

FURTHER RESEARCH INTO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE BRISTOL SPELEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY 1912-1914

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper adds to the biographical information about the members of the pre-World War One Bristol Speleological Research Society. In particular, the only previously unidentified signatory of the visitors' book at Gough's Cave on 28th February 1914, believed to be "J.A." or "Ja." Kerry, is identified as Frank Augustus Kerry born 8th February 1878 at Stoke Newington, Middlesex.

INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of Bob Williams' 1999 paper on the Membership of the Bristol Speleological Research Society (BSRS) was published, two further national censuses for 1901 and 1911 and a large and diverse range of other finding aids have become available, mostly online. Using these, understanding of the early membership can be extended. In particular, the only previously unidentified signatory of the visitors' book at Gough's Cave on 28th February 1914, believed to be "J.A." or "Ja." Kerry, can be identified as Frank Augustus Kerry.

FRANK AUGUSTUS KERRY

Unlike the earlier census releases, the 1911 Census comprises the actual schedules completed by heads of household. An online search showed there was only one household of Kerrys in Bristol at the time of the census, 2nd April, making them prime candidates for investigation.

The schedule (Figure 1.) shows Alfred James Kerry, 31 years old, born at Stratford in East London, living at 7 Cotham Lawn Road in Cotham, Bristol. His occupation is given as a cycle and motor goods wholesale distributor¹. Also listed is Alfred's 'cousin' Frank Augustus Kerry, 33 years, born in Stoke Newington, Middlesex². He is described as a "correspondence clerk at wholesale cycle and motor dealers warehouse". Alfred and Frank are actually second cousins.

There is no apparent Bedminster connection, the suburb of Bristol where a majority of the BSRS members lived. The cycle trade, however, suggests an immediate link to known BSRS member Edgar George Gregory Barker who was running a cycle shop in Bedminster from at least 1906 until at least 1919 (Shaw, 1993; Williams, 1999). Frank is of similar age to the older members of the BSRS, such as Barker.

¹ A London Gazette partnership dissolution notice (Issue 29041, dated 15.1.1915, p. 513) shows Kerry & Co traded as the East London Rubber Company, from premises at 150 Temple Street, Bristol with further offices in London and Sheffield.

² Also listed (apparently visiting from London) are Frank's parents Ebenezer Edward and Catherine Kerry. The National Archives reference for this document is RG14PN14857 RG78PN901 RD319 SD1 ED32 SN6.

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CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

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| NAME AND SERVICE | MILITARY OR NAVAL SERVICE | AGE | SEX | | RELIGION | | MARRIAGE | | MARRIAGE | | MARRIAGE | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----|------|--------|----------|-------|----------|--------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| | | | Male | Female | Anglican | Other | Married | Single | Widowed | Divorced | Married | Single |
| 1. Mr. J. J. O'Connell | 1st Lt. Royal Artillery | 34 | | | Anglican | | Married | | | | | |
| 2. Mrs. J. J. O'Connell | | 31 | | | Anglican | | Married | | | | | |
| 3. Mr. J. J. O'Connell | | 27 | | | Anglican | | Single | | | | | |
| 4. Mrs. J. J. O'Connell | | 24 | | | Anglican | | Married | | | | | |
| 5. Mr. J. J. O'Connell | | 18 | | | Anglican | | Single | | | | | |
| 6. Mrs. J. J. O'Connell | | 15 | | | Anglican | | Single | | | | | |
| 7. Mr. J. J. O'Connell | | 12 | | | Anglican | | Single | | | | | |
| 8. Mrs. J. J. O'Connell | | 9 | | | Anglican | | Single | | | | | |
| 9. Mr. J. J. O'Connell | | 6 | | | Anglican | | Single | | | | | |
| 10. Mrs. J. J. O'Connell | | 3 | | | Anglican | | Single | | | | | |
| 11. Mr. J. J. O'Connell | | 0 | | | Anglican | | Single | | | | | |
| 12. Mrs. J. J. O'Connell | | | | | Anglican | | Single | | | | | |
| 13. Mr. J. J. O'Connell | | | | | Anglican | | Single | | | | | |
| 14. Mrs. J. J. O'Connell | | | | | Anglican | | Single | | | | | |
| 15. Mr. J. J. O'Connell | | | | | Anglican | | Single | | | | | |

(To be filled in by the Enumerator)

(To be filled in by the Head of Family or other person to whom, or in charge of this dwelling)

I declare that this Schedule is completed to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: *W. J. O'Connell*
Print Address: *100 St. John's Street, Dublin*

Figure 1. 1911 Census Schedule for the Kerry family at 7 Cotham Lawn Road.

The 1914 Kerry signature at Gough's Cave has been read as initials "J.A." or possibly "Ja." short for James (Shaw, 1993; Williams, 1999 and see Figure 2.) when such shortenings (e.g. Jno.; Wm.; Geo.) were more commonly used as signatures. Could Alfred James Kerry have used his second name or reversed his initials to J.A.? His bold signature on the 1911 household schedule (Figure 1.) shows the Gough's signatory cannot be him, however, it is completely different to the smaller Gough's signature.

The next candidate is Frank Augustus Kerry. His middle initial is a match. Looking at the signature reproduced in Figure 5 of Shaw (1993) it seemed that the "J" could in fact be a manuscript "F" with the bottom curl brought back round as the middle bar of the F, albeit not clear and distinct. In searching for Frank in other sources, there was no marriage entry for him after 1911 and he is not in the electoral register for Bristol in the years following the First World War, while his second cousin and employer, Alfred, is found until around 1922 at 3 Cotham Road, where he moved to after 1911³. Alfred's will, proved in 1949, does not refer to Frank.

Frank is old for military service (born on 8 February 1878⁴), but still eligible, so evidence of him was sought in the forces during the First World War. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website has no F. or F.A. Kerry casualty, so he likely survived the war, if he served. The Army's medal card index⁵ on the www.ancestry.co.uk genealogy website produced a fortunate find: a card showing the award of the Meritorious Service Medal to Sergeant "Frank Augustus Kerry" of the 103rd Training Reserve Battalion, transferred to the 5th Royal Fusiliers and 2/2nd Battalion, Kings African Rifles. Many medal cards have initials or first name and initials only and so are not conclusive of identity, indeed, Frank's British War Medal and Victory Medal cards shown him as Frank A. Kerry and F. Kerry (two cards produced in error, then later cross-referenced). The rank, regiments and personal numbers match the M.S.M. card, so they are his.

In September 1940 German bombs hit the Arnside Street warehouse in London where papers for the First World War soldiers were stored. The resultant fire and water damage saw around 60% destroyed and most of the rest damaged. The surviving papers are known as the 'burnt document series' at The National Archives (WO 363). A search on the scanned images of these on the www.ancestry.co.uk website produced nothing. Searching images of the 'unburnt series' (WO 364 - papers taken from the main series, relating to possible pension entitlement, stored elsewhere), however, produced a wealth of information.

Frank was back in London by the outbreak of war living with his parents at 10 Grangecourt Road, Stoke Newington. On 10 September 1914 he volunteered into the Royal Fusiliers, aged 35 years and 216 days, giving his trade as a motor salesman. He was promoted to Corporal within a month and to Sergeant on 2nd February 1915. This seems to be the result of years of previous service declared with the Southern Rhodesia Volunteers from 1902-05 and again from 1906-10. He served in the U.K. until mid-1917 with the 27th Reserve Battalion, Royal Fusiliers and the 103rd Training Reserve Battalion, based in Edinburgh⁶. On 19th May 1917 he set off for Africa to serve with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Kings African Rifles⁷. While there, he

³ Alfred subsequently moved to the South Coast. He died on 17 January 1948 aged 68, when he was living in Holt, Dorset, and his wife in 1945 (both Bournemouth registration district).

⁴ Known from his soldier's papers. General Register Office birth reference March quarter 1878 Hackney 1b 469.

⁵ The National Archives reference WO 372 series. The register of awards is at WO 100.

⁶ From 21st to 24th March 1915 he was in Glenshiels Hospital as a 'collapse', described as 'done up [with] prolonged hours'.

⁷ A Nyasaland-recruited battalion, from what is modern-day Malawi. There was a severe shortage throughout the war of white officers and NCOs who spoke African languages, as many white South Africans/Rhodesians had formed

was transferred to 5th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (still attached to 2/2nd KAR), saw the Armistice arrive, and his Meritorious Service Medal gazetted for “valuable services rendered in connection with military operations with the Forces in East Africa”⁸. He returned to England on 1st May 1920⁹, was discharged from war service and immediately signed on again for a minimum two years term in the regular army, to continue working in Africa. He went back as Colour Sergeant (Company Quarter Master Sergeant) and seems to have been attached to the West African Regiment, at its depot from 24th June 1920. He only served around four months, however, and returned for final discharge on 28th October 1920. On all his papers he gives his parents address in Stoke Newington/Stamford Hill in London, 67 Church Street in 1914 and 10 Grangecourt Road, Stamford Hill through 1920.

There are three of his signatures in his soldier’s papers - from 10th September 1914, some six months after the Gough’s signature and another declaring he has no illness/injury sustained during military service, made on 25th October 1920 at final discharge. These two signatures are extremely close to the Gough’s signature (Figure 2.). The third, made on 1st June 1920 on re-enlistment, has his two first names written in full but both the initial letter formation and surname lettering is similar to the other two (Figure 2). The military signatures appears to have been done a little more slowly than the Gough’s signature, in that there is slightly less inclination to the right. Most significantly we know the first letter is meant to be an “F” on these and it matches the first initial on the Gough’s signature, with the middle cross-stroke again being indistinct.

So it seems that we have a man in his early thirties who returns from working in Rhodesia as an engineer (with volunteer military/policing service) and arrives in Bristol in late 1910¹⁰. He takes a job working for a relative, where he supplies parts to local cycle retailers. He probably gets to know Barker, a leading light in the BSRS, through this work. Barker may have persuaded him to join the society but could simply have invited him to come along on the trip to Gough’s Cave. At some point between April 1911 and September 1914 he changes jobs to become a motor salesman, his occupation at enlistment. Sometime between February and September 1914 he returns to his parents’ home in London from Bristol and enlists in the Royal Fusiliers¹¹ as soon as war breaks out. At re-enlistment in 1920 he gives “storeman” as his occupation, more akin to what he was doing for his second cousin in Bristol. He is still serving ‘for the duration of the war’ throughout 1918-19 and most of 1920 in Africa, so could not be involved in caving activity or the foundation of the UBSS in the U.K. He chose to return to Africa in 1920 for a further period as a regular soldier and gives a London address on discharge from this.

Frank Kerry may have been a BSRS member from 1912-1914 but appears to have no connection or involvement which survived the war. This is unusual as the majority of BSRS members were keen to be involved in the new society. He was, however, thousands of miles away. If contact with the BSRS was via Barker, however, who did not join the UBSS and

all-white units from 1914.

⁸ London Gazette, Issue 31375 of 30 May 1919, page 6969 as G/74262 Sjt. Kerry, F.A., 5th Bn. (Stoke Newington).

⁹ Sailing on the Walmer Castle from Africa 23rd March 1920 as Company Quartermaster Sergeant F. A. Kerry and giving his address in South Africa as “Tanganyika Territory”- The National Archives reference BT 26, piece 678, item 115.

¹⁰ He landed from South Africa in London on 20th August 1910. The passenger list gives his occupation as engineer. The National Archives reference BT26, piece 451, item 26.

¹¹ The Royal Fusiliers was very much a regiment for Londoners.

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| <p> <i>Lyob Barker.</i> <i>Edward K. Verdue.</i> <i>W. J. Brownsey</i> <i>J. Kerry</i> <i>J. H. Edwards.</i> <i>H. H. Lloyd.</i> </p> <p style="text-align: right;"> Bristol Speleological Research Society Feb 28th 1914. With sincerest thanks to Messrs for a most enjoyable inter- view. </p> |
| <p>(i.)</p> <p><i>Augustus Kerry</i> do solemnly declare that the e, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made.</p> <p> <i>J. Kerry</i> SIGNA <i>J. Kerry</i> Signat </p> |
| <p>(ii.)</p> <p><i>Augustus Kerry</i> do solemnly decl true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made.</p> <p> <i>Frank Augustus Kerry</i> <i>Jos. E. Old</i> </p> |
| <p>(iii.)</p> <p>suffering from a disability due to my military service.</p> <p> <i>mslow.</i> <i>J. Kerry.</i> Signature of Officer or Soldier. <i>20.</i> <i>E. Chester Made Lt.</i> Signature of Officer witnessing. </p> |
| <p>(iv.)</p> |

Figure 2. Kerry's known signatures: (i.) in Gough's Cave Visitor's book, 28th Feb. 1914 (Shaw, 1993, Fig. 5); (ii.) on Army Short Service (Special Reservists) Attestation Form, 10th Sept. 1914; (iii.) on Army Short Service Attestation Form, 1st June 1920; (iv.) on Army statement as to Disability Form, 25th October 1920.

seemed to bear some ill-feeling towards other BSRS members who did join UBSS¹², it seems possible that Frank Kerry might not have rejoined, even had he been in Bristol to do so.

Mr. F.A. Kerry sailed on 24th March 1921, as a 3rd Class passenger on the Union Castle Mail Steamship Co. Ltd.'s ship *Comrie Castle* bound for South Africa, to disembark at Durban (Port Natal) and intending to live in South Africa¹³. He is described as 43 years old, a storekeeper, his address still being 10 Grangecourt Road. It has not been possible to trace him further but he appears not to have returned to the U.K.¹⁴. South Africa keeps its indexes to death certificates private and thus only wills or administrations proved in South Africa can readily give a clue to a date of death. There is no such document indexed at the South African National Archives. His death was not registered in England or Wales from then to 1978; it is likely he remained in Africa and died there. There is an intriguing reference in Percy M. Clark's 1932 autobiography¹⁵. He says a Frank Kerry stayed with him for six months and he had nursed Kerry for a fortnight when he had typhoid fever, in the settlement called Victoria Falls¹⁶ where he lived.

Williams suggested sensible lines of further enquiry into "J.A." Kerry in his 1999 paper. There is now more material to investigate these.

Kerry being Sapper J. Kerry who died 15 July 1918 can now be discounted using H.M. Government's 'Soldiers Died in the Great War'¹⁷ which says that this soldier is John Kerry, born and enlisted at Ripley, Derbyshire. The 1901 and 1911 censuses show him to be one of two John Kerrys, both born at Ripley¹⁸.

James Leslie Kerry, born in Bath in 1891, is living (as it happens) in Stoke Newington by 1901¹⁹ and at 3 Highbury New Park, N in 1911, aged 19 years, a mechanical engineer, so he had left the Bristol area with his family long before the BSRS is established. He served in the Royal Navy in World War One as a Sub-Lieutenant in the RNVR, flying in the RNAS²⁰. He and his pilot won the Distinguished Service Cross for 'conspicuous gallantry on 28th February 1917 when they carried out a reconnaissance of Rayak and Damascus in a seaplane'²¹. He married in London in 1918²².

¹² Shaw p. 18; Williams p. 230-1.

¹³ The National Archives Reference BT27, piece 951 (shipping lists 'outbound from British ports 1890-1960') accessed on www.findmypast.com.

¹⁴ The National Archives reference BT26 series ('inward bound shipping lists') accessed on www.ancestry.com do not show any likely entry for him through to 1960.

¹⁵ Clark - see references at end, p. 222. This is the sole reference to Kerry and cannot be clearly dated but before 1932 publication date.

¹⁶ Modern-day Livingstone in Zambia.

¹⁷ On www.findmypast.com. Volume 4 covers the Royal Engineers.

¹⁸ The National Archives Reference RG 13/3228, folio 165 or RG 13/3230, folio 24 for 1901. 1911 (RG 14 series) accessed by name on www.findmypast.com.

¹⁹ The National Archives reference RG 13/209, folio 40 for 1901 and RG14PN978 RG78PN33 RD10 SD7 ED9 SN165 for 191, both on www.findmypast.com.

²⁰ I obtained copies of his Royal Navy service records from the National Archives (references ADM 273/16/134; ADM 273/23/107 and ADM 337/120/302) showing his "temporary address" as 3 Highbury Villas, London N. and that he was an engineer in civil life. He was resident at 68 Fairholt Road, Stoke Newington, London N16 in June 1921 (from trust papers in Hackney Archives). I have found Patent applications from the early 1940s in the name James Leslie Kerry, who then works for the British Rope Company Ltd., which may be him.

²¹ London Gazette Issue 30029 published on the 20 April 1917, p. 3820 for the citation.

²² General Register Office marriage reference December quarter 1918 Hackney 1b 1123 - to Constance M. Langley.

OTHER BSRS MEMBERS

The biographies of the other BSRS members have been described comprehensively by Williams, amplifying Shaw, but a few additional facts can be added. The census entries from 1901 and 1911 for the remaining BSRS members bear out the findings of Williams (1999).

EDGAR GEORGE GREGORY BARKER

It was possible that Barker had retained some papers or records made by the BSRS, as he was its Secretary Pro. Tem. into wartime, so an attempt was made to track him on to death and see how his property was disposed of. He describes himself as George Edgar Barker in the 1911 census. He had married in 1903²³ but there were no children of the marriage²⁴. He seems to have left Bristol by 1923²⁵. He died in the North Leach Hospital, near Cheltenham on 2nd November 1949, aged 70 years, when his address was 73 Bath Road, Cheltenham²⁶. His will, proved at Bristol, left everything to his sole executor, his former brother-in-law and childhood friend Alfred George Bonheur, a photographer with premises at 20 North Street, Bedminster. Bonheur died in 1971 but left no will. He had married a younger second wife in 1950, Marie Christina Gibb, who only died in 1993²⁷. no information has been found on whether any papers might have survived and been passed on as part of his estate.

WALTER JOHN ('JACK') BROWNSEY

He remained a bachelor and died on 22 September 1960 in Paulton Memorial Hospital²⁸ aged 78 years. His address then was Stock Nurseries, Langford, Bristol. He did not leave a will.

ARTHUR GILBERT EDWARDS

An attempt was made to identify his unit in the army. Unfortunately, the absent voters' list for Bristol prepared in 1918 and 1919 when many men were still away fighting or with the Army of Occupation in Germany only notes such voters with an 'M' for military by the name. Many such lists give full detail of rank; number; unit and force as well as name (e.g. Bridgewater, Somerset). The medal index cards show 18 possible Arthur G. Edwards, even after discounting three more who died in the war. There are many more cards for Arthur Edwards.

²³ General Register Office marriage reference March quarter 1903 Bristol 6a 238 - to Minnie May Brand.

²⁴ At 1911 census he states eight years married with no issue. General Register Office Index has no births recorded to the couple subsequently. The National Archives reference RG14PN14901 RG78PN903 RD319 SD3 ED17 SN63

²⁵ Bristol & Suburbs Directory 1923 (Bristol Record Office) not found under A-Z or Cycle dealers/repairers sections.

²⁶ General Register Office death reference December quarter 1949 Cirencester 7b 370.

²⁷ General Register Office marriage reference March quarter 1950 Bristol 7b 349. Marie continued at 28 Ambra Vale East to at least 1985, but changed her surname between the 1981 and 1982 electoral register to Stubbs. I do not know why. She died in Bristol in April 1993 when her date of birth was said to be Christmas day 1930.

²⁸ General Register Office death reference September quarter 1960 Norton 7c 156. The informant was his sister, Mabel K. Nash of Brook Cottage, Rickford, Burrington, Bristol.

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All the research papers for this article have been placed in the UBSS Library.

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