



## Harry John Drake

269431 Lieutenant, 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Wiltshire Regiment

He died on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1944 in France, aged 21

Harry is buried at Saint Desir War Cemetery, Calvados, France

The other men lying peacefully around Harry in the St Desir Cemetery in France bear either religious or sentimental texts on their headstones, Harry's reads "Chosen to be a Soldier, Thank God, Who Giveth us the Victory", reflecting his father's pride in the both his own and his family's martial record. Harry Drake was part of the Allied offensive in north-western Europe which began with the Normandy landings of 6 June 1944; he lies amongst those who died in the final stages of the campaign and four First World War burials.

News has just been received by Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Drake, Church Street, Harleston, that their eldest son, Lieut. Harry John Drake, has been killed in action in France. Lieut. Drake, who was 21, had previously been wounded and had only recently returned to duty. Prior to the war he had taken an outstanding interest in local sport. After leaving Redenhall Boys' School during the headmastership of his uncle, Mr. F. W. Drake, he went to Bungay Grammar School where he won his colours for cricket, football and hockey. On leaving school he studied for police work and as a cadet clerk was stationed at the Harleston Police Station until joining the Army in August, 1942. He was exceedingly popular in the town and district and news of his death has evoked much sympathy for his parents and relatives.

Like Dennis Howard who died in June 1942, Harry John Drake was the popular son of a local tradesman and, aged only 21, had already enjoyed a full life, fully engaged in many of the educational sporting and social activities that had become available to those from all walks of life in the interwar period. He went by his middle name, John, not too surprising bearing in mind that he grew up living next door to his grandpa, also known as Harry, with whom his father worked. In such a potentially confusing situation, it was common for the middle name to be used.

*Diss Express*  
25 Sep 1942

John was the son of Wilfred Harry and Dorothy Drake of Harleston. The Drake family appear, on the surface, to be a family who drifted into town from Norwich sometime in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, however skipping back 2 generations and we find Elizabeth Warn, the only daughter of a successful boot and shoemaker John Warn. Warn, whilst he himself came from Wacton, had married a local lass, Esther, and living in the middle of town, appear to have had only the one child; in 1851, 17 years old Elizabeth would have been a very marriageable prospect for a young lad on the make. Her father, previously described as a cordwainer (or maker of fine shoes), was then employing 3 men in his boot and shoemaking business.

Meanwhile up in Norwich, in 1841, David Drake, an accountant was raising a decent sized family of 6 children at the Heythorpe Buildings, Heigham. Since the oldest two children were an apprentice to a Woollen Draper and a Tailor's apprentice, I think we can assume that David was part of the cloth trade that had been such a major feature of Norwich commerce for centuries. However, the comfortable lifestyle being enjoyed by the family was about to be impacted, by the death of David in 1842.

9 years later, in 1851, oldest son George was a draper's shop man in Lincolnshire whilst David Jnr, born in Gibraltar (indicating his father had spent some time at least in the Army), was a married tailor, living in Norwich. Daughter Margaret had married Benjamin Barker, woollen draper, in late 1844 when only 18, the younger two boys, Alfred and Charles, bootmaker and warehouseman respectively, were lodging together and young Teresa, who I could not find, may well be doing something similar or working as a domestic servant. With her family scattered both within the bounds of the city and beyond, widowed Mary Drake was living with the Frowse family, it is quite possible that Mrs Frowse was Mary's sister. The women of the family were all involved in trades allied to the cloth trade whilst Mr Frowse was a Parish Clerk, most respectable.

1856. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of *St Benedict* in the County of *the City of Norwich*

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
151	14 <sup>th</sup> July 1856	Charles Drake	25	Bachelor	Warehouseman	St Benedict	David Drake	deceased
		Elizabeth Warren	22	Spinster		St Benedict	John Warren	Shoemaker

Married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Established Church of the Roman* by me, *John Carter Drake*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *Charles Drake* and *Elizabeth Warren* in the Presence of us, *George Drake* and *Sophia Drake*

The question that now arises is how did Charles Drake, Norwich orphan, get to meet and woo the eminently eligible Elizabeth, daughter of a well to do Harleston shoe and boot maker? Taking a bit of a guess, I think we can assume that Charles had picked up a bit of polish in his earlier, more comfortable years and combined with his big city manners this may have helped the young man in his bid to woo Elizabeth from the country town of Harleston. However, at the time of their marriage, in 1856, he was just a warehouseman – how they met may just remain a mystery, but I suspect he may have been working in a leather warehouse and doing a bit of sales and deliveries on the side!

However, and this is where things now get complicated, Charles's brother, shoemaker Alfred Augustus Drake, only 2 years older than Charles, had married Sophie Libbis in late 1851, she witnessed Charles and Elizabeth's marriage. Sophie Libbis' mother, also Sophie but nee Copeman, had been born in Redenhall, and that is the only link I can see! Now a bit of a stretch here but, contrary to normal practice, Sophie and Charles married in the groom's parish not the brides, and whilst Charles had a family member bear witness, Elizabeth did not – an elopement perhaps!

between us, I

1851. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of *St Benedict* in the County of *the City of Norwich*

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
300	24 <sup>th</sup> November 1851	Alfred Augustus Drake	23	Bachelor	Shoemaker	Box Street	David Drake	Sec <sup>d</sup>
		Sophie Libbis	Minor	Spinster		Box Street	Harwood Copeman	Sec <sup>d</sup>

Married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Established Church of the Roman* by me, *Thomas Samuel Pugh*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *Alfred Augustus Drake* and *Sophie Libbis* in the Presence of us, *David Carter Drake* and *Sarah Rebecca Drake*

Even if Elizabeth had eloped with young Charles Drake, this only child must have reconciled with her family as in 1861, when her husband was no longer a warehouseman but was described as a commercial traveller, Elizabeth was back home in Harleston. She was living with her three children, in Pedgriff's Yard (now known as Yallop's Yard) near to her parent's house. During this census husband Charles was in Ipswich, a traveller in leather lodging in a private house with two other commercial travellers. The pair had started married life off in Norwich, birth town of their older

children, Esther (aged 3 and named for Elizabeth's mother) and Theresa (aged 2 and named for Charles' younger sister) whilst the youngest child, David (named for Charles' father) and only 9 months old had been born in Ipswich.

Roll on to 1871 and the Drake family are back in Norwich, with Benjamin J, Frederick W and Harry E added to the family. They had not stayed in Harleston long as 9 years old Benjamin and his younger siblings all claimed birth in Norwich. However, Esther, now 13, was living with her grandparents, the Warns, back in Harleston and training as a dressmaker; sadly, Theresa, who would have then been 12 had died aged only 5 in Norwich. Two more children, Benjamin John and David Charles both died in Norwich only a few months after they appeared in the 1871 census. 1871 was not a good year – this return lists Charles as a labourer, somewhat of a step down from being a travelling salesman or even being a warehouse man.

All very normal, sadly childhood death was very common at the time, and all perfectly respectable, but a background quite different from most of our Harleston Heroes, urban rather than rural. By 1881, a twist appears. Elizabeth Drake and her two younger boys were living back in Harleston, in the home of widowed mother Esther Warne, a shoe shop keeper. Frederick Drake was a bottler at Everson's', the pop manufacturer behind Chameleon House, whilst his little brother Harry was still at school. Elizabeth was described as married, no sign of Charles but of course he may have been travelling as he had been 20 years earlier.

And this is when the whole story changes – 51 years old Charles, a Boot and Shoe Manufacturer, was in London on 106 Euston road. Well why not, the surprise is that sharing his home is a new 'wife', Charlotte, much the same age as Charles himself so it is not as if he had traded in Elizabeth for a younger model. This 'marriage' be it bigamous or non-existent, lasted as the couple reappeared together in both the 1891 and 1901 censuses; whether Charles maintained any contact with his abandoned family we do not know but it would seem unlikely. Whilst sentences for bigamy were light, the shame was immense, and Charles was by then a respectable businessman in late middle age.

Elizabeth herself had disappeared by the 1891 census, she may have died up in Norwich in 1897 as a lady of the right name and age did die then.

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1889. Marriage solemnized at the *Parish Church* in the *Parish* of *Needham* in the County of *Norfolk*

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
111	<i>October 18<sup>th</sup> 1889</i>	<i>Harry Edwin Drake</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Tailor</i>	<i>Redenhall</i>	<i>Charles Drake</i>	<i>Warehouseman</i>
		<i>Mary Eglinton</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Spinster</i>	<i>—</i>	<i>Needham</i>	<i>William Eglinton</i>	<i>Tailor</i>

Married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Church of England* aff'd. *Harry* by me, *W. T. Piller*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *Harry Edwin Drake* and *Mary Eglinton* in the Presence of us, *Frederick William Drake* and *Ellen Eglinton* (wrote of Redenhall)

However, her boys Frederick and Harry stayed on in Harleston, the two lads, abandoned by their father, bereaved of their mother and of several siblings, stuck closely together. When Harry Edwin married Mary Eglinton of Needham in 1889, his brother, Frederick William, was one of the witnesses. As was common at the time, Harry, a tailor, had married the daughter of a man, William Eglinton, who followed the same trade he did. A note of interest is that Harry describes his father as a warehouseman, indicating he had not heard from his father for many years. In 1891, Harry and Mary had set up home in Ellis' Yard with a one-year old daughter Rosa Esther. This yard is roughly

where Malthouse Court now stands and was named for the Market Gardener and Seedsman who worked from there for many years.

One house away from the corner of the Yard and the London Road, big brother Frederick, the pop bottler, was also enjoying married bliss with his wife Ellen Eliza nee White from Pulham; married the year before Harry and Mary, they were sharing their home with two lodgers!

Both Harry and Frederick were active, and more than competent members of the local militia. In Frederick's case this would have done his career no harm; his employer, John Everson of the pop factory was a very active major in the corps. In 1891 sergeants H. Drake and F. Drake won silver medals for their fencing prowess with Harry getting an additional medal for the assault at arms which included fencing, bayonet and sword work. On his return from the Boer War, Harry became a Sgt Instructor – a responsible role.

Come 1901 and tailor Harry and his wife had added two sons, Frederick W and Wilfred H to their family. Still living on the London Road, they had actually moved a few hundred yards further from the town centre and towards Wilderness Lane. Older brother Frederick had spread his wings and left his rather dead-end job as a pop bottler in Harleston and taken himself and his wife off to Bury St Edwards where he was running a coffee shop and restaurant at 92 St John's Street. They were obviously successful as by 1911, the still childless couple had moved to 38 St Andrews St / 1 Risbygate Street, a 10-room establishment.



There was quite a strong temperance movement throughout the country in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Harleston had its own Coffee Tavern which, in spite of its proprietors best efforts, never really took off. However, by 1912 Drake had linked his efforts with the newly fashionable sport of Cycling, the Bury St Edmunds Auto Cycle Union also benefitted from being part of the Risbygate Temperance and Commercial Hotel! Like his brother and his nephews, Drake became strongly linked with bowls, founding a club affiliated to the Hotel's green.

*Drake's Temperance Hotel and Coffee Shop.  
Bury St Edmunds*

Meanwhile, Harry remained in Harleston and was doing a fine job of raising his three children and building up his tailoring trade. In 1911 oldest daughter, Rosa, was an elementary school teacher and lodging with two other teachers, including the Headmistress, in Melton Constable – possibly the best job that any girl of Rosa's background might reasonably aspire to. Education seems to have been at the core of the family's priorities: Harry's older son, Frederick Jnr, was also an elementary school teacher whilst younger brother Wilfred was following in his father's footsteps and learning to be a tailor.

Over the next 50 years this family, with only tenuous links to Harleston really embedded themselves into the life of the town. Harry Edwin was sufficient of a figure in the area for his death in September 1945 to be marked in the local press when it becomes apparent quite how involved Harry was in the life of his adopted town, he was a Freemason, had been heavily involved in the equivalent of the Territorial Army, served in the Boer War and been a Special Constable. The obituary does indeed confirm that his grandfather had, as suspected, been in the Army. He was an excellent marksman and was part of the rifle club, he was involved in the local Friendly Society, particularly in their role in the annual Fundraising Hospital Sunday. His lads were actively involved in Cricket and football, a great interest of his own and like his son was an avid bowl player. A man of impressive physique

he also supported the local reading room – and was basically an all-round good egg – shame his father was not around to take pride in the achievements of his descendants

Frederick William seems to have been the more out-going of Harry's two sons, featuring in press reports of the 20's and 30's participating in Vegetable Shows, Bowls tournaments, pigeon racing – although in 1935 a third place did not get him the cup that was awarded to the winner by his own father! Good thing too or cries of nepotism may have been heard. He was also a keen and competent fisherman, with details of his catches appearing in the local paper. In 1922 he chaired the meeting of the South Norfolk Football league – Harleston had a very effective team at the time. His position as a teacher, culminating in him being the Headmaster of the local boys school, would have placed him firmly in the public eye even without any of his other activities. Also actively involved in local politics, Councillor Drake lived for many years in one of the Council Houses along the bottom edge of the Common, his was on the corner of the footpath leading down to Wilderness Lane. Listed with him in the 1939 register are his wife, and Florence, Evelyn and Muriel – two further names have been redacted. Slightly less cheerily, the recently retired Frederick was quite seriously hurt when a passenger in a double decker bus that overturned near the Wortwell Bell in 1936.

Wilfred Harry had a much lower profile but still pitched up at bowling events, Free Mason's Meetings and was a keen poultry keeper with prize winning eggs to show for his efforts! He appeared living slap bang in the middle of town in 1939, I think in the building which is now the cafe in Church street. Alternately may have been the building a little further on near Union Street. Next door to him and his family of wife and three children were his mother and father, Harry and Mary; no wonder Harry Jnr often went by his middle name of John!



*Probable location of the Drake's tailoring business.*

#### DEATH OF MR. H. E. DRAKE

The funeral took place at Redenhall Church, on Monday, of Mr. Harry Edwin Drake, aged 77, of Broad Street, Harleston, who died on the previous Friday after an illness extending over two years. He was one of the town's best-known business men, and had had an interesting and varied career. A native of Norwich, Mr. Drake came to Harleston as a young lad and subsequently built up a prosperous tailor's business from which he retired in 1930. He was the third eldest member of Lodge "Faithful" Freemasons, Harleston, having been initiated in 1900. In his early days Mr. Drake was perhaps more widely known in connection with his long period of service with the old Norfolk Auxiliary Volunteers and the 4th Battalion Norfolk Regiment, in which latter he saw service in the Boer War, and was awarded the long service and good conduct medal following his total volunteer service of just over 24 years. During the 1914-18 war, Mr. Drake acted as Deputy Chief of the Special Constables, and also as Drill Instructor of the Volunteer Training Corps for the Harleston and Weybread Company.

A man of excellent physique, his outstanding service as instructor and otherwise was invaluable. He was proud of the fact that members of three generations of his family had served their country in three wars. His eldest grandson, Lieut. H. J. Drake, made the supreme sacrifice in France in 1944. For many years he took a keen interest in local Friendly Society work, and served as chairman for some time of the old Rational Association, and was a prominent and active member of the Harleston Friendly Societies Hospital Sunday Committee. An excellent marksman, he was an enthusiastic member of Harleston and District Rifle Club. His enthusiasm for cricket and football in the district was augmented by the fact that both his sons were prominent playing members of the Harleston Town Cricket and Football Clubs, and he seldom missed a home match. He was a gardener of considerable repute, and this, coupled with bowls, formed his main hobbies after his retirement from business. He was deeply interested in the affairs of the Harleston Reading Room, and had served on the managing committee.

Harry's sons, Frederick and Wilfred, both married local lasses. In the middle of WW1. 1916, to be precise, Frederick William married Florence M Mullinger, the daughter of a fairly well to do farmer in Fressingfield although at the time she was a drapers assistant. 5 years later,

in 1921 Wilfred Harry married Florence's little sister Dorothy Mullenger.

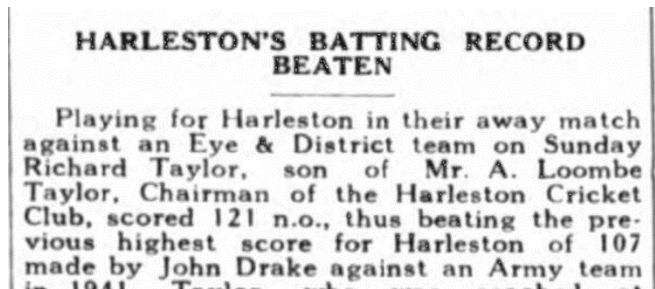
This does tend to complicate working out which Drake / Mullinger couple had which children, but between them at least 8 children were popped out between 1917 and 1933.

The 1939 register shows that Harry J (1922) also known as John, and Frederick A (1931) were both Wilfred Harry's sons, there was a third sibling between them in age which a later obituary showed to have been William M (1925) or Bill.

The 1939 register also proves that Florence (1917), Evelyn (1920) and Muriel (1922), baptised in Florence snr's home ward of Plomesgate, were definitely all Frederick's, and the other 2, younger siblings we can deduce to be May C (1926) and Freda P (1929).

In brief Wilfred had 3 boys, Frederick had 5 girls.

Harry's keen interest in sport was shared by Harry's grandchildren in the 1935 Harleston Sports Day May Drake won the under 9's flat race and came second in the high jump whilst her sister Muriel won the under 12's flat race, came third in the high jump and 4<sup>th</sup> in the long jump. The Jubilee sports in the same year also featured numerous Drakes winning places on the podium. In 1936, Muriel was winning prizes left right and centre at the Harleston Swimming club regatta. These took place in the River Waveney – very bracing! In 1938 John (Harry J) Drake was one of a number of juvenile boxers participating in an evening's bill of local boxers at the Corn Hall – he drew his match.



As a lad of 19, John attained a record breaking score of 107 runs against an Army team in 1941, not to be surpassed until 1949, and even then it took a public school lad to do so!

*Diss Express*  
1 Jul 1949

It seems these Harleston v. Army matches were a regular feature of the Cricket calendar at the time – keeping bored s out of mischief I suspect, the local paper reporting on ones such match details how John scored 73 runs and then went on to take 5 wickets for one run; would a county career have awaited John if he had returned from war?

*Diss Express*  
15 Aug 1941

On the eve of war, a touring team came from the West Indies and played exhibition cricket across the country including a match at Lavenham, such was John's prowess and renown as a young cricketer, he was included in the team. Follow this link for some footage of the Lavenham event

<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-west-indies-cricketers-in-norwich-1939-1939-online> and this link [http://test-cricket-tours.co.uk/page\\_1662010.html](http://test-cricket-tours.co.uk/page_1662010.html) for some general information about the tour.

**Harleston Cricket**  
**ANOTHER BIG PARTNERSHIP**

Another big partnership was provided on the Recreation Ground on Saturday when against a Service team, J. Drake (73) and A. Johnson (69), scored 142 runs out of Harleston total of 228 runs, the second highest of the season. Harleston won easily by 204 runs. Drake's innings included 3 sixes, and 7 fours. The service side employed seven bowlers but apart from Howe (3 for 28), and Hellier (3 for 50) the attack lacked sting, while fielding lapses proved costly. During their short innings of 24 runs, the Army side showed evidence of insufficient match practice, only Sawyer reaching double figures. J. Drake took 5 wickets for 1 run, B. Stimpson 3 for 6, H. Aldous 2 for 6 and L. Bond 1 for 11. Details:—

Harleston	
J. Edwards b Hill	5
W. Drake run out	5
L. Bond c Bayley b Hellier	21
J. Drake c Turner b Bayley	73
A. Johnson b Hellier	69
R. Staff c Bayley b Hewson	17
B. Stimpson b Hellier	7
Lieut Anderson b Howe	1
L. Hubbard b Howe	0
H. Aldous b Howe	18
W. Stoker not out	5
Extras	7

Not just about the physical side of enjoying life, also in 1935 Evelyn and Mary Drake participated in fund raising amateur dramatics whilst William and J Drake (almost certainly Harry John) did the same in the Sea Scouts.

Our hero, Harry John Drake was very much a typical product of his grandfather, balancing academic attainment with sporting prowess; he had attended the local boys school (headmaster, his own uncle Frederick) and then moved onto the Bungay Grammar School where he had represented them on the hockey, cricket and football field. Deciding to serve his community professionally as opposed to the voluntary work of his father and grandfather, he had joined the police force based in Harleston

### CRICKET CLUB REVIVED

The revival of the Harleston Cricket Club on a peace-time footing following a lapse of over three years due to the War, was unanimously decided upon at a largely attended meeting held at the Magpie Hotel, Harleston, on Friday week, when the President of the Club, Mr. A. Lombe Taylor, presided. Before business commenced, the meeting stood in silence for the following past members of the Club who had been killed in action, namely, Squadron Leader Mathewson, R.A.F., Lieut H. J. Drake (Army), F./Sgt. N. Lusher, (R.A.F.), Sgt. Pilot B. G. Barker (R.A.F.) and Sgt. A. F. Daniels.

After being re-elected President, on the proposition of Mr. W. H. Stacey, seconded by Mr. J. C. Edwards, Mr. Taylor said he always felt it an honour to hold that position, and was always very glad to do anything he could for the Club. He could not say how long it was since he was first appointed President, following his father, the late Mr. Alfred Taylor. The family connection went back a very long time.

prior to enlisting. Only 21 years old when he died, he had already been wounded once and had only recently returned to duty when he received his final fatal injuries. A sad loss not only to his family but to the town that he would have doubtless contributed to in many ways.

*Diss Express*  
30 Nov 1945

Doubtless many families in the town had mixed feelings as the war finally drew to an end and normal life was slowly resumed, The Cricket club which had gone into abeyance in the mid 1940's was revived in late 1945 when the inaugural meeting stood in silence for Squadron Leader Mathewson, Lieut H.J. Drake, Flt Sgt N Lusher, Sgt Pilot B G Barker and Sgt A F Daniels all of whom were former players and had been killed in action. Wilfred Drake, the father of one of these men was appointed to the committee.

### A.T.C. TEST

Leading Cadet J. Filby, of the Harleston Section of the A.T.C., who took a recent examination, was successful in gaining a Proficiency Certificate, and has since been promoted Sergeant. Leading Cadet W. Drake, of Harleston, who belongs to the Bungay Section, also gained a Proficiency Certificate and has been promoted Sergeant.

Three years younger than Harry John, in 1942 this younger brother, the then 17 years old Air Cadet William. Drake was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in the ATC .

*Diss Express Norfolk, England*  
25 Sep 1942

Drake went on to make a career in the military but like the rest of the family was also a keen sportsman, turning out to be a very effective defender for the Harleston Football team when home on leave for Christmas 1949.