

Education Report

*From “Sad Case”
to Kings Man.*

*What will you be doing
at lunchtime?*





Harold Albert Roe 1893 - 1915



HE whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.

Pte. Harold Roe
Suffolk Regt.

Genealogy Lunchtime learning :

Case Study

At some point in my childhood I became aware that my dad's cousin, "Uncle Harold", was named after my Grandmother's brother (my grand uncle) who died in the First World War. Being a child, I just accepted this information without question and also, to be honest, without care. I mean, he was dead wasn't he, therefore he couldn't feed me, play with me or give me pocket money when he saw me, so why should I think about him. However, as my teenage years approached, with my fascination of war films and soldiers increasing, I began to get more curious about this absent relative.

My father, seeing my interest in the family tree, took me to see his cousin, and showed me a photograph of Harold which he kept on the wall (see left). "He died in the First World War", my dad said. "He joined the navy but threw up as soon as his ship moved, so they put him in the army, and then he died of dysentery". Not the war hero a teenage boy was looking for, more of a "sad case"!

As adulthood loomed, my attention turned to everyday things, such as, marriage, mortgage, children, however, my interest in the family history never died and when my Uncle's mother died, my father had to help clear out some of house and various memorabilia of the dead Harold came to light. My father gave the memorabilia to me knowing of my interest in history and the family tree.

Luckily, the memorabilia gave me lots of information in which to do further investigations which included commemorative posters, letters and medals. Taking advantage of a union lunchtime learning genealogy event, where I had access to the internet and Ancestry.co.uk's website, some more of Harold's life was revealed to me

Harold was the first born child of Albert and Alice Roe, and by checking the online birth index I found he was born in the third quarter of 1893. Harold took his middle name from his father, something of which continued through the generations to myself and my son.

The 1901 census revealed that Harold, now aged seven, was living with his parents and three siblings at 35 Ravensmeer, Beccles, and as to be expected his occupation was a student.

In 1911 the census, the family had moved house and now lived at 7 Shaws Yard. Harold, now 17, had left school and become a Butcher. Not only had the family moved, but it had also got slightly larger as Harold now had seven siblings. Shaw's yard, according to my father was a slum area which was knocked down many years ago. This was confirmed when I completed a search for that address on www.foxearth.org.uk, where it was reported in a newspaper, the *Beccles & Bungay Journal* on 5th July 1936, all the houses were deemed unfit for habitation.



1914-15 Star

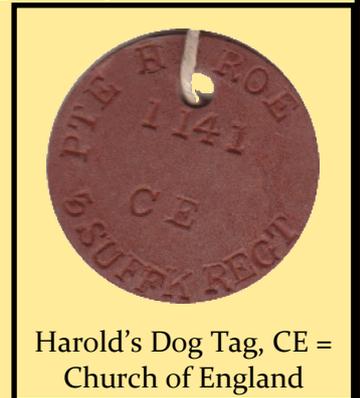


British War Medal



Victory Medal

Searching for Harold's military record online was not as easy as looking up the censuses, as many of them got burnt in 1940, during a bombing raid, so the military records are fragmented. I could find no reference for Harold enrolling which would prove the sea sick story that seemed so funny to me as a child. But I did get the date of his death by checking the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website www.cwgc.org. I found that he died on Aug 31st 1915 and was buried in Gibraltar cemetery. Also on the website, it quoted his service number of 1141, and that his mother and father had moved house again and now lived in 22 Ballygate Street, Beccles. Most importantly it confirmed the story that Harold had died of dysentery. Further information gained from the CWGC website was that some time after the wars conclusion the Imperial War Graves Commission placed a headstone at Harold's Grave. The inscription on the headstone said "Day by day we still miss him. From his sorrowful Father and Mother". These few words in this inscription brought home the devastation and turmoil caused by the loss of a loved child, even several years after the event.



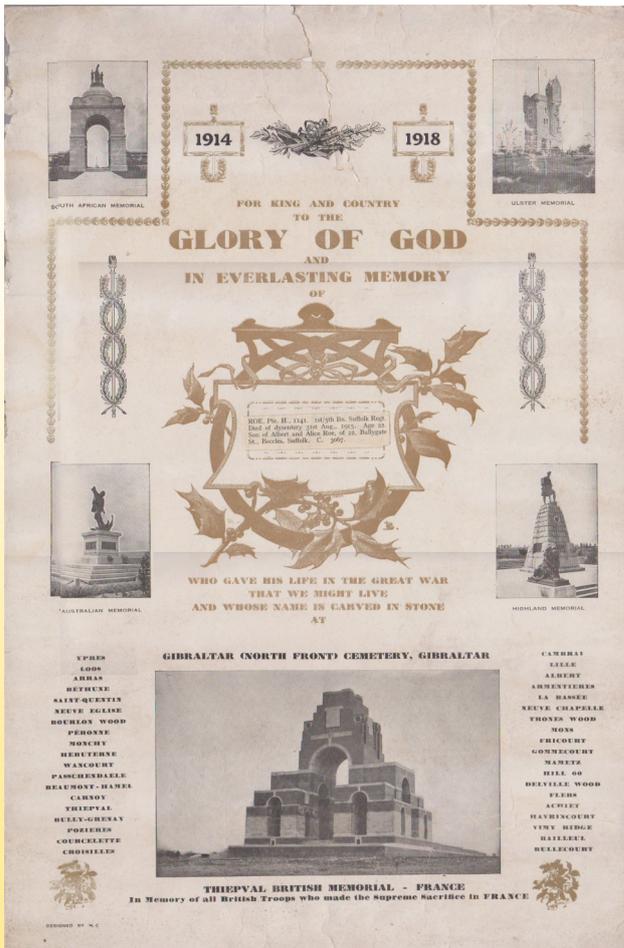
Harold's Dog Tag, CE = Church of England

With the confirmation of his service number checking Ancestry.co.uk did have one military record and that was in the Medal Rolls Index in which confirmed the three medals, which were now in my possession, the Victory Medal, the British Medal and the 1914-15 Star. It also confirmed the area in which he was sent and that was the Balkans.

A further search on www.1914-1918.net showed that the 1/5 Suffolk battalion embarked at Liverpool on July 30th 1915 for Gallipoli, stopping off at Mudros, in Greece. They eventually disembarked at Suvla Bay on 10th August 1915. Whether Harold caught dysentery on ship is uncertain, but with the story of him being seasick at a drop of a hat, the voyage must have been extremely uncomfortable for him. As dysentery is normally caused by contaminated water and I suspect that the Royal Navy knew how to store water supplies correctly and he survived the journey unscathed, but may have been in a weakened state when he arrived at Gallipoli. The Battle of Gallipoli which took place two days later on August 12th was recently dramatized in the TV film (1999) "All the Kings Men". The TV film concentrated on 1/5 Norfolk's and in particular the men from Sandringham, but the 1/5 Suffolk's and 1/8 Hampshire's were as equally involved.

Through the Imperial War Museum archive, the *Battlefield Study of Gallipoli* (Sept 6444) acknowledges that on August 5th there was reports of artillery fire, sniping and there was a shortage of water. Could this be the cause of Harold death? Was he just a thirsty man drinking what little water he could find?

The Suffolk's remained in Gallipoli until 19th December 1915 when they were then evacuated to Alexandria, Egypt. However, Harold was not to



be with his comrades, but stricken down with dysentery and shipped out on a hospital boat and died somewhere between Gallipoli and Gibraltar. Three weeks after landing on the shore of Gallipoli Harold died.

It's amazing what you can find out in your lunchtime!



Harold's Bronze memorial plaque given to those who died during the war, more commonly known as a "Dead Man's Penny".

(size approx. 5 inches)

We never look down on anyone, unless we're helping them up!

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