

Harold John Robert White

Rifleman 50159, 12th Battalion

King's Royal Rifles, London Regiment (The Rangers)

Harold John Robert White was born on 1 September 1899 and baptised on 27 September in Haddenham, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, the son of Robert and Ellen Louisa (née Bryant) White. Robert was originally from Wombwell, Yorkshire, from a coal-mining family but obviously chose not to follow the family tradition as the 1901 Census shows he had moved from the area and lists him as an agricultural labourer, living with Ellen at Saunders Yard, Haddenham. Ellen was born in Haddenham but has no occupation listed. The couple had eleven children, but only eight were living at the time of the 1911 Census. One was born after this date. Those children living in 1911 were: Violet Maude born 1896, Sidney George born 1897,¹ Harold John Robert born 1899, Percival Nelson born 1900, Leonard born 1902, Gertrude Minnie born 1904, Arthur born 1905 and Elsie May born 1908. Betty was born later in 1913. In 1911 the family was residing at The Ferns, Haddenham, Aylesbury, and Harold, 11 years old, was attending school.

Robert moved the family to Amersham between 1912 and 1913, where they resided at 2 Croydon Villa, Pineapple Road, Amersham Common, an address at which the family lived for many years. It is not known what Harold did until his enlistment in the army, but it is recorded that he enlisted in Aylesbury, probably at the recruitment centre in Temple Square. He was posted, having been given service number 10842, to the 8th Brigade, 35th Battalion Training Reserve which was based in Wool, Dorset (having formerly been the 7th Reserve Battalion, the Dorset Regiment). Following his period of training, Harold was transferred to the 12th Battalion, London Regiment (The Rangers), who were affiliated to the King's Royal Rifle Corps.

At the time of Harold's death the Battalion were part of the 175th Brigade in the 58th Division, and between periods of relief in billets, were serving in the front line trenches at Senlis, a village located between Amiens and Albert in the Somme area of France. In late July 1918 the battalion was in billets until the 30th when they took up position in the reserve trenches and on the following day moved back to the front line. During the next few days no action was seen. However on 2 August it was reported that "a big explosion was heard in the quarry in enemy lines" to the right of their position. Patrols were sent out to investigate and returned, without incident, to report that they found that both the enemy front line and supply trenches were unoccupied. The following day, 3 August, the Battalion was relieved and marched to Baizieux, from where they were conveyed to Vignacourt and went into billets, where they remained until 7 August 1918.

Reports in the *Buckinghamshire Examiner* of 23 August 1918 stated Harold was wounded on 3 August 1918, in the thigh, both arms and abdomen. He died of his wounds on 5 August 1918. All casualties in the area would have been taken to Casualty Clearing Station No.4 in Pernois, which was situated west of Albert, (north of Amiens). Those who sadly died at this Clearing Station would have been buried in the Pernois British Cemetery, where Harold was laid to rest. From the *War Diary* it is not possible to establish when or how Harold was wounded as, during this period and prior to the date of his reported injuries, the diaries do not record any direct encounters with the enemy.

Although the records indicate that, at the time of Harold's death, he was serving with the 12th Battalion (The Rangers), it is possible that this was incorrect, and that he was with the 12th Battalion

¹ Sidney George also served in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, 1/1st Battalion. As a Private, number 3567 [later to be number 266290], he was reported wounded in the Daily Casualty List on 15 Sept 1916 and mentioned in the *Bucks Examiner* of 22 Sept. He became a Lance-Corporal and was awarded the Victory and British Medals. In the *Absent Voters List* of 1918 his address is given as Croydon Villas, Pineapple Road. In 1924 he married Gertrude Mabel Williams and died on 26 January 1954 at Harefield Hospital while resident at St Elmo, 6 North View, Eastcote, Pinner, Middlesex.

King's Royal Rifle Corps, (KRRC - to which they were affiliated) and who at the same time were serving in the trenches northwest of Albert, in the Avion/Mericourt section of the line, south of Lens. Here soldiers wounded in battle were taken to Casualty Clearing Station No.41 located at Auchy les Mines, but in April 1918 this station was relocated to Pernois alongside Casualty Clearing Station No.4. *The War Diary* of the KRRC for late July 1918 reports no troop movements or casualties, but on the night of the 30th/31st it states that raiding parties were sent out "for the purpose of obtaining information and identification and destroying a tunnel under the embankment in the enemy line." The *Diary* further records that after initial problems of getting through the enemy barbed-wire defences, they moved forward and met with a German patrol where a fire-fight took place (resulting in casualties on both sides), after which they returned to their own lines. No exact details are recorded of the casualties (which is not unusual within some war diaries) and possibly Harold could have been wounded here and later taken to the Casualty Clearing Station at Pernois.

For the period 1 to 5 August the Battalion in the trenches was subjected to enemy fire from trench mortar gas shells resulting in 30 casualties, but there were no further troop actions.

No record has been found of where and when he was wounded, but it is recorded that Harold John Robert Whike died from his wounds on 5 August 1918, aged 18 years.

He was awarded The Allied Victory Medal and The British War Medal, 1914-18.



Pernois British Cemetery, Picture courtesy of Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Harold John Robert Whike is remembered with Honour and buried in Pernois British Cemetery, Halloy-les-Pernois, Somme, Grave reference III.C.9.

He is also remembered on Haddenham War Memorial.

Sources

The National Archives, Kew: War Office Records.
WO 95/3009 and WO 95/2120 - *War Diaries*.
WO 372 - British Army WW1 Medal Rolls Index Cards 1914 –1920.
The Long, Long Trail (www.1914-1918.net).
Buckinghamshire Examiner Archive Records.
Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, Aylesbury