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Moving to America in the 1920's



Gary Cook Sep 1, 2019 · 4 min read ★

Edward Bannister is mentioned as being a Ewhurst World War One survivor. This is based on the fact that his 'forwarding' address for the army was 'Mrs Parry, Oxmead, Ewhurst, Surrey.' He had me flummoxed for quite a while but, gradually and accurately, his story emerged like so much caramel from a broken Rollo.

Mrs Parry was his sister. Her married name was Gertrude Agnes Parry. She'd married a chap with the unlikely name of Methold Sidney Parry in around 1916 and they moved into Oxmead sometime after a man called Truman Press left.

Gertrude and Edward were two of the children of Grace Ann and Edward Bannister of Liverpool. Before her marriage, Grace Ann was a Jephson and her sister was the mother of Roger Casement.

Roger Casement was a man who believed in freedom and the Irish State. He was involved in the 1916 Easter Rising to the extent that he had gone to Germany to obtain military aid for the cause. The British arrested him on charges of High Treason. Eventually he was tried, sentenced then hanged on 3 August 1916. One of his greatest supporters was his cousin Gertrude. She was also the sole beneficiary of his will.

Roger, who was possibly a homosexual when such a thing was seen as a crime against humanity and therefore needed to be dealt with in the harshest possible way, had

ironically spent years in the Congo reporting on human rights abuses. In fact, he has been hailed by some as the father of twentieth-century human rights investigations.

Roger's story is an incredible tale of a man paying for his belief that all people should be equal and free...but he's not the person I was researching, though the two of them did spend a few summers together in Stanley, a suburb of Liverpool in Lancashire.

Edward's father, Edward senior, was a career diplomat who, during the mid 1890's, was the Vice-Consul of Congo. He died in 1907 so is not really a big part of this story, though he may have influenced young Roger to some extent.

Edward junior enlisted on 12 August 1914, right at the beginning of the First World War. Not being an army man, he was sent for basic training before landing in France on 9 March 1915. He fought bravely and was wounded for his trouble. He received a hunk of shrapnel in a cheek and was hospitalised. He was evacuated back to England, arriving on 21 November 1915.

Following essential healing, his superiors thought he'd be better serving the war effort at home and so he was transferred into the Royal Defence Corps on 15 November 1917. I can only assume he was put onto 'light duties' or similar. Then, shortly before the Armistice, on 28 August 1918, after four years in the army, he was discharged as no longer fit for military service.

When he enlisted, Edward claimed his profession was an actor and this is the career he followed to the end of his days, though not necessarily in the UK.

In August 1928, aboard the good ship *American Farmer* (1920) originally a US army transport ship but then run by the American Merchant Lines, Edward sailed away to settle in New York City. And he was there for a year before returning on 12 April 1929 though for what reason I haven't been able to ascertain though it may have been because he was touring in a production of the successful comedy, *So This is London*. Whatever the reason, he soon returned and remained in the US for the rest of his life.

At some point after 1929 he changed his name to Edward Jephson. Perhaps there was already an Edward Bannister on the Equity books in the US and so he adopted his mother's maiden name. I can think of no other reason.

He died, as Edward Jephson, on 23 October 1943 in New York and his obituary was printed in *Billboard*. He was buried in Kensico Cemetery, Westchester County, New

York.

And so, Edward Bannister, though recorded as having had something to do with Ewhurst in Surrey actually didn't. At all. Okay, he may have visited his sister on occasion but that was about it. Sadly I've not been able to find a photo of him. Or Gertrude.

Speaking of his sister; Gertrude, and husband Methold, eventually moved to Cushendall in County Antrim, Northern Ireland where they both died though about 20 years apart.

During his life, Methold was a bit of an authority on Malaysian rubber and had, in fact, written a book on the ABC of Rubber Planting in Malaya, an obvious page turner of great pace. He was also, for a while, a director of the Kuala Lumpur Rubber Company from its incorporation in 1906. He really knew his rubber. Unfortunately I've not found a photo of Methold either.

And as for Oxmead in Ewhurst, where Gertrude and Methold lived, apart from being their home, they also offered to house Belgian refugees at the beginning of the Great War, taking six early on. It has been through a few name changes but is now called Campions.

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