

## **William Henry HORWILL**

Born Morchard Bishop Q2, 1877  
Rifleman A/202644

Died 21<sup>st</sup> March 1918, aged 40  
12th Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps

**William Henry Horwill** is named on Dawlish War Memorial and in the Devon Roll of Honour for Dawlish, but he is also named on the Morchard Bishop War memorial where he was born.

**William Henry Horwill** was the eldest child of William Horwill (1848-1907 ) and Sarah, nee Way (1854- ). William was born in Morchard Bishop on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1848 to John Horwill and Charlotte, nee Andrews. William was baptised in Morchard Bishop on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1849.

William and Sarah appear to have married in 1874 (GRO ref Crediton June 1874, vol 5b, p 707). The father was an agricultural labourer and both parents and all the children were born in Morchard Bishop. They had nine children but one had died by the 1911 census. The survivors were:

|                       |                    |  |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--|
| <b>William Henry</b>  | <b>(1877-1918)</b> | (GRO ref Crediton, Apr-June 1877, vol 5b, p 409) |
| Ellen                 | (1879- )           |  |
| Alice                 | (1881- )           |  |
| Walter J              | (1883- )           |  |
| Frederick John        | (1885- ) *         |  |
| Annie Louise Victoria | (1887- ) **        |  |
| Charlotte Mary        | (1890- )           |  |
| Percival George       | (1893-1954) ***    |  |

In 1881 the young family were at Southcott, Morchard Bishop with the first three children.

In 1891 they were living at Rudge Cottage, Morchard Bishop and the parents were still there ten years later with the three youngest children.

William Horwill died on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1907 at Bugford Cottage, Morchard Bishop of Bronchitis and Heart Failure. His death was informed by his son Frederick John Horwill (GRO ref Crediton, 1907, Jan-Mar, Vol 5b, p 333).

By 1911 Sarah, a widow, was still at Rudge Cottage with Percy and a boarder, John Smith. Percy (Percival George) was a cowman.

**William Henry Horwill** appears in the Dawlish census in 1901, age 23, as a carter to James Edwin Lock who was the miller at the flour mill on Brunswick Place. James Lock (1862-1939) was born in Sandford, near Crediton and was first a miller in Upton Hellions before moving to Dawlish, and marrying Mary J Slocombe (1863-1906) in Exeter in 1888. Mary J Slocombe was born in Dawlish.

**William Horwill** (shown as Herwill on the 1911 census form and as Horwitt in 1901) was still working for James Lock in 1911 at 19 Brunswick Place, and presumably up to the outbreak of war.

\* Frederick John Horwill may have joined the Devonshire Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in 1904. There is a medal record card that shows this person enlisting on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1904 and being discharged with the rank of Company Sergeant Major (service no 7726) on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1918 with nephritis.

\*\* Annie Louise Victoria Horwill married William T Newman in Cardiff in 1910 (GRO Cardiff, 1910, July-Sept, Vol 11a, p 666). She is given as the sole legatee of **William**

**Henry Horwill** in the Army Register of Soldiers' Effects. This may indicate that Sarah Horwill may have died ca 1914 when this deed was arranged by **William**.

\*\*\* Percival George Horwill may be the Private, service no 14473, enlisted with the Devonshire Regiment, 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion. There is a press report in the *Western Times* of 3 March 1917 that he had been reported wounded. He was an early entry into the War because he was awarded the 1914-15 Star as well as the British War Medal and Victory Medal.

Because of the destruction of army personnel records in the WW2 blitz there is little certainty about the identity of servicemen with the same names.

**William Henry Horwill** is shown in some records as enlisting at Exeter in the King's Royal Rifle Corps and is a Rifleman, service no A/202644

**12th (Service) Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps**

Formed at Winchester on 21 September 1914 as part of K2 and came under orders of 60th Brigade in 20th (Light) Division. Moved to Bisley, going on in November 1914 to Blackdown and February 1915 to billets in Hindhead. Moved to Larkhill on 10 April 1915.

22 July 1915 : landed at Boulogne. (The Long Long trail)

The War Diary of the KRRC, 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, for February 1918 shows them moving as a reserve to various positions along the Somme front, but not being called into action. This continued until 6<sup>th</sup> March when, until 20<sup>th</sup>, they prepared the defences of Offoy.

The German Offensive of March 1918 is set out in the profile document for Walter Andrews (q.v.) who was killed on 23<sup>rd</sup> March on a different part of the Front.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> the KRRC were 'stood to' all day until the evening when "a very heavy bombardment began along the whole front, increasing in intensity until it reached its maximum at about 4 a.m., 21<sup>st</sup> March. "

21<sup>st</sup> March "The Battn 'stood by' in billets all morning and at last at 2.30 p.m. the order came round "Man Battle Stations". We marched off at 3.15 p.m. via SANCOURT, VILLERS ST CHRISTOPHE and across the fields to DOUCHY, or rather, to a sunken road about 500x N.W. of DOUCHY. DOUCHY was being heavily shelled. Here, a mounted officer from Brigade found the Battn. We were to remain where we were until we received further orders. Sentries were therefore posted and the Battn waited. At midnight the order came through to move to the original Battle Stations. A peculiarly dense mist had fallen making movement extremely difficult, especially over open country."

The Army Register of Soldiers' Effects lists **William Henry Horwill** as dying of wounds and further searches are necessary to discover if he had been in hospital.

22<sup>nd</sup> March "During the morning the news came from various unofficial sources that the Germans had broken through the Divisions holding the forward zone and that we might expect an attack in the afternoon. This attack was looked for chiefly from the direction of VAUX which had been heavily shelled. And, in fact, at 3.50 p.m. a long-drawn bugle call from the enemy lines heralded an attack in very great force on both our flanks. They penetrated at VAUX and at FLUQUIERES. 'A' Coy., found itself practically cut off. The Germans were concentrating on its right rear. Still the Company held on. There was a gap in the wire immediately in front. Through this gap the Germans four times attempted to rush our position, but 2 Lewis Guns which had

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been placed out in front of the Company so successfully covered this opening that their every effort was frustrated. The position was, however, fast becoming untenable. All the Officers had been either wounded or killed. The Company was forced to retire. As a matter of fact the position on the left had become so critical that a Battalion retirement had been ordered. We fell back to VILLERS-ST-CHRISTOPHE, marching through the dense mist on a compass bearing. German aeroplanes were flying all over us dropping large and powerful lights (*flares?*) but they did no damage."

The action continued in following days and the end of month summary showed that losses of Officers killed were 6, wounded 11, while Other Ranks were 37 killed, 216 wounded, 207 missing, 5 missing believed killed in action, and 1 died of wounds.

The Allied Fifth Army was driven back by overwhelming numbers across the former Somme battlefields in the months that followed, before the Advance to Victory, which began on 8 August 1918.

Devon Roll of Honour (Dawlish) Horwill, William. Pte. K.R.Rifle Corps

Dawlish War memorial inscription:  
HORWILL W. PTE. K.R.R.

Devon Heritage site info:

W Horwill A/202644 Rifleman William Henry Horwill of the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the King's Royal Rifle Corps. Died 21 March 1918.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: HORWILL, WILLIAM HENRY Rifleman A/202644  
21/03/1918 King's Royal Rifle Corps, 12th Bn.

Panel Ref: Panel 61 to 64. [Pozières Memorial](#), Somme, France (located about 6km NE of Albert)  
The Memorial commemorates over 14,000 casualties of the United Kingdom and 300 of the South African Forces who have no known grave and who died on the Somme from 21 March to 7 August 1918.

Last known address: Rudge Cottage, Morchard Bishop

Next of kin: Annie Louise Victoria Newman, sister & sole legatee. She had married William T Newman in Cardiff in 1910.

References:

War Diary of the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the King's Royal Rifle Corps. (National Archives, Kew – WO 95/2021/1)

The Long, Long Trail

Birth Certificate for William Horwill (1848- )

Refs via subscription websites:

Census data from 1881 to 1911

UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War

UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects

National Newspaper Archive

WW1 Service Medal and Award Rolls

WATTSHISNAMES family tree - Ancestry