



Herbert Edward Ray

2661 Private, Leicestershire Yeomanry, Regiment of Household Cavalry and Cavalry of the Line (including Yeomanry and Imperial Camel Corps)

He was killed in action at Frezenberg in Flanders on 13th May 1915, aged 23

Herbert is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium



Maybe it is the moustache, but Herbert looks more like 32 than 22 in this photo!

Herbert Edward Ray's father had been a miller, his grandfather was a miller too; the early life of his grandfather is somewhat shrouded in mystery exacerbated by a very lax attitude to keeping track of his age. Someone once said we were a notion of shopkeepers, almost accidentally the Rays became a family of shopkeepers!

Rev. Alfred Lyall, rector of Harbledown.— On the 7th, at Wortham church, Mr. W. H. Ray, miller, Rickingham, to Ann, youngest daughter of Mr. Charles Y. Browne, grocer and draper, of the former place.— On the 8th, at the parish

Regardless of all that; in late 1861 William Henry Ray Snr married Anne nee Browne, just in time to appear in the

1861 census living adjacent to the Broome Mill in Rickingham. As the Master Miller, William Snr had a 19 years old apprentice and a female servant of a similar age in the house with him! Ann was the daughter of a Grocer from Long Green, Wortham, a background that becomes relevant in later years. Some-time in the late 1860's the family moved to Boxford via a brief stay in Walsham. By 1871, William Ray Snr and his wife had popped out 6 children, the youngest of whom was only 2 months old. Two of William Snr's unmarried sisters were also in the 1871 household – hopefully to help rather than hinder! Rather nicely this twosome popped up again, in tandem, 20 years later.

William Snr and Anne Ray's oldest son and second child was William E Ray Jnr, father of our Harleston Hero; aged 8 in this 1871 census, the family were still in Boxford for the 1881 census. By 1881, two more children had been added to the family and 18 years old William Jnr was also a

RAY.—July 16th, after a long affliction, in the 58th year of his age, William Henry Ray, miller, formerly of Bickinghall and Boxford. Greatly respected.

Miller. William Snr died in 1887, aged only 58, leaving a youngish family behind him; his youngest daughter

Bessie was only 9 years old. I am glad to say that Ray must have invested his money well and wisely as in 1891, his widow, with her two youngest daughters in her household, was able to live off her own means. Rather nicely, the now rather elderly spinster Aunts who were in the 1871 household popped up again with Ann in 1891.

1901 is a bit confusing, Ann was living, in a solidly respectable working-class suburb of Fulham with unmarried daughter Emma, a draper's assistant and, on the night of the census at least, her married daughter Mary Torbell who was, an actual draper, and Mary's son. For many years, before and after this census the extended Torbell family had run drapers shops and bakers and confectioners in the center of Eye including Mary's husband Charles. Mary's brother-in-law, Douglas Torbell, draper, working in London in 1911 died out in France in 1917, another slightly more distant relative and the only surviving child of his elderly parents, Stanley Edward Torbell, died in 1918.

By 1911, Anne Ray was living in the household of her daughter Emma who was married to a Baker and Confectioner, all the way down in Bournemouth!

Whilst Anne was trotting about the south-east of the country, her son William E Ray Jnr was quietly getting on with life. In 1891 this miller, son of a miller, was lodging in Wortham; interestingly he is one of three adjacent houses in Long Green each of which had a young miller lodging with them! Early next year William Jnr married a lady with the delightful name of Lavinia Lockwood, 9 years his junior she would have been about 20 at the time of the marriage. There were a lot of Lockwoods in Stoke Ash; whilst Lavinia's father was a farmer, her mother was running a general store that Lavinia was assisting in.

Perhaps it is not too surprising that by 1901 William Jnr and Lavinia Ray nee Lockwood were running their own store in Lavinia's hometown of Stoke Ash; their children, Herbert aged 8 and Norah aged 3, had actually been born in William's mother's home town of Wortham. In 1911 the family, with three well-spaced out children (5 or 6 years between each child) were now in Harleston. They must have been doing rather well as this modestly sized family were then living in an eight-room house in the Thoroughfare. At this time William Ray had returned close to his first vocation and was a Corn Merchant's manager. Also in the house were two teenaged children of Lavinia's sister, one of whom was. This does seem to be a family who liked each other and were happy to support and keep company with each other.

In 1911, 13 years old Norah Ray, was Morris Dancing and winning prizes at the Diss Secondary School; there were only 4 pupils coming from Harleston amongst the 45 boys and 29 girls attending the school. I wonder if she was one of the 21 pupils at the school who were getting free education or if her father had to pay? I suspect the latter as I think the family were really quite well off; good for him for educating his daughter(s). Not every Edwardian father, from all ends of the social spectrum, believed it worth so doing. Oddly enough the middle classes were generally more in favour of educating their daughters than most. For the working classes the choices for their children were often so limited that investing time and money in education was viewed as futile, for the upper classes an over educated girl was less attractive in the marriage stakes than a well finished one.

For some reason, Herbert was working away in Leicestershire when war broke out in 1914; it has to be said that drapers tended to be a fairly mobile crew! Generally known as 'Bert' Ray, he was, as one might expect, a dapper dresser, looking extremely well turned out in the studio photo taken shortly before his enlistment. He enlisted in Melton Mowbray, appears to have started with the Hussars before being embedded with the Leicestershire



Yeomanry and would have barely completed his basic training before he was shipped out to die in Belgium in May 1915. Indeed, the Market Harborough Advertiser of May 25 states that Private Ray, worked for Messrs Goward and Son Grocers on the High Street, and 'had only recently been sent out to the front, this being his first engagement'.

Goward's High Street premises, which had been a shop since at least the late 18th C, are now a Wetherspoons Pub named, very aptly, the Sugar Loaf.

Although the family's roots were not very deep in Harleston, in 1920 when the Broad St Memorial was erected, the family would still have been living in the town and it was here they chose to mark the passing of their only son. Herbert, a cool looking customer with an appraising glance has no known grave and is one of almost 55,000 men whose deaths are marked on the Menin Gate near Ypres.