

Peter SNELL

Born Q2 1896, Exeter
Gunner, Service No: 966604

Died 28 March 1918, aged 21
Royal Field Artillery, 60th Divn

Peter Snell was the son of Peter Snell (1865-1896) and Elizabeth Harriet Johns (1858-1936). They married in the Parish Church, Dawlish, on 25 June 1892 (GRO ref Newton Abbot, 1892, Apr-June, vol 5b, p 253). His trade was shown as a 'shoeing smith' and his father, William, was a labourer.

The Snell family had been at Lower Hill, St Giles in the Wood, near Torrington in 1871. The census shows:

William Snell,	Head,	46	Farmer of 165 acres	Born St Giles
Catherine	wife	48		High Bickington
William	son	8		"
Peter	son	5		St Giles
Anna B	dau	3		"
Peter	father	80	Retired farmer	"
Mary	mother	74		L. Torrington

In 1881 young Peter was 15 and had moved away and was a blacksmith's apprentice to Francis Squire, blacksmith, who had been born in St Giles in the Wood and married Harriet Brailey who was from Dawlish. They were in Park Street, Dawlish, with six children one of whom was also a blacksmith, Sydney Squire. Francis Squire died in 1884, aged 42 and his widow then lived with her married daughters. Peter Snell is shown here as Walter Peter Snell. This adopted name allows a trace to 1891 when Walter Snell is a boarder with George Lowton, also a shoeing smith, at 1 Friars Lane, Exeter (Holy Trinity). It may be assumed that Peter Snell continued to live and work in Exeter for his son, also **Peter**, was born there in 1896.

** Elizabeth Harriet Johns married Peter Snell in 1892.

The Johns family had been established in Dawlish since ca 1867, and Edward Johns ran a plumbing business from his home in 11 Queen Street with two sons working for him.

The 1881 census shows:

Edward Johns		44	Plumber (employs 2 boys)	b Exeter
Elizabeth "	wife	42		Witheridge
Elizabeth H **	dau	22	sick	Exeter
William H	son	20	Plumber	"
Sarah A	dau	18	Dressmaker	"
Lavinia A	dau	16	Pupil teacher	"
Frederick C	son	14	Plumber	Dawlish
Alfred G	son	12	scholar	"
Frank E	son	10	"	"
Minnie L	dau	8	"	"
Richard B	son	6	"	"
Amy F	dau	1		"

a further child, Maude was born in 1885

Peter Snell the elder died in 1896 aged 31, the year of **his son's** birth, and in 1901 his widow and her son, aged 4, were living with her sister Minnie Johns, a piano teacher, at 8 King Street, Dawlish and her younger sister, Maud, 16.

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In 1902 Elizabeth Harriet Snell married the widower William Cook Chaffe (1847 – 1938) (GRO ref Newton Abbot, 1902, Jan-Mar, vol 5b, p 279). William Chaffe was a blacksmith and wheelwright, who had been born in Buckfastleigh but was established in Dawlish by 1881 at Weech. His wife, Elizabeth Jane Boyer, died in 1898.

In the 1911 census William Cook Chaffe is at 6 Myrtle Place, Old Town Street, Dawlish and the household is:

William Chaffe,	65	Farmer	b Buckfastleigh
Elizabeth Harriet "	51	wife	Exeter
Arnold John " son	24	Haulier carter	Dawlish
Peter Snell , step-son	15	"	Exeter

There is no surviving record of when **Peter Snell** enlisted and joined the Royal Field Artillery. A description of the organisation and engagement of artillery is given in the Tribute for Lieut Philip Gladstone Pope (q.v.).

The 60th Division had been sent to France in 1915 but on 1 November 1916 the Division received orders to reorganise, preparatory for a move to Salonika. Units entrained at Longpre between 14-25 November and, going via Marseilles and Malta, assembled at Salonika on 25 December 1916. The Division then remained in Salonika.

In June 1917 the 60th Division was once again re-organised in preparation for a move to Egypt for operations in Palestine. It embarked on 12 June and by 4 July had completed concentration at Moascar in the Southern Suez Canal Zone. The Division began to advance to Palestine and by 23 July was at Deir el Balah (8 miles SW of Gaza). The Division then remained in Palestine and took part in the following engagements:

1917

The Third Battle of Gaza (30 October - 7 November), notably in the capture of Beersheba (31 October) and the capture of the Sheria position (6 November)

The capture of Jerusalem (8-9 December)

The defence of Jerusalem (26-30 December)

1918

The capture of Jericho (19-21 February)

The battle of Tell'Asur (8-12 March)

The first Trans-Jordan raid (as part of Shea's Force, 21 March - 2 April)

The attack on Amman (as part of Chaytor's Column, 27-30 March)

Amman, the main objective of the raid, is about 30 miles east northeast of Jericho. "The Raid" being the first trans-Jordan Raid.

On the 28th the attack on Amman began with the 2nd/23rd Battalion on the right and the 2nd/21st in the left. The advance was held up soon after commencing with withering rifle fire as they moved over open ground. During the afternoon the 2nd/17th and 2nd/18th were ordered up in support as well as the 2nd/20th, who were sent to help the Australian Light Horse. This advance by the Londoner's and Australians was driven back. They were able to move through the Artillery fire, however, it was the small arms that forced them out.

At 2:00am on the 30th the attack on the city was renewed. The Imperial Camel Corps captured two lines of Turkish Trenches, but the 181st Brigade failed in taking the 'Citadel' in spite of capturing 135 prisoners. The 2nd/18th got within half a mile of the hill and then the 2nd/21st

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was counter attacked but held the line after brutal hand to hand fighting. The 2nd/18th tried again at 3:00pm and was stopped 400 yards from the top by heavy machine gun fire from the flanks.

The raid had not gone well from the outset and by April 2 the 60th London Division had withdrawn back across the River Jordan. A week later they were heading back.

It appears that **Gunner Peter Snell** was killed in that last attack. The record in the Register of Soldiers' Effects simply says 'in action'.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: SNELL. P. Gunner 966604, 28/3/1918, age 22
Royal Field Artillery, 60th Divn Ammunition Column, burial N 75 Jerusalem War Cemetery.
Jerusalem War Cemetery is 4.5 kilometres north of the walled city and is situated on the neck of land at the north end of the Mount of Olives, to the west of Mount Scopus. The cemetery is found on Churchill Blvd, next to the Hadassah Hospital. The Australian Memorial is opposite the cemetery entrance.

Last known address: 6 Myrtle Place, Old Town Street, Dawlish

Next of kin: Elizabeth Harriet Chaffe, mother.

A Death grant was paid to his mother, Elizabeth Chaffe, of £18. 8s. 0d. And a similar amount to his sister Amy Taylor. War Gratuity was paid in similar measure to each, of £8. 10s. 0d.

Dawlish War memorial inscription: SNELL P. GNR. R.F.A.

St Gregory's Churchyard memorial (grave No 701) "In Ever loving memory of Peter the beloved son of P. and E Snell Killed in action in Palestine March 28th 1918 Aged 22 years His life for his country His soul to God. And of his mother Elizabeth Chaffe died April ?? 1936 Aged 77 years"

He is listed on the Devon Roll of Honour.

Devon Heritage War Memorials site info:

The website information relates to Frederick Snell who died in 1915, but was also in the Royal Field Artillery. A correction needs be made to the Devon Heritage website.

References:

CWGC

1914-1918.net

The history of 60th (2/2nd London) Division

Dawlish Local History Group Map of St Gregory's churchyard

Free BMD records

Copy marriage certificate for Peter Snell – Elizabeth Harriet Johns 1892

1914-18 Invisionzone.com

Refs via subscription sites;

Census entries

Snow Family Tree and McIlvenna Family Tree (*Ancestry)

Forces War Records.

UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects 1901-1929

UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-1919