Coker. Sadly both died during the German 'blitz' of 1941.

William enlisted in August 1915 and joined the 16th (Irish) Division of the Royal Field Artillery Ammunition Column and landed in France the following February. He served with distinction receiving the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the Meritorious Service Medal for '...gallant conduct and devotion to duty'. William rose to the rank of Quartermaster Sergeant.

At least three of William's brothers enlisted and happily each one survived the war.



William married Elsie Gillies at the Holy Trinity Church, Harrow Green in August 1915. Their only child, Betty Margaret was born in 1918.



The bond between rider and horse was very powerful and is exemplified by these pictures.



If William ever thought that his equine duties would include a 'glorious' cavalry charge, the reality was that barbed wire and machine guns had made such attacks suicidal. William would spend the war helping supply the guns of the artillery which was a dangerous but absolutely vital military role.



Battle Honours

William's battles included :-
 1916 GUILLEMONT; GINCHY
 1917 MESSINES; LANGEMARK
 1918 ST. QUENTIN; ROSIERES

The casualties suffered by both sides in these actions were horrendous. William must have witnessed some terrible sights and been lucky to survive. His own unit suffered grievous losses and returned to England in June 1918 for reorganisation, refit and a well earned rest.



Guillemont main street



Ginchy village attack



Working conditions



Inevitability

USE OF HORSES IN 1918

	220,187	SUPPLY HORSES
	219,509	SUPPLY MULES
	111,171	RIDING HORSES
	87,557	GUN HORSES
	75,342	CAVALRY HORSES

15% of the horses employed died each year of the war



Messines Ridge 1917

After the war William and Elsie lived in York Road raising their daughter. William worked for the LMS railway company at Euston but later moved to Derbyshire and then Pinner. He retired to Poole in 1951 and died in 1962 still devastated over the loss of his wife one year before.

William, like so many army veterans, spoke little about his war but a treasured family 'heirloom' is a shaving mirror he had carried throughout the campaign. Always devoted to his family, William exemplifies the brave, resilient and dedicated men whose efforts defeated a tyranny.