

Charles James Partridge WW1

Charles James Partridge was not a wartime recruit but a professional Regular Army soldier with nearly nine years' service. His surviving record allows us to reconstruct much of his journey, and it also clarifies where he was probably serving immediately before the war.

Charles James Partridge, 1888–1915

Charles was born at Burnham-on-Crouch on 18 February 1888, the son of Edward and Emily Ann Partridge. He enlisted at the Essex Regiment's depot at Warley on 24 July 1906, aged eighteen years and five months. At 5 feet 3¾ inches he was short by modern standards, but comfortably above the Army's reduced minimum height requirements of the period.

He enlisted for nine years with the colours followed by three years in the Army Reserve. This meant that his full-time engagement would have expired in July 1915. He died only ten weeks before completing it.

His service may be reconstructed as follows:

Date	Place and significance
24 July 1906–20 January 1909	Home service, probably including depot training and service with a home-based battalion
21 January 1909–25 November 1913	India with the 1st Battalion, Essex Regiment
1910–11	G Company at Quetta, Baluchistan, on the North-West Frontier
From 26 November 1913	South Africa, almost certainly with the half-battalion stationed at Durban
December 1914	Returned to England
18 January 1915	Battalion moved to Banbury and joined 88th Brigade, 29th Division
21 March 1915	Sailed from Avonmouth for the eastern Mediterranean
25 April 1915	Landed at Cape Helles, Gallipoli

Date	Place and significance
6 May 1915	Wounded during the Second Battle of Krithia
10 May 1915	Died of wounds, aged 27

The India posting can be made more precise. The 1st Essex moved to Quetta in 1909, and Charles appears in the 1911 census with G Company there. Quetta was a major garrison close to the Afghan frontier, at an elevation of more than 5,000 feet. Service involved intensive training for frontier warfare as well as the ordinary routines of imperial garrison duty.

Quetta, Baluchistan

Charles's "India" service appears to have been nearly five years of frontier-garrison soldiering rather than active campaigning. He was stationed principally at Quetta—then in British Baluchistan, now Pakistan—with G Company, 1st Battalion, Essex Regiment.

His likely chronology

Date	What was happening
21 January 1909	Charles's overseas service in India began. This may be an embarkation or posting date rather than the day he reached Quetta.
1909	The 1st Essex moved from Thayetmyo in Burma to Quetta. Charles probably joined it during or shortly after this transfer.
1910	G Company was photographed at Quetta; this is the company in which Charles was subsequently recorded.
2 April 1911	The census found him at White Barracks, Quetta: aged 23, unmarried, a private in G Company.
1911–13	Continued garrison service at Quetta.
24 November 1913	The battalion left Quetta.
26 November 1913	Charles's South African service officially began.

The dates show that the greater part—and possibly all—of his Indian posting was spent in Quetta.



Soldiers of the 1st Essex at Quetta

What Quetta was like

This was not a quiet posting in central India. Quetta was a heavily fortified frontier cantonment, close to Afghanistan and guarding the approaches through the Bolan Pass. It was headquarters of the British Army's 4th Division and contained infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineers and the recently established Staff College.

The cantonment stood about 5,500 feet above sea level on a broad plain enclosed by mountains, some rising above 11,000 feet. Contemporary descriptions mention an extremely dry climate, cold winters with snow and fruit-growing districts around the town. Soldiers arriving from Essex would have found the altitude, intensely bright sunlight, dust and winter cold particularly striking. The railway journey from Karachi to Quetta climbed through the Bolan Pass and would itself have been memorable. [A contemporary account of Quetta](#) describes its military and strategic importance.

Quetta was also a commercial meeting point for western Afghanistan, Persia and Central Asia. The local population was culturally and linguistically varied, including Pashtuns, Brahuis, Hazaras, Punjabis and traders from farther afield. Urdu served as an administrative lingua franca. British soldiers nevertheless lived within a distinctly military and colonial environment, with much of their contact with local people occurring through markets, transport, domestic employment and the cantonment's supporting trades.

Charles's probable working life

No surviving source yet gives his personal day-to-day duties, but a private in G Company would ordinarily have followed a tightly controlled routine:

- Reveille, roll-call and barrack-room inspection.
- Physical drill and route marches, often carrying full equipment.
- Rifle instruction and range practice with the Short Magazine Lee–Enfield.
- Field exercises, outpost work and training for frontier warfare.
- Guard duty at barracks, magazines and other military installations.
- Cleaning weapons, maintaining kit and carrying out fatigue duties.
- Church parade—Charles was recorded as Church of England.
- Organised sport and recreation when off duty.

This training was serious even though there is no indication that Charles fought in a campaign while in India. Quetta's purpose was deterrence and military readiness: the garrison was expected to be able to mobilise quickly if the Afghan frontier became unstable. His surviving information does not suggest entitlement to an India General Service Medal, so his time there was probably classified as ordinary garrison service rather than active operations.

Sport was an important part of regimental life. The 1st Essex fielded teams in football, cricket, boxing, athletics and tug-of-war; a battalion tug-of-war team was photographed at Quetta in 1912. There is no evidence yet that Charles belonged to a particular team, but he would have attended matches and company competitions. Some of the regiment's Indian sporting photographs are reproduced by the [Essex Regiment family-history site](#).

Quetta had a Soldiers' Club, gymkhana, churches, markets and recreational grounds, although life for an ordinary private remained communal and fairly austere. Charles probably slept in a large barrack room, ate from the company cookhouse and had little privacy. His pay would have been modest, but food, clothing, accommodation and medical care were provided.

The 1911 census snapshot

The census is especially valuable because it places him precisely:

Charles James Partridge, aged 23, unmarried, Private, G Company, 1st Battalion Essex Regiment, White Barracks, Quetta.

That is much more informative than the generic term "India." It identifies his company and his actual barracks, and it links him to G Company photographs. The earlier family-history discussion about him also records this identification: [Charles James Partridge, Great War Forum](#).

A particularly promising photograph album

A professional photographer, Fred Bremner, produced an album entitled *An Historical Record of the 1st Battalion The Essex Regiment, Quetta, Baluchistan, 1911*. It is catalogued by [Sutton Libraries](#).

This may be the best surviving visual record of Charles's Indian service. Because it dates from the census year and contains battalion photographs, there is a real possibility that Charles appears in it—especially if it includes a G Company group. Fred Bremner specialised in photographing British and Indian military units; his work is described by the [National Galleries of Scotland](#).

His departure from India

There is a useful new conclusion from the company information. When the battalion left Quetta in November 1913, headquarters and A–D Companies went to Mauritius, while E–H Companies continued to South Africa. Charles belonged to G Company, and his service record begins "South Africa" on 26 November 1913. Taken together, these facts make it very likely that he went with the half-battalion bound for Durban rather than serving in Mauritius.

His Quetta years therefore mattered greatly. By November 1913 he was no longer an inexperienced Essex labourer but a 25-year-old Regular soldier with more than seven years' service, nearly five of them overseas. The weapon handling, marching discipline, field exercises and endurance developed there would later make him one of the experienced professionals on whom the battalion depended at Gallipoli.

South Africa rather than Mauritius

Your earlier understanding was that Charles went from Quetta to Mauritius. The battalion's movements explain the confusion. In November 1913 the 1st Essex left Karachi and was divided: one half went to Mauritius aboard the *Soudan*, while the other half went to Durban in South Africa. At the outbreak of war the battalion was still divided between these two stations.

Because Charles's individual service sheet explicitly begins "South Africa" on 26 November 1913, he was almost certainly among the men sent to Durban, not Mauritius. The two halves were reunited only when ordered home late in 1914. [The Long, Long Trail's battalion history](#) confirms this division between Mauritius and Durban.

His brief Gallipoli campaign

The 1st Essex became part of the 29th Division, composed largely of experienced Regular battalions recalled from imperial garrisons. It sailed from Avonmouth on 21 March, travelling by way of Egypt and Mudros.



Troops of the 1st Battalion, Essex Regiment landing at 'W' Beach, 25 April 1915. Copyright: © IWM (Q 37880)

At about 9.30 a.m. on 25 April the battalion landed at W Beach, Cape Helles, which had already been taken at terrible cost by the Lancashire Fusiliers. Charles therefore participated in the original Gallipoli landings. The Essex advanced under fire towards Hill 138, losing 18 killed and 95 wounded on that first day. He then survived the First Battle of Krithia on 28 April and further fighting on 1–2 May.

On 6 May, the opening day of the Second Battle of Krithia, the 1st Essex was ordered forward towards the high ground south-west of Krithia. The battalion advanced through scrub and broken ground towards the Ottoman positions around Fir Tree or Fig Tree Spur. Little ground was gained. Across the three-day battle it suffered five officers wounded, fifteen other ranks killed and approximately 137 wounded.

The [Gallipoli Association's account of Burnham's war dead](#) specifically records that Charles was wounded on 6 May and died four days later. This is more informative than the bare description "died of wounds": it places the injury firmly in the Second Battle of Krithia.

We do not yet know whether he was struck by a bullet, shell fragment or some other projectile. Nor have I found the medical record identifying the field ambulance that treated him. Since he survived for four days and was buried beside W Beach, he was probably carried back through a regimental aid post to one of the dressing stations at Lancashire Landing. He apparently died before he could be evacuated to a hospital ship or a base hospital in Egypt.

His grave

Charles is buried in **Lancashire Landing Cemetery, Row E, Grave 53**. The cemetery stands about 500 metres inland from W Beach. Rows A–J were created during the campaign rather than assembled after the war, so Charles's grave is almost certainly close to his original wartime burial place. [The CWGC cemetery history](#) confirms that these rows were made between the April landing and the January 1916 evacuation.

His official commemoration reads:

Son of Edward and Emily Ann Partridge, of Eres Corner, Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex.

“Eres Corner” is almost certainly a transcription error for **Eves Corner**, which is an identifiable place at Burnham-on-Crouch and agrees with the family address in his enlistment papers. He is also named on the [Burnham-on-Crouch War Memorial](#).

The more exact military description of his death would be:

Private 8674 Charles James Partridge, 1st Battalion, Essex Regiment, wounded during the Second Battle of Krithia at Cape Helles on 6 May 1915; died of wounds at Lancashire Landing on 10 May 1915, aged twenty-seven.

Medals and family memorials

Charles was entitled to the:

1914–15 Star

British War Medal

Allied Victory Medal

His next of kin should also have received the bronze Memorial Plaque and commemorative scroll issued to the families of those who died. His medal index card survives in [The National Archives under reference WO 372/15/15171](#).

The F Company photograph

I found what appears to be your own 2014 Great War Forum enquiry, signed “Mike”, concerning the photograph marked “F 4th Essex”. It contains two leads, but they need treating cautiously.

The 4th Essex was a Territorial battalion, and F Company was associated with the Southminster and Dengie district. Charles, however, remained a Regular soldier of the

1st Battalion. There is no normal administrative reason for him to have transferred to the 4th.

A brief attachment as an instructor after returning from South Africa is possible, but the opportunity was narrow: his battalion returned in December 1914 and moved away to join the 29th Division on 18 January 1915. The photograph might instead show him visiting local Territorial comrades or his older brother, or the identification may need rechecking. The [original forum discussion](#) preserves the photograph's history and the suggestions made at the time.

The other suggestion there—that a “Private Patridge” in the 3rd Battalion shooting team in 1912 might be Charles—is doubtful. Charles was serving in India at that date, whereas the 3rd Battalion was the Special Reserve at home. Unless the regimental journal misidentified either the man or his battalion, this was probably another soldier.

The strongest new conclusions are therefore that Charles served with G Company at Quetta, probably went to Durban rather than Mauritius, landed in the original assault at Cape Helles, and was wounded during the Second Battle of Krithia before dying at the beach medical base four days later.