

Private James Harold Sibley[©]
Regimental number: 22070
1st Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

born: 1891- died: 25 May 1918

The inscription on Private James Harold Sibley's gravestone reads:

WE LOVED HIM
HE LOVED US
HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR US¹

His father George had requested this inscription on behalf of the family. James Harold (known as Harold) was one of 10 children born to George Edward Sibley and Elizabeth Prince. George and Elizabeth were both born in Crewkerne, Somersetshire,² and were the same age—20—when they married.³ George was born on 2 June 1868⁴ and Elizabeth in about the same year.⁵ They married in the parish church of Crewkerne on 2 October 1887.⁶ They started their family early and had seven sons and three daughters:

- Willie Reginald (born in 1888),⁷
- Charles Ernest (born in 1890),⁸
- James Harold (born in 1891),⁹
- Percy Hubert (born on 21 March 1892),¹⁰
- Elsie Blanche (born in 1896),¹¹
- John Wilfred Archibald (born in 1898),¹²
- Beatrice Alice (born in 1900),¹³
- Victor Fred (born in 1903),¹⁴
- Sidney George (born in 1904)¹⁵ and
- Dorothy Gertrude Nelly (born in 1906).¹⁶

Sadly, their last child, Dorothy, died when she was just 2.¹⁷

Most of the children, including Harold, were born in Crewkerne, which is located between Yeovil and Chard in Somersetshire. That is where the family was living in 1891, where George was a web weaver and Elizabeth a shirt machinist. The family was living on West Street.¹⁸ Ten years later the family had moved to Barry Lane, in Hardington, near Yeovil. George had made a career shift and was now a Prudential insurance agent.¹⁹ He was probably known as the "Man from the Pru."²⁰ The Prudential was founded in London in 1848 to provide loans to professional and working people. A few years later, it introduced insurance policies to the working class "for premiums as low as one penny through agents acting as door to door salesmen."²¹ A salesman was known for many years as the "Man from the Pru."²²

By 1911 George had perhaps been promoted in the company, as he was now an assurance superintendent, and the family was living about 20 miles away at Rydor House, Castle Cary, still in Somersetshire. Both Harold and his older brother Reginald were then tailors.²³

Harold joined up very early in the Great War. He enlisted in Bath²⁴ in about August 1914.²⁵ He served in the Gloucestershire Regiment and went to France on 20 July 1915.²⁶

He survived more than three years. In mid-May 1918, he was with the 1st Battalion of the regiment, which was in the field at Cambrin, near Béthune in northern France. The weather was fine until 24 May, when there was heavy rain in the morning. The battalion's companies changed positions during the day. In the evening, 200 gas projectors were discharged over the enemy. Two Other Ranks [non-officers] were wounded that day.²⁷ One may have been Harold. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 24 May 1918 with shrapnel wounds to his abdomen, head and thighs. He died the following day and was buried the same day in Pernes British Cemetery, France (Plot 2, Row C, Grave 21) with the Canadian chaplain R. K. Lambert presiding.²⁸

Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.²⁹ Harold was one of 200 injured admitted to No 1. CCCS on 24 May 1918. In total, of nearly 4,000 soldiers admitted to this CCCS in the month of May, 115 died.³⁰

The chaplain wrote to Harold's father, his next of kin, who was living at Guildown, Marian [*sic*] Road in Clevedon, Somerset, to notify him of his son's death.³¹

Harold was awarded posthumously 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).³²

Harold's mother died sometime before 1939, since that year Harold's father was a widower. He was living at 15 Marson Road.³³ He was living at Guildown on Marson Road when he died on 7 December 1943.³⁴

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¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Sibley, Harold James [*sic*], Service No.: 22070

² "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for Harold Sibley, Registration district: Crewkerne, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 3, Piece: 1894, Folio: 54

³ "Somerset, England, Marriage Registers, Bonds and Allegations, 1754–1914," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for George Sibley

⁴ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 June 2018), entry for George E. Sibley, Schedule number: 151, Sub-schedule Number: 1, Enumeration district: WOOD

⁵ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for Harold Sibley

⁶ "Somerset, England, Marriage Registers, Bonds and Allegations, 1754–1914," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for George Sibley

⁷ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 May 2018), entry for Sibley, Willie Reginald, Registration district: Chard, Volume 05C, Page 401

⁸ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 May 2018), entry for Sibley, Charles Ernest, Registration district: Chard, Volume 05C, Page 400

⁹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 May 2018), entry for Sibley, James Harold, Registration district: Chard, Volume 05C, Page 409

¹⁰ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 May 2018), entry for Sibley, Percy Hubert, Registration district: Chard, Volume 05C, Page 379

¹¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 May 2018), entry for Sibley, Elsie Blanche, Registration district: Chard, Volume 05C, Page 387

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- ¹³ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 May 2018), entry for Sibley, Beatrice Alice, Registration district: Yeovil, Volume 05C, Page 364
- ¹⁴ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 May 2018), entry for Sibley, Victor Fred, Registration district: Yeovil, Volume 05C, Page 347
- ¹⁵ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 May 2018), entry for Sibley, Sidney George, Registration district: Yeovil, Volume 05C, Page 342
- ¹⁶ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 May 2018), entry for Sibley, Dorothy Gertrude Nelly, Registration district: Wincanton, Volume 05C, Page 347
- ¹⁷ "England & Wales Deaths 1837–2007," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2018), entry for Dorothy Gertrude N. Sibley, District: Wincanton, County: Somerset, Volume: 5C, Page: 305
- ¹⁸ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for Harold Sibley
- ¹⁹ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for Harold Sibley, Registration district: Yeovil, Sub-registration district: Coker, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 4, Piece: 2297, Folio: 43, Page: 5, Household schedule number: 36
- ²⁰ "Prudential plc," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prudential_plc: accessed 6 May 2018)
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for Harold Sibley, Registration district: Wincanton, Registration district number: 310, Sub-registration district: Castle Cary, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Household schedule number: 209, Piece: 14424
- ²⁴ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for Harold James [sic] Sibley
- ²⁵ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 May 2018), entry for Harold James [sic] Sibley
- ²⁶ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 June 2018), entry for Harold J. [sic] Sibley
- ²⁷ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 June 2018) Regiment or unit: Gloucestershire Regiment, Sub-unit: 1st Battalion, Division: 1st Division, Diary entry start date: Jul 1916, Diary entry end date: 6 Jul 1916, Diary dates: 1914 Aug 1–1914 Dec 31, Piece description: Piece 1278/1-5: 3 Infantry Brigade: 1 Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment (1914 Aug–1919 Apr), Piece number: 1278
- ²⁸ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Sibley, H. J.
- ²⁹ "Pernes British Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 13 January 2015)
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- ³² "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 June 2018), entry for Harold J. [sic] Sibley
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³⁴ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1966," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 June 2018), entry for George Edward Sibley