

Sergeant Charles Richard Harris

Regimental Number: 9898

2nd Battalion, Royal Scots

born: 1889 - died: 28 May 1918

Charles Richard Harris was probably born in 1889.¹ He was the son of William Elston Harris and Edith Godden. William was born in London in about 1846 and his wife, Edith, was born about 1856 in Ashford, Kent. William appears to have left London at an early age. By the age of 15 he was a footman working for a magistrate in Worthing, Sussex.² At the age of 25 he was a labourer and living in Tyneham, Kent.³ At 35, he was an excavator and living in Hythe, Kent.⁴ He married his wife, Edith, in Hythe, Kent in the spring of 1881⁵ and established his family there. They had nine children. Six were born in Saltwood: William Thomas Harris (born 1881), Annie Mabel Harris (born 1884), Emily Jane Harris (born about 1885), Herbert Elston Harris (born in 1890 but died a few months later, in the autumn of 1890), Frederick George Harris (born 1887) and Charles Richard Harris (born about 1889). William was a general farm labourer.⁶

In 1891, the family was living on Page Farm in Postling, Kent,⁷ where three more children were born: Benjamin Herbert Elston Harris (born about 1892), Edith Harris (born about 1896) and Ernest John (born about 1897).⁸

In 1911, William was again living at Pedlinge, near Saltwood, with his wife and the two youngest children.⁹ He was a general farm labourer. No evidence has been found to indicate where Charles was living at the time.

Charles enlisted in Shorncliffe as a Private in the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Scots.¹⁰ He was later promoted to Acting Sergeant.

The Royal Scots is the oldest, and therefore most senior, infantry regiment in the British Army.¹¹ The 2nd Battalion 2nd was deployed at the beginning of the war with the British Expeditionary Force, arriving in France on 14 August 1914. It served with the 8th Brigade, 3rd Division in France throughout the war.¹² In total, the Royal Scots raised some thirty-five battalions of infantry and over 100,000 men during the course of the First World War, of which fifteen battalions saw active service. 11,000 soldiers serving in the regiment were killed, and over 40,000 wounded.¹³

Charles was one of those soldiers killed. He was gassed and admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 22 May 1918. He died three days later and was buried the same day in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row C, Grave 49) with the chaplain, J. K. Tibbitts, presiding. He was a member of the Church of England. His mother, who was living at Laurel Cottage, Pedling, Hythe, Kent, was notified of his death.

On 22 May, 284 soldiers were admitted to the 1st CCCS, bringing the total number of patients to 543.¹⁴ In the whole month of May, there were 115 deaths at this CCCS – more than in any of the other three and a half months that the 1st CCCS was in Pernes. The Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when the 1st and 4th Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.¹⁵

Charles was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914-15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).¹⁶

It is not possible to determine whether any of Charles' brothers, all of whom would have been old enough to serve by the end of the war, actually served in the forces in World War I. However, it appears likely that his brother, Frederick George, served in the Royal Navy. In 1911, he was married and serving as an able seaman on board HMS Actaeon.¹⁷ HMS Actaeon was a torpedo school ship moored at Stangate Creek, near Sheerness.

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¹ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2015), entry for Charles R. Harris, Registration district: Elham, Sub-registration district: Hythe, ED, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 753, Folio: 15, Page Number: 11

² "1861 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2015), entry for William E. Harris, Registration district: Faversham, Sub-registration district: Teynham, ED, institution, or vessel: 9, Household schedule number: 11, Piece: 980, Folio: 123, Page Number: 4

³ "1871 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2015), entry for William E. Harris, Registration district: Worthing, Sub-registration district: Broadwater, ED, institution, or vessel: 2, Household schedule number: 139, Piece: 614, Folio: 35, Page Number: 25

⁴ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2015), entry for William E. Harris, Registration district: Elham, Sub-registration district: Hythe, ED, institution, or vessel: 9, Piece: 1014, Folio: 62, Page Number: 19

⁵ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2015), entry for William Elston Harris, Registration district: Elham, Inferred County: Kent, , Volume: 2a, Page: 1520

⁶ "1891 England Census," entry for Charles R. Harris

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2015), entry for William E. Harris, Registration district: Elham, Sub-registration district: Hythe, ED, institution, or vessel: 3, Piece: 853, Folio: 42, Page Number: 18, Household schedule number: 103

⁹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2015), entry for William Elston Harris, Registration district: Elham, Registration District Number: 66, Sub-registration district: Hythe, ED, institution, or vessel: 9, Household schedule number: 175, Piece: 4671

¹⁰ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2015), entry for Charles Richard Harris

¹¹ "Royal Scots," *Wikipedia* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Scots: accessed 27 January 2015)

¹² "Edinburgh's War 1914-1918: Location of Royal Scots Units During the War," (http://www.edinburghs-war.ed.ac.uk/system/files/PDF_location_of_royal_scots.pdf: accessed 27 January 2015)

¹³ "Royal Scots"

¹⁴ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 15 December 2014)

¹⁵ "Pernes British Military Cemetery" *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 13 January 2015)

¹⁶ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2014), entry for Charles R. Harris

¹⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 27 January 2015), entry for Frederick George Harris, Registration district: Sheppey, Registration District Number: 62, Sub-registration district: Minster, ED, institution, or vessel: 19, Household schedule number: 29, Piece: 4468