



Arnold Randell

88228 Private, 45th Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps

Arnold died of wounds on 1st September 1917 in Belgium

He was buried at Lussenthoek Military Cemetery, West Flanders, Belgium

Arnold Randall was a Harleston born lad of mixed Norfolk heritage that reflected a curiously Victorian phenomenon – the rise of the Drapers' or Department Store. His father, a Grocer's Assistant, Albert Randall came from North Walsham, his mother was born in Hampstead. Albert was born too early to benefit from the imposition of compulsory education, up to the age of 10, in 1880 but it seems his parents with a small family were able to educate their children. This compulsory education was not welcomed by all, but reflected a spreading desire amongst the working classes, especially the religious to increase literacy.

Albert had come from humble but skilled roots; way back in 1871, his parents, and Arnold's grandparents, James and Emily, were living on the Norwich Road in North Walsham with precisely three children, aged 9, 8 and 7 years of age. James was a carpenter and joiner, the older two of his children followed traditional trades but by 1881 his youngest son Albert had gone into the Grocery trade. The 16 years old lad was an assistant Grocer, a job that required reasonable numeracy and literacy and preferably a personable exterior. In this 1881 census another child had been added to the family but since there was an 8 years gap between her and Albert, I think we can assume this was a slip up!

Workers in the large shops tended to be quite mobile, and I had suspected that Albert had made his way to London where he met and married his Hampstead born wife Emma nee Smith. But no, I was quite wrong; in 1887 23 years old Albert (who was already living in Harleston) married Emma Susan Smith from Newmarket Street in Heigham. It turned out that it was Emma's family who were the mobile crew not Albert after all!

1887. Marriage solemnized at *Holy Trinity Church* in the *Parish* of *Heigham* 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.
465	Aug: 21 st 1887	Albert Randell Emma Susan Smith	23 22	Bachelor Spinster	Grocer —	Harleston Newmarket St	James Randell George Smith (Deceased)	Carpenter Grocer

Married in the *Church of the Holy Trinity* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by *Licence* or after _____ by us,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, { *Albert Randell* } in the Presence of us, { *Robert Collier*
Edgar Julia Smith } *Edwards*
(Curate)

Emma's deceased father George Smith (described on the Marriage Certificate as a Grocer) actually, appeared on Silver Street, Hampstead, in the 1871 census described as a Police Constable. This census reveals that Emma's father George Smith came from Norwich, whilst her mother and older brother came from Dickleburgh and Emma and her younger brother had both been born in Hampstead. Their mother, Caroline nee Aldis, daughter of Norwich born parents, had actually started her working life in Dickleburgh as a flax dresser, doubtless supplying the Flax Mill at Scole. This was tough work that wrecked the hands, she was one of at least 7 children, her father having started off as a labourer wound up working in steam mill; I wonder if it was the flax mill?

So, when Albert Randall and his wife, both aged 26 when they appeared at the top of Candler's Lane in 1891 were really more local than they first appeared. Albert Randall and his wife also chose, like his parents, to limit their family and the two Harleston born children, Percival and Arnold aged 3 and 2, were to be their only offspring.

Ambitious Albert would have expected to have to move in order to pursue his career and by 1901 this compact family were living in Costessey with Albert having achieved the status of Grocery Manager. By 1911, Albert was no longer an employee but had set up as a Grocer and Baker in his own right, 'living over the shop', still in Costessey. His wife, Emma, was also helping in the business whilst Arnold, then 22, had not followed his father into the Grocery trade and was instead employed as a Boot Maker. We don't know exactly when the Randall family left Harleston for Costessey, he may have been still a toddler, or he may have been well into his education in the town.

Meanwhile Arnold's brother Percy was off in London in an interesting household. Ivan Herman Kuins, a Dutch born London County Council Cookery Instructor, Lecturer and Demonstrator was living in a 9-room house at 44 Vincent Street, well at least he, his Dutch wife and a lodger were living in 6 of these rooms. The other 3 rooms were independent households, each of which was

being lived in by a cook: two were Dutch, the 20-year-old Dutchman was working in a Restaurant, the 22-year-old at the Ritz and our Percy Randall at the Howard Hotel!



This huge hotel was very much at the luxury end of the market and in later years traded on its proximity to the Air and other Ministries, possibly hitting the height of its elegance in the interwar period but was demolished sometime around the 1970's

– the modern replacement being itself demolished at the start of the 21st Century.

Whilst Percy was serving the wealthy and privileged in London, Arnold was fully involved in village life in Costessey, winning the prize for the best Miniature Garden in the Costessey Show in 1910 and garnering himself a special mention in the local press.

and Miss Melton. The prizes offered by the committee for the best model gardens, 3ft. square, were taken by Messrs. A. Randell and Melton of Costessey. Mr. Randell's being an exceptionally interesting exhibit. A particularly

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Arnold was not a fighting man, instead the 28-year-old was a stretcher bearer for the Royal Army Medical Corps. His home address was given, as one might expect, as Costessey, when he was conscripted in August 1915 and he went straight in to the Ambulance Division. Whether, this was because he refused to fight for religious reasons, whether he was deemed unfit for action or just a luck of the draw I do not know but I rather suspect it may have been for religious reasons. He was certainly well developed physically; this shoemaker was 5'8", weighted 11 ¼ stone and had a 40" chest with an almost 4" expansion – this was rather different to a lot of the rather short and very wiry farm boys that enlisted from in and around Harleston. Amongst the effects returned to his mother, along with an (identity?) disc, a pipe and a photo – much as we would expect for any soldier – were religious books, possibly in the leather bag also returned and a crucifix in a pouch. We do know Arnold died of wounds received whilst in service; he put his life on the line as much as any combatant soldier having been wounded in the thigh on the 21st of August, it was not until the next day he was transferred to a Canadian Clearing Station in Belgium where he died 10 days later, most likely of infection. We do not mark his death on our memorial, (his death is marked on the Costessey War Memorial, the place where he spent most of his formative years and his parents continued to live after his death), but since Arnold was born and spent his earliest years in the town it is right that we as a town acknowledge and mark with respect the ultimate sacrifice this young man made for his country.

His slightly older brother, Percy, made it to Corporal and appears to have been posted to an Officers Mess with the British Expeditionary force – presumably a slightly safer posting.