

LOUIE CHAPLIN

1899–1.7.1918 aged 19 years

Munitions worker Chilwell Ordnance Depot



Louie was the daughter of Ernest and Margaret Chaplin and lived with her parents on Monks Lane. Together with her friend Fanny Taylor she worked at the Chilwell depot filling shells. The Chilwell Ordnance Depot was a major supplier of shells for the artillery of World War I. By 1918 it employed 10,000 people, 4000 of them women. Production reached a peak in June 1918 when 46,725 shells were produced in 24 hours. The depot exploded at 7.12pm on the 1st July 1918 killing 134 workers and wounding 250 others. The Gotham school diary records "The explosion at Chilwell National Shell Filling Works shook houses and rattled windows. Emily and Betsy Bowley escaped. Fannie Taylor and Louie Chaplin died." Kate Abdy, at home in Attenborough, records; "I raced towards the works after hearing the huge bang and saw the awful sight of debris hanging in the golden sky, so clear that the bodies of those unfortunate people seemed to be suspended for some time, spread eagled, before slowly coming earthwards." Only 32 of those killed could be identified. Though the cause of the explosion is unknown theories exist as to sabotage by people described by the owner, Lord Chetwynd, as 'rabid socialists'. One of these suspects was unexpectedly on duty at the time of the explosion and two others were found in the safest part of the factory, when they should have been attending to their duties near the seat of the explosion. The explosion was investigated by detectives from Scotland Yard, but no charges were ever brought. The remains of those killed were buried in a communal plot at Attenborough church. See also *Fanny Taylor*.