



Harry Stanley Rouse

5772422 Rifleman, 8th Battalion Rifle Brigade (The Prince Consort's Own)

Harry was killed in action on 30th July 1915 in Flanders, aged 23

He is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) memorial, Flanders, Belgium

Harry Stanley Rouse was the oldest son of Harry Lewin Rouse and Ada nee Valiant. Although Harry Jnr was born in Croydon in 1892, his parents had actually married two years earlier in Depwade. Harry Snr originally hailed from Ipswich, but Ada was a local girl having been born in Brockdish. It is possible that Harry Snr had met his wife to be when she was working away from home, as a domestic servant; many, many East Anglian girls were recruited to the under stairs army of servants in London. It is also possible that Ada was a far flung relative but this is a tangled family!

When Harry Snr appeared in the 1891 census at the Naval Barracks, Sheerness, Kent as part of the complement of HMS Wildfire (which was actually a sort of stores / naval supply depot), he was described as a married 'Ships corporal'. Having never heard of a 'Ships Corporal', I vaguely assumed the rank to be some sort of position in the marines but it transpired that a Ship's Corporal was a Petty Officer whose job it was to assist the Master at Arms with maintaining discipline and expertise with small arms – a cut above the normal able bodied seaman.

Harry Snr was born to a military family; when he was 2, his father, William, was the Sergeant Major at the Suffolk Military Barracks in Ipswich. Two of his oldest siblings and his mother, had been born in Gibraltar, I think we can assume Sgt Major Rouse had been posted there for a few years. Ten years later, William Rouse was still described as a Sgt. Major, was still at the Barracks but was now a Chelsea Pensioner and was part of the Militia (Local Volunteer Reservists). I wonder what inspired Henry Snr to enlist in the Navy not the Army!

I could not find Harry Jnr's mother in the 1891 census, however the reason that Harry Jnr was born in Croydon, a bit of a trek from Kent, is hinted at in the next census. Living with the Rouses at the Dove Inn, Wortwell in 1901, was young Dorothy Mira Lewin who appeared as a one-year old baby in 1891, with her parents Alfred and Florence Lewin and baby sister Madeline in Croydon. Not only do Harry Snr and his son Maurice bear 'Lewin' as a middle name, but Dorothy is actually described as Harry Snr's niece. Okay – so far so simple if a little unresolved but things then get more complicated. Dorothy's mother, Florence Lewin nee Valiant was actually Ada's older sister but, since Harry Rouse Snr would have been given the middle name of Lewin some years before the marriage of Lewin to Valiant, there is likely to be a much earlier connection too – possibly remote as Alfred Lewin came from Cambridgeshire!

Florence and Ada were the youngest two of at least eleven children, even more interestingly, in 1881, Florence was a waiter at the Dove Inn where her father, Samuel Valiant, was the landlord, being a semi-retired watch and clock maker who had previously been the landlord of the King's Head in Brockdish, home village for the girls. Valiant died at the grand old age of 83 in 1897, Maurice Lewin Rouse was born in Wortwell in 1897, was this the perfect opportunity for Harry

Rouse Snr to take over a going concern or had the couple moved back to Norfolk a year or two previously to help the old fella run the pub? Could be either as Harry Jnr was baptised in Depwade only a few months after his birth in 1892. During the last few years of Valiant's tenancy the pub had got a little rowdy, not helped by the village boasting the battling Skinner family at this time. Essentially, they loved to drink, loved to fight and when they had run out of other people to fight would wind up fighting their own relatives.

However, I suspect Naval Veteran and former Petty Officer Harry Lewin Rouse was a much tougher prospect and tales of havoc at the Bell tailed away during his tenancy.

Back to the family, things then go on to become rather tangled, I had assumed that the reason Dorothy Lewin appeared with her aunt and uncle at the Dove, both in 1901 and ten years later in 1911, was due to her mother having died. Far from it, in 1901, her mother, Florence, still married, not widowed, was working as a live in Barmaid at the Magpie in the middle of town! Florence's other daughter, Madeline Valiant Lewin was living on Church Street with one of Florence's brothers, Samuel Valiant jnr, the Landlord of the Hope Inn who held the licence until 1925. In 1911, both Madeline and Dorothy were still living at their respective pubs, with their respective uncles!

Harry Snr's wife, Ada Rouse died in 1909, only aged 43, but Henry Snr carried on caring for his niece, Dorothy remained at the Dove appearing there in 1911 along with another niece from the Valiant family – keeping things respectable!

Dorothy married Thomas Girling in Depwade in 1912 whilst 10 years later her sister Madeline nipped across the border to marry a Suffolk man. The younger son, Maurice Lewin Rouse, married in Edmonton in 1919 and seems to have settled there, dying in Lambeth in 1967.

So, what had gone wrong? Back in 1891, Florence's husband was a respectable clerk, by 1901 he was tramping in Hitchin, Herts and claiming to be a Harness Maker. Booze, theft, nervous breakdown – who knows but whatever had happened Florence had fled London to return to Norfolk and the assistance of her family to raise her two daughters.

It seems that Alfred Lewin's altered circumstances caught up with him, either that or Florence unilaterally decided she was effectively now a widow as in 1904 Florence married James Barber, a butcher and the Landlord of the Angel Inn – well I guess she was a very experienced pub worker by then. A bit surprising that she did not take her children with her into her new household but with several adult children, an elderly sister in law and a couple of her husband's employees already in place, she may have thought it better to let them carry on in their settled lives in their Harleston pub homes!

So, a bit of a digression but this does show that Harry Stanley Rouse had deep and complex local roots, even if his father was not local at all!

Back to 1911, Harry Rouse Snr was supplementing his pub earnings with his Naval Pension and the occasional auction on his adjoining paddock whilst his first-born child was boarding up in Coltishall having got a nice steady job on the Great Eastern Railway, working as a clerk. Harry Rouse Snr continued to lead a quiet blameless sort of life although he was fined a total of 5s for riding a bike without lights in 1902!

He left the Wortwell Dove in 1915, having re-married, and moved out to River View, Bridge Road, Oulton Broad. Although he married in Chelsea, he married to yet another local Valiant, Alice Clara; the arrival of their daughter, Iris, in the first half of 1915 may well have had a lot to do with all the upheaval! Alice Clara was the 'niece' living at the Dove Inn with Harry Snr in 1911. Niece is possibly stretching the relationship a little as Alice was actually the cousin of Harry's first wife Ada. She too came from a 'pub' family, her father William combined bricklaying with running the

Red Lion at Thorpe Abbots between 1874 and his death in 1915, the pub remained in the family until 1947, almost three-quarters of a century!

Perhaps there was some local disapproval of the marriage between Harry and his niece, 22 years his junior, especially so close to the death of Alice's father, hence the marriage in London and the relocation out towards the coast?

Harry Jnr was only 23 when he died and his father's background was a footloose military one, an Army brat himself, Harry Snr had joined the Navy before marrying a local lass Ada Valiant, the mother of Harry Jnr and daughter of the Landlord of the Dove. This marriage not only afforded Harry Snr a second career, as the Landlord of the Dove Wortwell but enmeshed himself and his family firmly in a network of local pubs! One sister in law worked at the Magpie and then went on to become landlady at the Angel, Fressingfield, a niece (and the sister of the niece he had given a home too) worked with another uncle at the Hope and he went on to marry a sort of cousin of his first wife whose family held the Red Lion at Thorpe Abbots.

At a time before telephones, when nearly every working man used the local pub as his office, his social centre and his home from home, when news travelled from village to village with each man who popped in for a pint and a gossip on his way home the death of Harry Stanley Rouse, even if he had left the town to follow a career on the Railways, would have spread through the pubs on the Suffolk / Norfolk borders at high speed. His sister, Vera, would also have been very well known in the town, having worked at the Redenhall School and would doubtless have shared an outpouring of sympathy, it is not surprising Harry is commemorated on the Harleston and Wortwell Memorial as well as the Wortwell memorial even if his sole surviving parent and his brother were no longer in the area.



Magpie, 1914, where Henry Jnr's Aunt worked as a Barmaid

The Hope where Harry Jnr's Uncle employed Harry's cousin.



Bell Inn in 1915, run by Harry Jnr's Grandparents, then parents, home to Harry, his siblings, one of his cousins and another cousin who was to become his stepmother.



Red Lion at Thorpe Abbots, childhood home of Harry Jnr's step mother



The combined Butchers and Angel Pub, later to be the home of Harry Jnr's re-married Aunt.



The Old King's Head - The Street, Brockdish

King's Head where Harry Jnr's mother, aunts and uncles grew up, with Harry's Jnr's Grandfather.