

## THE GARRETT FAMILY

*Rob Forsyth*



Home Farm, Clifton: late 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph

Home Farm was the family home of Francis Beesley Garrett (1843-1912) and his wife, Mary, with their children, Ruth (b 1886) and their son Frank (1891-1955).

Son Frank served with The Oxfordshire Yeomanry (Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars) during WWI. The Hussars were a volunteer cavalry with a large number of recruits from farms recruited specifically because of their ability to ride.



A Field post card from France on 9 April 1915. Francis is on the right

In 1914 he married Florence Rose Walker (b 1889 in Islington) who was a nurse at the John Radcliffe hospital. She was known as Rose.

During WWII Frank was in the reserved occupation of farming and so he joined the crew of the Deddington Royal Observer Corps post (see photograph p.72).



In his ROC uniform

Frank and Rose had four sons and a daughter. The eldest children - Frank, Tom, Ken and Mary - all went off to the war. John, who was the youngest (b1923), was categorised as in a 'reserved occupation' running the farm with his father. He continued to do this after his father died in 1955 in a tractor accident. Tragically John died aged 50 in a car accident

## FRANK GARRETT

Frank and Rose's son, Frank, was a tail gunner in 467 Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR), based at Bottesford. He died on 18 August 1943 age 26 on a raid on Peenemunde (p.55).

A relative of one the other crew members recounts 'The crew came together in March/April 1943 and were involved in 19 major, highly dangerous, operations during that summer. They were all to meet their fate at Peenemunde on the night of 16-17 August. Several of their bodies were recovered from a lake at Peenemunde, although the body of Adam Brand, the air gunner aboard, was washed up on the shores of Poland, 20 miles away.'

Frank Garrett



## MARY WEBB (née Garrett)

Mary joined the RAF in 1942 and trained and worked as a telephonist at RAF Honiley, at Wroxhall in Warwickshire.



## TOM GARRETT



Clifton School 1926. Tom is in the front row, third from the right

Tom joined the local regiment, The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, in 1939. He did not like talking about his war experiences - which he said were pretty tough - so his family have no knowledge of his own involvement other than they know he served in the Far East. Records show that it was the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion that went to the Far East and subsequently served on the Arakan front during the advance down the west coast of Burma in 1944-45, fought at Akyab in 1944 and at the main Japanese base at Tamandu in 1945. How much of this Tom participated in himself we do not know but, as all of these engagements involved very fierce fighting, one can fully understand and respect his reticence.



Tom 'somewhere' in the Far East

## KEN GARRETT

Ken served in the RAF Volunteer Reserve from 1942 to 1946 driving low loaders (known as 'Queen Marys') which recovered crashed aircraft. From 1943 to 1946 he was stationed overseas in Alexandria, Egypt and Basra, Iraq. He met his wife, Edith Minty, who was a WAAF, while they were both doing driver training.



In Amyra Egypt 1945

## EDITH GARRETT (née Minty)



Edith served in the WAAF from 1942 to 1945. She trained as a driver at Morecambe where she first met Ken. She then deployed to a Beaufighter airfield in Lincolnshire as an ambulance driver. She has very clear memories of the sky being packed full of aircraft for the 1,000 aircraft bombing raids. She also recalls seeing a Beaufighter burst a tyre on take-off and cartwheel exploding into a hangar. Despite the ever-present sadness of death and injury, she nonetheless remembers her time in the service as being exciting and great fun; youth had the ability to rise above the terrible circumstances that surrounded air and ground crew equally. After a couple of years she moved to York to Command HQ driving staff cars.

Ken and Edith were married in Chesterfield then came to live in Deddington where they ran the Post Office store for many years until they retired in October 1985.



The occasion of Ken and Edith's retirement from the Post Office store with sons Andrew (*l*) and Peter (*r*)