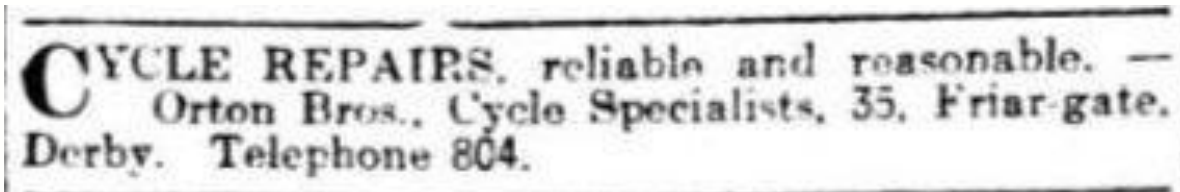




William Orton

79 Park Grove



From the Derby Daily Telegraph for 4 December 1909. Orton Brothers also advertised that they were cycle manufacturers, repairers and agents; sold all accessories and “any make of gear repaired” © Local World Limited

William, born in 1872, was 42 when war broke out and, when conscription was first introduced in 1916, was too old to be called up. However, by 1918, when the upper age for conscription was raised to 51 William, at 46, was no longer exempt.

He was attested (or enrolled) on 31 July 1918. He served with the RAF, acting as a batman from August 1918 to 23 January 1919 when he was discharged. His RAF record gives very little detail of where he was based during his service but the role of batman was similar to a valet for officers: looking after uniforms and personal equipment, perhaps acting as a driver or messenger. Depending on the rank of the officers he may have been assigned to one or a small group.

William was the son of Edward and Mary Orton who had moved from Nuneaton for Edward’s work as an Elastic Web weaver in the late 1860s. They had a family of six children, with William as the 4th child.

William and his older brother Robert went into business together repairing and making bicycles and their business “Orton Brothers” was based at 35 Friar Gate, in one of the

small shops near the old railway bridge.

In 1900 William married local girl Mary Jane Barker and they set up home at 37 Longford Street, a few doors away from Robert and his family at 25 Longford Street.

In 1908 William and Mary baptised their daughter Mary at St John’s Church, where they had married, and when she was still a baby the family moved to 79 Park Grove.

Sadly Mary died aged 6 in June 1914. The most interesting thing about William’s RAF record is that it reveals that the couple later adopted a small girl, Phylis Evelyn Stone (born in 1910). A note pencilled in the margin of his RAF service record lists her as a dependent.

William went back to his cycle business after the war, but in 1932 his brother Robert died. The cycle repair business was still listed in the trade directories for 1935 and 1936 but it is uncertain if William ran the business alone or had help.

In the mid 1930s William and Mary moved back to 37 Longford Street. William died there in December 1938, with Mary living on there until the early 1960s.