

Essex Newsman Saturday 12 October 1935

EAST HANNINGFIELD

PRESENTATION TO P.C. FRANCIS – At a parish gathering on Saturday Mr. S. F. Body referred to the approaching retirement of P.C. Francis from the Police Force, after 26 years' service, seven of which had been in East and West Hanningfield. Cordial response had been made to the fund which he (the speaker) had opened for the purpose of a presentation and there had been a generous response.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Henry J. Francis was born at Needham, Suffolk, on 1 August 1888, the son of Henry and Mary Francis. Henry was a hurdle maker. Henry J. entered the workforce at an early age and the 1901 Census finds him living at home and employed as a grocer's assistant.

Ten years later he was lodging with John and Mary Hummerstone at Clarkes Row, High Street, Epping and was by that time a constable in the Essex Police Force. The following year he married Emily Gayfer (b. Mellis 9 October 1888) on 9 September 1912 at Stoke Ash Baptist Chapel, Suffolk.

Henry enlisted, on 9 February 1916, into the Machine Gun Corps and his address at that time was Coronation Avenue, Braintree.

Their daughter Winifred Emily was born on 2 December 1916.

Henry was demobbed on 19 January, 1919 and he appears to have come through the Great War without injury.

Henry and Emily's elder son Henry G. was born at Braintree in early 1919, and their second son, Douglas John, was born on 28 October 1921.

At some point P.C. Francis transferred from Braintree to Theydon Bois, because it was from there he was moved to East Hanningfield in the autumn of 1928, replacing P.C. French who moved to Great Clacton.

There are several reports in the local newspapers in which he appears upholding the law, and he seems to have made a good impression on the residents of East Hanningfield, hence the presentation in 1935.

The 1939 Register records Henry, Emily, Winifred and Douglas living in Beehive Lane. Henry was employed as a commissionaire at a telegraph research laboratory, and Douglas as a draughtsman in an engineers' dept. Winifred had by this time married but was living with her parents.

An Essex Chronicle article of Friday 21 August 1942 relates how Winifred's husband Bertam Garwood and his brother Louis had met up in Cairo, Louis being an RAF dispatch rider and Bertram a L/Cpl in the Royal Army Service Corps. It explains that Bertram had joined the Territorials in April 1939 and had gone through the first Libyan campaign. "He married Miss Winifred Francis of Beehive Lane who is serving in the WAAF", Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

Less than a year after the reunion in Cairo Leading Aircraftman Louis Garwood died, 3 July 1943, and is buried in the Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery.

The Francis family did not come through the War without loss. Douglas, whilst serving as a pilot based at Foggia Main Italy, was lost without trace over Romania on 19 August 1944. He was only 22 years old.