

Harry Sweetland

Driver T2/015650, 193rd Company, Army Service Corps

Henry William Sweetland was born in 1898 to James Sweetland and his wife Rosa in Rushden (District of Wellingborough) Northamptonshire. He was known as Harry. James Sweetland was originally from Street in Somerset. He married Rosa Ann Axten, an Amersham girl, in Amersham between January and March 1891.

In the 1901 Census the family was living in Mill Lane, Leicester. Harry, now 3, had two brothers: Robert Thomas aged 9, born in Chesham, and Ernest Frederick aged 1 month, born in Leicester, as well as a sister Agnes Mary aged 5, born in Croydon. James gave his occupation as a boot laster.

By the time of the 1911 Census the family had moved to Tappings Row in Plantation Road, Amersham Common. James Sweetland was a boot riveter, meaning that he fixed the leather upper to the sole of the boot. He states that he employed at least one person (other than domestic servants). Harry (13) was recorded as being at school, and he was listed in the attendance record of St Mary's school in 1906. Ernest's name did not appear in 1911 as he had died aged only a few months and Harry is apparently the only child still living at home. Agnes was training for domestic service in Newport, Isle of Wight. Robert could not be found.

In the records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, it was stated that Harry Sweetland was a native of Chesham. James Sweetland may have had some association with the boot and shoe factories in Chesham (16 were listed in the Kelly's Directory of 1896) and although he died in 1916 aged 60 in Amersham, the family may have lived for a short time in Chesham, which is where their son Robert was born in 1892. Harry's obituary in *the Bucks Examiner* of 1917 gives an address of 5 George Street. *Soldiers Died in the Great War*, however, gives Harry's place of enlistment as Watford, his birthplace as Rushden, Northants, but cites his place of residence as Sydney, New South Wales.

Harry and his brother Robert were both mentioned in the *Bucks Examiner* Roll of Honour of 11 December 1914 as having enlisted. Robert became Gunner 35333 in the Royal Garrison Artillery and served in the Balkans. He entered the theatre of war on 3 April 1915, which entitled him to be awarded the 1914-1915 Star. The Medal was approved in 1918 for issue to officers and men who served in any theatre of the war between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915.

Harry W Sweetland served as a driver in the Army Service Corps. He enlisted in Watford in 1914 as a volunteer. He was assigned to the 193rd Company of the ASC, which was formed in November 1914. It formed part of the 23rd Division fighting on the Western Front. The ASC were the unsung heroes of the British Army in World War 1. They moved huge quantities of food, fuel, equipment and ammunition and used any form of transport available: railways, waterways, motor and horse-drawn vehicles. Harry Sweetland was a driver, which meant that he drove horses pulling wagons. He was responsible for looking after two horses and their harness and ensuring that the animals were fed and rested when possible. The wagons would be the General Service wagons – sturdy vehicles designed for heavy work in all conditions. They often had to take equipment right up to the front line.

The 23rd Division was established in September 1914 as part of Kitchener's Third New Army, K3. Between 21 and 26 August 1915 the Division landed at Boulogne. Harry Sweetland's Medal Index Card shows that he entered the theatre of War in France on 26 August 1915, which meant he was eligible for the award of The 1914-15 Star. Harry Sweetland served on the Western Front for two years and must have seen a great deal of action in that time. In 1915 the Division was involved in the fighting around Bois Grenier.

In 1916 the 23rd Division took part in many engagements, notably:- the German Attack on **Vimy Ridge**, the Battle of **Albert**, the Battle of **Bezantin Ridge**, the Battle of **Pozières**, the Battle of **Fleurs-Courcelette**, the Battle of **Morval**, which were all phases of the Battle of the **Somme**.

In 1917, the battles in which the 23rd Division fought were the Battle of **Messines** and others in the Ypres Salient. It was in Flanders that Harry Sweetland was killed in action on 2 July 1917, aged 19.

The Medal Index Card for Harry Sweetland shows his rank and number, his date of death and his medals – The Allied Victory Medal, The British War Medal, 1914-18 and The 1914-15 Star.

Name.		Corps.	Rank	Regtl. No.
SWEETLAND.		A. S. C	Driver	T2/015650.
Harry				
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks	
VICTORY	RASC 101. 2/11	1118	K. in a. 2.7.17.	
BRITISH	do	do		
15. STAR	TASC 781.	36.		
Theatre of War first served in		10 France.		
Date of entry therein		26.8.15.		

The Bucks Examiner of 20 July 1917 published the following report, giving the wrong date of death, under the headline: "Death of Driver Harry Sweetland"

"We are sorry to hear of the death of driver Harry Sweetland (5 George Street) Army Service Corps aged 19 years. He was killed on July 4th in France. Deceased joined up in October 1914 and was sent to France in September 1915. It is interesting to notice that Mrs Sweetland has received a 'picture' postcard depicting the deceased's grave, the wording upon one side being 'Driver Sweetland's Grave exactly as shown on the other side. Deeply mourned by his comrades, who send you their sympathy. J McIntyre, Lc-corpl ASC: 70th Brigade Transport 6/7/17'.

The sketch or picture shows a carefully tended grave. A staff officer, writing to Mrs Sweetland, expresses sympathy and remarks that the deceased was very popular with his comrades and did his work well. At the beginning of June he used nightly to go into some of the very heavily shelled areas with his wagon (he was attached to Brigade Headquarters), and in these trying times did his work unflinchingly."

Driver Harry Sweetland was buried in the Dickebusch New Military Cemetery Extension, near Ieper (Ypres), West-Vlaanderen.

Harry's sister Agnes married Harold Ernest Weston in 1917 and emigrated to Australia. His mother Rosa also went to Australia and her last known address was "Wyralla", Oxford Street, Belmore, New South Wales, Australia.

Driver Harry Sweetland is remembered with Honour
Dickebusch New Military Cemetery Extension, Ieper, Belgium
grave reference II.A.4



Dickebusch New Military Cemetery Extension
Courtesy: World War One Cemeteries (www.ww1cemeteries.com)

The Dickebusch New Military Cemetery Extension was used from May 1917 to January 1918 and contains the graves of 547 Commonwealth servicemen.



Photograph Courtesy: Roger Cook

Harry Sweetland is also remembered on a plaque on the Chesham Bois Scout Hut.