



## Inspector William Merry

### New Zealand Rifle Brigade

Kenneth William Merry joined the Bucks Constabulary on the 20th November 1950. He was following in the footsteps of his father William Merry.

William was born in Goole, Yorkshire on the 4<sup>th</sup> November 1895 and was the only son of James and Emma Merry. His father was a fish fryer and they lived at 1 Barmston Street, Sculcoates, Hull and was the owner occupier of the premises. The present day definition of a fish fryer is a typically British fish and chip shop. Prior to this James had been a fisherman working from Grimsby. By 1911 James and his family had moved back to Goole and were now living at 1 Stanley Street. James was still in the Fish and chip shop business.



By 1913 William was employed as a clerk and in the same year after a visit from New Zealand by his Uncle and Aunt, Daniel and Emma Averis (Emma was James sister) it was decided William should go to New Zealand with them. He had contracted tuberculosis and it was thought the climate in that part of the world would be better for him and assist his recovery.



*Pictured above: William with his parents James & Emma*

*Pictured right:*

*L-R: James Merry, Daniel Averis, William Merry*

*Seated: Emma Averis and Emma Merry*

*Photo taken in Goole before William, Daniel and Emma left England*



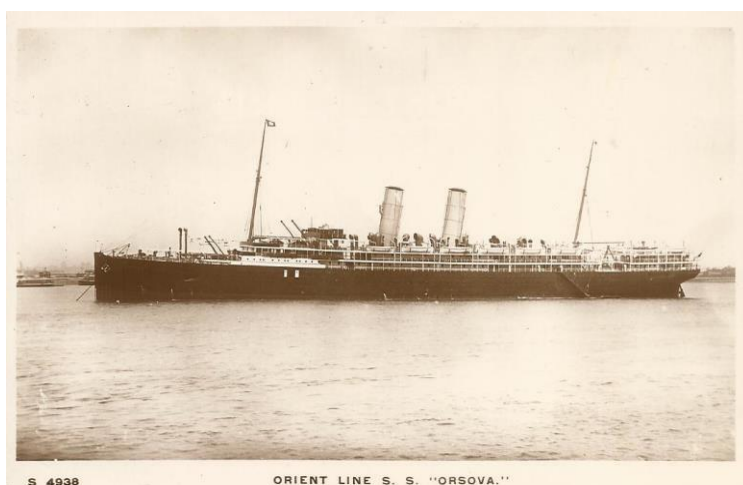
*The two photograph's above. Left: The Mummery family, third left is Emma Averis, the young man in the middle is William Merry and standing at the rear on the right is Daniel Averis. Photograph right: On the wharf is William's father, James and who it is thought to be his mother Emma's parents. The photograph below shows the SS Orsova in the background and a small boat making its way towards the ship.*



On the 24<sup>th</sup> October they started their long journey on the SS Orsova. Pictured below, the Orsova was a passenger liner built in Clydebank, Scotland in 1909 and operated a regular passenger service from London to Australia via the Suez Canal. The family arrived in Melbourne, Australia some weeks later and from there they boarded a ship to

New Zealand. The family was home for Christmas. The Averis family lived at Kingsdown near Timaru, South Canterbury in the South Island. From here William went to Waimate 30 miles away, approximately 130 miles south from Christchurch, where other relatives were living.

William found a job as a grocer's assistant and was employed by W.G. Napier in Queen Street, Waimate. He became a member of the Choir at St. Paul's Methodist Church and was soon a well-known figure in his new community.



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ORIENT LINE S. S. "ORSOVA."

A year after William's arrival in New Zealand the First World War, (known as The Great War) broke out and young men in the country were joining up. William was no exception. In early January 1916 he enlisted in the infantry, joining the New Zealand Rifle Brigade. Before leaving, a farewell social was arranged by St. Paul's Methodist Church Choir for both William and a Mr Briggs, second preacher at the church who had also enlisted. Around thirty sat down to enjoy the supper provided and the evening was full of music and songs. The Reverend G.F. Stockwell gave a speech during which he said how sorry they all were that the need had arisen for further calls upon men of the church. It was only that day he had been counting up the names on the Roll of Honour in the church and found it would now contain a total of thirty, which he considered very satisfactory. Waimate had supplied its full quota. He referred to the good work done by Mr Briggs as assistant and Bill Merry in the choir, and presented Bill with a wrist watch and Mr Briggs with a silver match box. Other brief speeches were made including a thank you from both recipients for their kindness which they considered was undeserved by them. They said that they would not forget their many friends in Waimate.



*St Pauls Methodist Church built 1888*

The following day William and thirteen other young men marched to the railway station to catch the noon express to Wellington, a brass band leading the group. When they arrived at the station there were several hundred people waiting to see them off. The deputy-mayor, Dr Haynes, stood on the railway steps with the deputy Mayoress Mrs Francis and in a speech he said, *"Once more we have met to say farewell to another lot of brave lads from our town and country who are going to fight on the side of liberty and justice. The Motherland is in danger, and her sons have rallied to help her.*

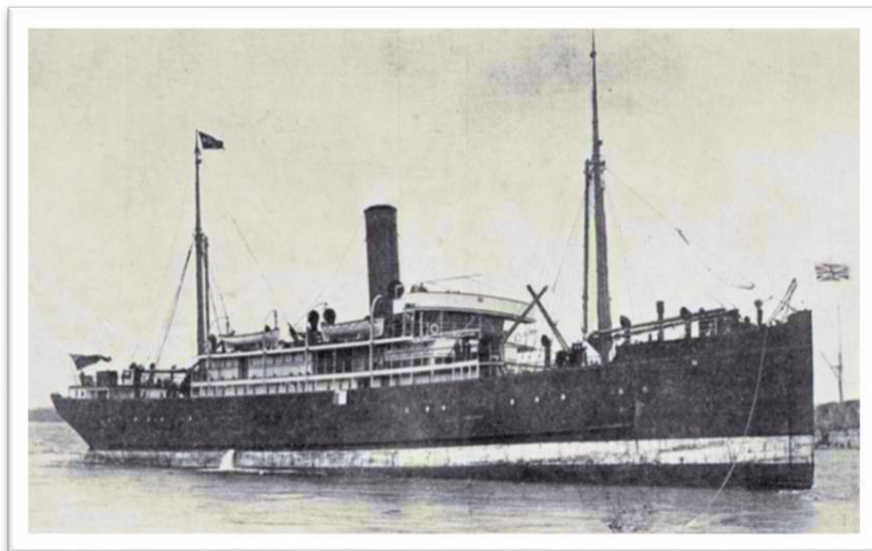
*In going forth on their noble errand they are sacrificing everything in order to fight for you and me. They are sacrificing their prospects in life, their homes and everything they hold dear; and they are going to face death for us. We cannot honour them enough. Reading Sir Ian Hamilton's despatches describing the super human bravery of our lads on the Gallipoli Peninsula one feels glad that he is a New Zealander. The boys have made history and have rendered the name of New Zealand immortal. They have created a high standard, a new standard of bravery and endurance, and have covered themselves with glory. But these men sustain that standard. We are all confident that when the time comes you will do your duty and do it nobly. We all hope that you will return safely to us, covered with honour and glory and when you do so a warm welcome will be awaiting you. On behalf of our town and country I wish you God-speed and a safe return.*



The crowd applauded both the speech and the young men. During a speech from Reverend A. S. Morrison he said, *"... I look to you men with great respect when I think that, judging by the record of other New Zealanders have put up, you have the making in you of the bravest and the best soldiers that the world has ever known. We want you to feel an inch taller if you can. We want to magnify your stature, as the Apostle Paul felt he might do..."* Towards the end of his speech he said, *"We have in Germany and Austria and especially in Prussia a ruthless destroyer of the world's peace. There are a great many in this district who have been praying for you and will be still praying for you. I hope you will be able to hold up the flag and fight a good fight. May God bear you up! Think of your mother and sisters and I know some of you think a good deal of some other body's sisters too which is perfectly natural."* The crowd laughed; he finished by saying, *"Think of the old saying of the Rugby field and the cricket oval. Play up, play up and play the game."* The crowd applauded. One of the young men, Alistair MacKenzie, responded by saying, *"Mrs Francis and Dr Haynes, I wish on behalf of the men here to thank you. Although we are going a little late, I think we will be able to hold our own and do as others have done."* As their train pulled out of the station the crowd continued cheering.

This would be the last time that Bill would see the small town that he had grown to love and the people he respected and worshipped with.

On arrival at Wellington the men made their way to Trentham Military Camp. It was the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1916. The documentation describes William as 5ft 11 inches tall, weighing 10 stone and 11 pounds, having blue eyes, fair complexion and light brown hair. After his initial training he was promoted to Corporal on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 1916.



SS Navua

With his fellow comrades, he embarked from New Zealand on the 6<sup>th</sup> May 1916 bound initially for Suez, Egypt. The troops left on a convoy of ships including HMNZT 52 SS Mokoia and HMNZT 53 SS Navua which were transporting 12 Reinforcements NZ Expeditionary Force (1st draft), 6th Reinforcements to 1st Battalion NZ Rifle Brigade, 3rd Reinforcements to 3rd, 4th Battalion NZ Rifle Brigade and 4th Maori Contingent. They also carried (part) 6th Reinforcements to 1st Battalion NZ Rifle Brigade. Bill sailed on the Navua. The convoy arrived at Suez on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June where they continued their training before embarking at Alexandria, the second largest city in Egypt, on the 26<sup>th</sup> July bound for Southampton, England. Arriving in Southampton on the 7<sup>th</sup> August the troops marched into Sling Camp on Salisbury Plain. William was posted to 'A' Company New Zealand Rifle Brigade where he relinquished his rank of Corporal to Rank of Rifleman.

He was promoted to Temporary Corporal on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1917 and full Corporal a month later. Within days of this he saw promotion to Sergeant on the Instructional Staff at the camp and sent to the Staff Training School. He qualified as a first class signaller and this was one of his main subjects.

During this time he was able to get several periods of leave where he met his cousin Cecil James Averis. Cecil was also in the New Zealand Rifle Brigade and he kept a diary of this period. He wrote:

*"On Sunday 29th (July 1917) W Merry and I went for a walk as far as Amesbury a little town about four miles from the camp".*

The diary continued:-

*"On Tuesday 28th (August 1917) we got our leave, four days. Left camp 8.30 arrived in London at 12.50 Waterloo Station. Had dinner then started to look for my train for Westbury. First station I went to was the Great Central but I was too late for the train there so I next went to Euston where I got a train at 5 o'clock arriving at Westbury 7.35 where Uncle Jim and Auntie met me. Arrived at the house 8 o'clock. On Wednesday 29th raining nearly all day so did not go out. Cleared up in the evening so Uncle Jim, Ian Ward and I took a walk into Brackley, about three miles. It is rather a pretty place with some very old buildings. Saw some of the places where mother used to go when she was a girl before leaving England for New Zealand."*

The Uncle Jim and Auntie referred to are William's parents.



*Pictured here are William and Cecil in their New Zealand Army uniform; note the Signals badge above the sergeant's stripes on William's Arm. The 'lemon squeezer' hats worn by both men were first adopted by the Wellington Regiment in 1912 and by 1916 became general issue for all New Zealand Army units, replacing the slouch hat (a wide-brimmed felt or cloth hat with a chinstrap) issued at the beginning of WW1. The branches of the service were distinguished by different coloured puggarees or hat bands worn around the base of the crown.*

On the 23rd April 1917 William was posted to the Staff Training School and on the 30th September he was detailed as sergeant instructor 4th Reserve Auckland Infantry Regiment. The following month he was taken on the strength of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade at Brocton Camp on Cannock Chase where training was provided in many subjects such as trench building, rifle and bayonet practice, also keeping the troops updated with current combat techniques. Training was an important part of a soldier's life. They were constantly drilled to maintain field discipline and levels of physical fitness although nothing could properly prepare them for life on the front. William remained as an instructor until the day came, on the 10th April 1918, when he was sent to France.

The Rifle Brigade marched into Etaples on the 15th April where he joined the 3rd Battalion in the field. William's cousin Cecil was also in the 3rd Battalion of the NZRB. Like many soldiers William fell sick. This was common amongst the troops with the sudden change of climate, food and water. William was sent to the 3rd New Zealand Field Ambulance Hospital where he recovered. Five days later he re-joined his unit.



*William Merry back row first left*

William took compassionate leave on the 6<sup>th</sup> October and returned to the United Kingdom. His father, James, who was now a farm labourer, had been very ill suffering from heart problems and had died on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October, he was only 54 years old. Ten days later William found himself back with his unit where he saw fighting on the Somme. On the 4<sup>th</sup> November 1918, in one of the battles, he was wounded by machine gun fire and was admitted to 4 General Hospital for treatment and to recover. He was then taken to the UK where he spent a month in the New Zealand Convalescent Hospital at Hornchurch, Essex and on the 19<sup>th</sup> December, now fully recovered he was discharged from the hospital. William never returned to New Zealand; he was discharged from the New Zealand Rifle Brigade on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1919 while still in the UK.

It is worth noting that New Zealand sent more troops to fight in the Great War, per head of population, than any other nation. 18,166 New Zealanders died from a country of only one million at the time.





William moved back with his mother to her home at 17 Littleworth in Westbury, Bucks, a small village a few miles from the town of Brackley. He found work as a labourer, working for a Mr P. Mitchell in the village. Labouring was not what he wanted from life and after making enquiries into the Buckinghamshire Constabulary he decided to give that a try.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> October of the same year, at the age of 24 years, he joined the Bucks Constabulary where he commenced his training at Aylesbury. On the 15<sup>th</sup> November he was sworn in as a constable in front of a magistrate. *"I do solemnly and sincerely declare that I will well and truly serve our sovereign Lord the King in the office of constable in the Buckinghamshire Constabulary, to the best of my skill and knowledge"* The Oath has changed several times over the years but basically it is something an officer takes very seriously and is a very important part of his conditions of service as a police officer and should follow him throughout his service.

William's first posting was to Slough on the 8<sup>th</sup> December. Slough was in the southern area of the Force until the 1 April 1974 when Buckinghamshire boundaries changed under the Local Government Act 1972. Berkshire, now known as the Royal County of Berkshire, took over administration of Slough and Eton and part of the former Eton Rural District from Buckinghamshire.

At the time of joining he was described as of proportionate build, 5 feet 10 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches tall with a fair complexion, grey eyes and light brown hair. Policemen's pay was poor; at this time Bill was only earning 70/- per week but at least accommodation was provided and he found himself in lodgings in the town. On the 16<sup>th</sup> November the following year he was posted to Burnham, a town around three and a half miles north-west of Slough. This proved to be a posting which lasted just over a year and on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 1921 he was posted back to Slough Police Station where he remained until the 26<sup>th</sup> April 1923 when he was posted to the Central Division at Aylesbury.

*Pictured below: Aylesbury Police Station*





It was during his time here that he received his first commendation on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1924 “for good work in a case of shopbreaking at Aylesbury” ‘Shopbreaking’ was the term now used for ‘Burglary’ which was changed in 1968 on the introduction of the Theft Act. For this he was “Highly commended”.

Aylesbury Police Station was built in 1857, when the Bucks Constabulary was formed, and used until 1934 when it was demolished in favour of the new police station in Walton Street.

William was at Aylesbury police station for just under two years when he was moved within the Central Division to *Chequers* on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1925. *Chequers*, was and still is the country residence of the Prime Minister. During World War 1, as was the case of many country estates, the house was used as a hospital and convalescent home for officers wounded during the fighting. After the War it was reinstated as a home. During the post war period things were changing and while in the past, Prime Ministers were rich enough to have their own country retreats to occasionally relax from the responsibilities of high office or entertain foreign dignitaries, the new breed of politician found themselves without places grand enough to fulfill this task. After lengthy discussions the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, secured the house and grounds and *Chequers* was given to the nation to serve this purpose for all future Prime Ministers. The Chequers Estate Act 1917, as it was called, was given Royal Assent on the 20<sup>th</sup> December 1917.

As it was now the official country retreat of the Prime Minister security was necessary for the house and grounds. This was and still is to this day the responsibility of the police, in this case the Bucks Constabulary. In order not to affect the budget the police that were needed were paid for by the state and thus called ‘Private Policemen’. This was not uncommon; Eton College is just one example in Buckinghamshire where ‘Private Constables’ were used. In Eton’s case the constable was paid for by the college. These officers still needed the powers of a constable and these became official postings for officers. The Prime Minister during William’s time at *Chequers* was Stanley Baldwin (November 1924 to June 1929).

William was keen to be promoted and took the examination for the rank of sergeant on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 1925 but he failed the exam. He had several postings during 1925; on the 1<sup>st</sup> July he returned to Aylesbury police station only to be moved to the South Western Division at Princes Risborough on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

William tried for sergeant again on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 1926 which he unfortunately failed but he was not going to give up. On the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1926 he was moved within the South Western Division to High Wycombe. He took the exam again six days later; this time he passed the qualifying and all important exam.

He would now be in line for promotion. It was during his time at High Wycombe, and six days before another posting to Princes Risborough, that he received his second commendation. This was for "*good police work in a case of fowl stealing at West Wycombe*". Theft of poultry was common in rural Buckinghamshire and a number of constables received commendations for investigating and arresting an offender for this very common offence over the years. Nonetheless this would certainly not hinder his bid for promotion.

His posting back to Princes Risborough was on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 1929 but by the 4<sup>th</sup> February 1930 he was again posted within the same Division to Haddenham. This was due to his marriage on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 1929 to Florence Strickland at the Registry Office at Brentford, Middlesex. William had been living in lodgings up to this time; now a married man he would get his first police house.

Florence was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1899 at Burnham in Buckinghamshire. Her mother and father were Miriam and Edward Strickland who between them used to manage the George Hotel in High Street, Burnham. Florence was one of eleven children in total, three of whom died young. Her father's untimely death on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 1909 left her mother, 49 years old, running the hotel on her own but with help from two of her children, Edward and Bessie, they managed to keep it going. When Florence was old enough she also helped, working behind the bar.

Their stay at their first house together was short-lived and on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1930 they found themselves posted to Buckingham. William had been promoted to Sergeant on probation which was the reason for the move to the North Western Division. He and Florence moved into a house on the Lady Kinlos estate at Maids Morton which became the police house. Maids Morton is a village just outside Buckingham, and where on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1930 their son Kenneth was born.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1933 William passed the qualifying examination for inspector so things were looking very good for the future but his career took a downturn when he completely blotted his copybook. William was known as a gentle man but he also had a temper when roused. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of August he found himself in front of the Chief Constable Colonel T.R.P. Warren.

The 'Colonel' in the Chief Constable's title was from his days in the Army. Chief Constables did not receive promotion through the ranks as they do today. Most were retired officers from the Army. Colonel Warren was appointed Chief Constable on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 1928 and held this position until 15<sup>th</sup> October 1953.

William was reduced to the rank of Constable for:

1. Unnecessary exercise of authority
2. Assault on one Thomas Barnshaw, at Burnham on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August
3. Making a false statement to the Chief Constable at Aylesbury on the 8<sup>th</sup> August.

He not only lost his rank as sergeant but also had a reduction in pay and was posted to Gerrards Cross. Florence hated this posting and the house which was on the main road but luckily this was not to last too long.

Although he had been demoted to constable he still had his sergeant's and inspector's exams under his belt - in other words he would not have to take these exams again and on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1935 he was promoted back to sergeant and the increase of pay would have been very welcome. Promotion saw another move to Beaconsfield.



In the late 1930s, with a possible war on the horizon, police officers were trained for 'War Duties'. This training continued until well into the 1980s. During this period, with gas being a particularly deadly weapon used in the trenches during the Great War, officers were trained in anti-gas measures. The photograph above shows officers during 1936 at one such training session, which took place prior to and continued during the Second World War. William took and passed his training at Bletchley in anti-gas measures on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 1937.



On the 27<sup>th</sup> February 1939 he was promoted to Acting Inspector and credited with pay of £320 a year and a new posting to Bletchley, Fenny Stratford. At the start of the Second World War Bill was appointed as the liaison officer between the police and A.R.P. wardens and took a major part in the early stages of the Home Guard. He was also responsible for training the Military Police in traffic duties and instructing the Special Constables in the Division.

In December 1944 Bill, along with Superintendent Bryant and Detective Constable Smethurst, received a commendation from the Chief Constable *for their hard work and efficient handling of recent cases of larceny of suitcases etc. from the London Midland and Southern Railway*. This was to be Bill's last commendation in the Force.

During his last posting to Bletchley, Bill, Florence and Ken lived in the Inspector's quarters in the police station and the Superintendent for the Northern Division at the time was Ernest Callaway and later Frederick Bryant. During their time there they lived in the police house in the grounds. Inspectors lived in quarters within all the main police stations. The next nearest station on this Division would have been at Newport Pagnell where again the inspector lived with his family. It was not unusual for the inspector's wife to cook the dinners of any prisoners in the cells although this would have been rare as most prisoners would have been up before the Magistrates the next morning and dealt with for the offence. Drunk and Disorderly and Breach of the Peace type offences would be common examples. The last Superintendent he was to serve under was Ben Lord.

There was some good natured rivalry between Superintendent Ben Lord, who was a very tall man, and his inspector Bill; they had very different personalities. Anyone who did not know them would have thought they hated each other but in reality they were good friends and when they both retired their friendship continued.





William was described as an *“easy going bloke”* by his men. One probationer police constable, Cyril Wise, described him affectionately as *“a simple type of person easy to get on with”*, clearly respected and liked by his sergeants and constables at Fenny Stratford. William was also the Federation Representative for the inspectors. Cyril fondly remembers him practicing his speeches using him as his audience saying the same sentence in different tones to see how it came across and to decide which, was the best tone to use on the day.

William's son Ken had taken up a career as assistant dispenser at Ruston's Chemist at Bletchley. Ken's intention was to one day become a pharmacist but at the age of 18 years Ken, was called up for National Service joining the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 1948. After his initial training at Aldershot he spent time in Greece and Cyprus. Young men between the ages of 17 to 21 years old were called up for National Service where they spent 18 months. This was extended to two years in October 1950 during the Korean War. National Service ended on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1960.

In the meantime William was fast approaching retirement and having served 30 years and at the age of 54 years old he decided to retire on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1949 which would also mean another move from the police station. They moved into a house not far away at 41 Church Street, Bletchley. Tributes were paid to him by the Magistrates, the Clerk, and on behalf of the associated solicitors for his work. Part of an inspector's work was to prosecute offenders arrested by the police in Magistrates Courts and William would have spent many hours in court at Fenny Stratford. The court building was situated in the same grounds as the police station.

Within just a few years of William's retirement the old police uniform changed from the round necked tunic to the open neck, white shirt and collar worn with a black tie for inspectors and blue shirt and collar, again with a black tie for sergeants and constables. This would have been welcomed as in the summer they would now be able to wear collar and tie, shirt and epaulettes, much cooler on hot summer days. The cape was still issued to officers until the early 1980s.

William obtained a job as a security officer at Bletchley Park and he found himself attached to the Government establishment at Cheltenham where he made regular trips. He did not talk about his job working for the Government during his time there, finally retiring at the age of 65 years.

Ken, in the meantime, left the Army on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1950 but his dream to be a pharmacist was to be cut short by the untimely death of the pharmacist, Mr. Ruston, in a tragic accident at an airshow at Farnham. This caused the chemist shop to close and left Ken without a job.

Ken talked the problem over with his parents and he decided to follow his father's footsteps and join the Buckinghamshire Constabulary. So, in November 1950, he started his training; his pay was £330 per annum. He was described on joining as 5 feet 10 ½ inches tall, fresh complexion, blue eyes and fair hair.

*This photograph of Kenneth Merry was taken when he joined the Bucks Constabulary.*



After his initial training at the Police Training School at Eynsham Hall, Oxfordshire he was posted to Aylesbury Police Station on the 3rd March 1951 where he lived in lodgings. There less than a year he was posted to Iver on the 3rd December 1952 again living in lodgings in the town.

He had met his future wife, Sheila Bavington, when he worked for Rustons chemist on her regular visits there. Sheila lived in Bletchley at Cottingham Grove. Her father was a master butcher and had his butcher's shop in Bletchley Road, 'F. Bavingtons Butcher'. When they decided to tie the knot Sheila was 21 years old and Ken was 23.

Ken and Sheila married at St Mary's Church Bletchley on the 16th January 1954 which coincided with his last posting to Steeple Claydon on the 16th March, which was to last a total of 17 years. Initially they moved in to a council house in the village rented by the police until the new police house was built at 9 Queen Catherine Road. Ken's nearest Police Station was at Buckingham where he would have reported to on most days.

Ken was described as a very pleasant person who did not want to push himself forward. Like many police officers he did not want promotion and being a village policeman in a rural area like Buckingham suited him perfectly. He was also a very tidy person always putting things in their rightful place. One day at Buckingham police station this backfired on him. He was busy straightening the front office, putting things away, washing up dirty cups etc., emptying the ashtrays and generally tidying up when one of the rubbish bins caught fire from a cigarette not quite put out in one of the ashtrays. The fire set the curtains alight before Ken realized what was going on. He managed to put the fire out but later had some explaining to do to his Sergeant and Inspector!

*Ken's long service and good conduct medal*



Ken loved gardening and in his garden he grew vegetables as well as flowers; in particular he enjoyed growing chrysanthemums. He would spend hours dressing them for the many shows in the area where he won numerous medals and certificates for his blooms.

In spring 1959 Ken and Sheila's daughter Teresa was born followed two years later in 1961 by their son Robert. This completed their family. The same year Ken received his long service and good conduct medal. These medals have and still do to this day the officer's name engraved on the edge of the medal.



The 1<sup>st</sup> April 1968 saw the amalgamation and the Bucks Constabulary joined with four other Police Forces - Reading Borough Police, Oxfordshire Constabulary, Oxford City Police and Berkshire Constabulary. The new Force was to be known as the Thames Valley Constabulary, later renamed Thames Valley Police. Headquarters were now at Kidlington in Oxfordshire and of course the Force was now much larger. Ken liked the coziness of the smaller Bucks Constabulary where all the officers knew each other; this was all lost in the new much larger Thames Valley Constabulary. The Bucks Constabulary

officers were allowed to keep the same shoulder numbers but the officers in the other four Forces had to change. The Bucks Police helmet changed from the rose (seen here with the Bucks swan helmet plate) to the comb helmet with the new Thames Valley Constabulary helmet plate. The flat cap received a black and white checkered band with the new Thames Valley Constabulary badge.

In the early 1970s William's health was failing; he was now in his mid-70s and he had diabetes. He was also having problems with his breathing and found his day to day activities more and more difficult but he did his best to get on with his life until his death on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 1974 of pneumonia. Bill died at his home 24 Warners Road, Newton Longville, Winslow. His death brought a sad end to an interesting and varied life.



William's funeral was held at Fenny Stratford Church attended by his close family friends and old colleagues from the Bucks Constabulary. He was buried in Fenny Stratford Cemetery.

*Pictured here is his grave taken in July 2012*

The headstone reads: *"In loving memory of a dear husband and dad WILLIAM MERRY died 10<sup>th</sup> February 1974 aged 78 years. Until we meet again"* Bill's grave was for a single person. It was his wife Florence's request that when her time came she would be buried with her mother.

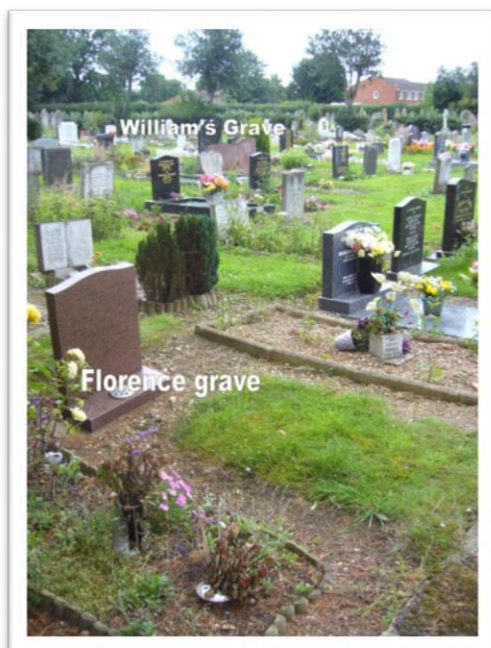
Florence continued living in their bungalow in Newton Longville.



Having spent 25 years in the Bucks Constabulary - 17 of them at Steeple Claydon - Ken decided to retire from the police in November 1975. He was just 45 years old - too young to fully retire- so he found himself a job as assistant to the clerk of works at Buckingham University, the first private University in Britain where he met and made friends with students from around the world but he was not happy he found the work just not challenging enough. By now Ken and Sheila had moved to 18 Manor Road, Maids Moreton having purchased the house from an ex-Bucks police sergeant. In the meantime Ken found another job at the Steiner School in Pottersbury, Northants as a

Garden Manager. He enjoyed this job enormously getting great satisfaction in growing food for the school kitchen. His previous hobby stood him in good stead as his new role as a full time gardener, he loved the work and was a great success.

Florence lived for another 9 years close to Ken, Sheila and the two children. Ken would collect her every Sunday and she spent the day and had dinner with the family. During the week Sheila paid regular visits to Florence helping her with her shopping and housework and it was on one of her frequent checks on Florence that Sheila found her dead. Florence's health had been good for her 83 years and her death was quite sudden.



Whilst clearing her house and putting her things in order, Ken and Sheila found out that Florence had been married before and Bill was her second husband. This was a shock to Ken who was very upset that he should find out this way. He wondered if he had any step brothers and sisters and what happened to her first husband? They decided to do some research at Somerset house to see what they could find out. In the mean-time Florence's funeral took place at Fenny Stratford Church.

Her request to be buried with her mother proved difficult.



The local authority was unable to find out where she was buried and her husband Bill's grave was for a single person only. Ken and Sheila decided that she should be buried as near to Bill as possible. They wanted a similar grave to Bill but the local authority no longer allowed surrounds around graves in this cemetery. Therefore a headstone was chosen made of the same stone as William's.

The photograph taken on the previous page, in July 2012, shows William and Florence's graves. On Florence's headstone it says *"In loving memory of a dear wife and mother Florence Evelyn Merry died 17<sup>th</sup> August 1983 aged 83 years until we meet again"*



*Photograph above Ken Merry (back to the camera) at an incident at Buckingham 1970s.*

Ken and Sheila's research at Somerset house revealed that there were no step brothers and sisters. Florence married a Canadian Infantryman named James Morris in 1917 at Hammersmith. This was during the Great War and James was killed at Belgium on the 30<sup>th</sup> October that same year. He was buried at Tyne Cot Cemetery. After his death Florence went back to using her maiden name of Strickland thus giving no indication of her previous marriage.

Ken and Sheila had talked about running a guest house together for many years and in December 1985 the family moved to a small seven bedroom hotel in Ilfracombe, north Devon. Ken resigned from the school and just before they moved briefly worked as a gardener, chauffeur and handyman for a Mr. Jarman, a retired former owner of Wipack, the Buckingham based electrical manufacturer. It was only for a short period, but Mr Jarman was a generous and caring employer and tried to persuade them to stay in Bucks and offered to buy a Hotel for them to run But Ken and Sheila wanted to be independent and declined this very generous offer.

After the initial excitement of running their own business together they faced the reality of a property that needed some TLC. After a visit to the bank manager they started work colour coding the rooms with new paint and set about opening the doors to their first guests. Sheila looked after the kitchen, cooking, washing and organising the dining room and Ken the bedrooms, cleaning and running the bar. The bar was a great success and became the focal point for guests after dinner or returning after a stroll by the sea. They worked hard and built up a regular clientele and coasted along over the next 10 years, making many good friends in the process.

Ken's health began to deteriorate over a period of time and this in conjunction with the fact that they were both very tired from the relentless pressure of "living at work" it was always hard for them to switch off. Eventually they sold Westbury and it was turned back into a family home and even though it has had several owners has never been used as a Hotel since. Ken and Sheila rented a house for three months and then moved into Orchard Road, Ilfracombe and started their retirement. Sheila's sister Joan moved into a small house five minutes' walk from Orchard Road and for a brief time they were all very happy until Ken suffered a heart attack at Christmas 1998. Joan's arthritis had worsened around the same time and after Ken recovered they decided to sell both houses and all move in together. The three of them found the perfect house in Westward Ho! (Devon); upstairs had its own kitchen and living room where Joan lived, while Ken and Sheila lived downstairs.

Ken never fully recovered from his heart attack and his health started to deteriorate and eventually it was no longer possible to look after him at home. He was moved to Henton Nursing home, close by, where he died on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2003. Sheila and Joan continued to live in the house, until Joan's death in November 2011. Sheila then moved to a small flat nearby. Sheila now lives in Westward Ho, near Bideford (Devon), her daughter Teresa lives nearby with her husband and two children. Her son Robert lives in Hackney with his wife and two sons and works as a Stone Consultant.

*Footnote:*

*William and Kenneth's story has been put together from their Bucks Constabulary records of service, from general on-line research including Ancestry and with the considerable help of Carole Smith (New Zealand) as well as Sheila and Robert (Ken's wife and son).*

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<http://www.mkheritage.co.uk/bch/>