

## Second Lieutenant Harold Welford Sheffield

Harold's grandfather was *George Sigsworth Sheffield*. He was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1825 at Beverley, Yorkshire to John, a grocer (b. 1796) and his wife Sarah (née Potter).<sup>i</sup> George was baptised on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1825 at St Mary's church, Beverley, where his parents were married on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1821.<sup>ii</sup>



**Figure 1: St Mary's Church, Beverley, Yorkshire**

George became a 'solicitor's managing clerk' to Messrs Robinson & Atkinson, with practices in Beverley and Hull.<sup>iii</sup>

On 28<sup>th</sup> October 1848, George married Ursula, youngest daughter of the late William Whitton, a local stonemason, at St Mary's Church, Beverley.<sup>iv</sup>

Over the next thirteen years, Ursula gave birth to eight children: Sarah Jane (b 1851 but died in 1859 aged eight), Agnes (b 1852), Emily (b 1854), Annie Mary (b 1856), Arthur John (b 1858), Ursula (b 1860), George William (b 1862) and Herbert (b 1864).

By 1871, George had become the Registrar of Births and Deaths of Beverley sub district, an office he held for thirty-seven years. The family had moved from their earlier home in Hen Gate to a larger house in Westwood Road, Beverley. George, Ursula and their seven children continued to live there for at least the following twenty years.

George immersed himself in local affairs and became the secretary to the Race Committee, an auditor to the Pasture Masters, treasurer to the Commissioners of Sewers and a sidesman at his local church, St Mary's.<sup>v</sup>

George and Ursula's second youngest son George William Sheffield became a clerk to the wine merchants Dent, Urwick and Yateman, who had their headquarters at 34 Great Tower Street, London. The firm was established there in 1821 and occupied the whole of the ground floor of the building.<sup>vi</sup> In the 1891 census, George's occupation was described as a 'spirit merchant's traveller'.



Figure 2: (Above left) Courtyard and old warehouse at side of Dent, Urwick and Yateman (Above right) Obituary of George Sigsworth Sheffield, 1902

### Mr. George S. Sheffield.

On Monday morning Mr George Sigsworth Sheffield passed away at his residence in York terrace, aged 76 years. Deceased, who retired from the office of Registrar of Births and Deaths for the Beverley districts in October last after 37 years' service, was well-known throughout the locality. For a long period he was secretary to the Race Committee, an auditor to the Pastors Masters, treasurer to the Commissioners of Sewers, sidesman in St. Mary's Church, and held other offices, but for the past two years had been in declining health.

The funeral took place in the New Walk Cemetery on Thursday morning. Among others present in addition to the family were:—The Mayor (Alderman Elwell), Alderman Wray, Alderman Green, Councillor Arden, Councillor Turner, J.P., Mr J. A. Hudson, J.P., Mr J. B. Bainton, Mr W. H. Fisher, J.P., Mr J. R. Procter (deputy Clerk of the Peace), Mr C. J. Arden, Mr H. W. Bainton, Mr S. E. Todd, Mr J. Willis Mills (Town Clerk), Mr G. A. Robinson, Dr. Gregory, Mr C. E. Stephenson, Mr A. Beaumont, Mr Jos. Beaumont, Mr H. W. Ward, Mr C. Goulding, Mr T. Marshall, Mr Geo. Hobson, Mr H. Sugdon, Mr W. Brigham, Mr W. H. Winpeuny (deputy Chief Constable), Mr Powell, Mr W. H. Whitton, Mr F. J. Beaumont, Mr Wm. Pottage, Mrs Bannister, Miss Kirby.

The burial service was read by the Rev R. Fisher, vicar of St. Mary's.

The following is a list of those who sent wreaths:—The Family, Mr G. A. Robinson, Mr J. B. and Mrs Robinson, Mr J. A. Hudson, the Misses Robinson, Mr and Mrs C. E. Stephenson, Miss Carlman.

Mr Hasslewood Taylor conducted the funeral arrangements.

The coffin plate bore the inscription:  
 GEORGE SIGSWORTH SHEFFIELD,  
 Born 23rd Oct., 1825.  
 Died 30th Decr., 1901.

On 5<sup>th</sup> August 1896, George married Ada Amelia, daughter of T W Welford, a solicitor from Hexham. The couple were married by the Rev H R Moule at Hexham Abbey.<sup>vii</sup> The couple moved to Birmingham shortly after and set up their first home at 59 Oakfield Road, Balsall Heath.<sup>viii</sup>

The 1901 census recorded George and Ada's address as 'Southerton', Mayfield Road, Moseley, Birmingham and George's occupation as a 'commercial traveller for wholesale spirits (whisky) trade'. Living with them at the time was Ada's elder sister Annie, who would have been a very welcome extra pair of hands to help with Harold Welford, George and Ada's son, born on 23rd September 1897 at their Moseley address. A further child, Ursula Beatrice Emily, was born in 1902.

In 1911 the Sheffield family were living at 'Aislaby', 84 Oxford Road, Moseley.

Harold attended Greenhill School, Moseley a private elementary school. Two days before his twelfth birthday in 1909, he was admitted to King Edward's School (KES), New Street, Birmingham as a Foundation Scholar.

Harold was in the Second Class of the Modern School, studying a scientific rather than a classical curriculum. He was a very able scholar and a member of the debating Society. In his class, he was placed fourth overall.

While at school, Harold became a member of the Officer Training Corps and attained the rank of Sergeant. At a medical on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1914 he was recorded as 5' 8" tall and weighing 139 lbs. His vision for distant objects was described as 'not very good'.



**Figure 3: 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant H W Sheffield**

On 31<sup>st</sup> May 1915, Harold left school and on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1915 enrolled as a Cadet at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst where he remained until 6<sup>th</sup> April 1916 when he was gazetted a Second Lieutenant with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment.<sup>ix</sup>

On 15<sup>th</sup> June 1916, Harold arrived in France and proceeded to join his regiment. The war diary for the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion East Yorkshire regiment records that on 24<sup>th</sup> June, '2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Sheffield arrived from the base at Etaples and posted to 'D' Coy where he was immediately in action with the battalion at Bazentin-le-Petit.<sup>x</sup>

Just over three weeks after arriving in the area Harold was involved in fierce fighting in Mametz Wood, where a shell exploded a few yards away from him and his servant. By a miracle the fragment of shell caught Harold's rolled up Burberry which was by his side and thus broke the force of the blow, while his steel helmet saved him from other flying fragments. His servant was blown against a tree, badly injuring his back. Harold received a wound on his left arm and suffered serious shell shock and was evacuated to a casualty clearing station. Four days later, on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1916, he embarked from Rouen to Southampton on the *HMHS Patrick*. Harold was sent to a London Hospital and then to Yorkshire to convalesce. He was given leave from 22<sup>nd</sup> July to 16<sup>th</sup> September.<sup>xi</sup>



Figure 4: HMHS Patrick

At his first Medical Board it was reported that 'scar of wound on left arm quite healed. He appears in good condition. He eats and sleeps well. His heart appears normal'.

However just over a month later at another Medical Board on 26<sup>th</sup> October it was reported that, 'Since his last board he has been laid up with a rheumatic chill. He is far from well and effects of shell shock still in evidence viz exaggerated tremor of hands and rapid pulse and sleeplessness'.

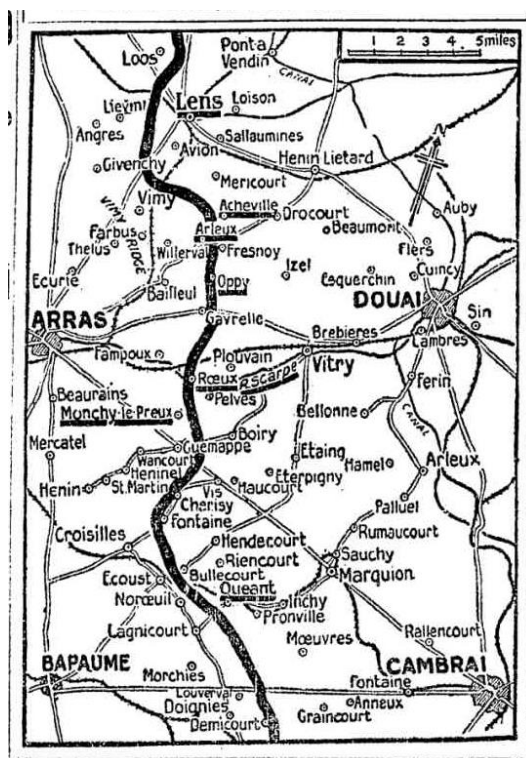


Figure 5. Map showing the location of Henin and Croisilles

In a letter to his father at this time Harold relates that he is very anxious to get back to France and states with much disgust that the Army Medical Board had put him back for another month.<sup>xii</sup>

Harold returned to France in April 1917. The Battalion war diary reports that Harold arrived from base on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1917 and was posted to 'B' Coy.<sup>xiii</sup>

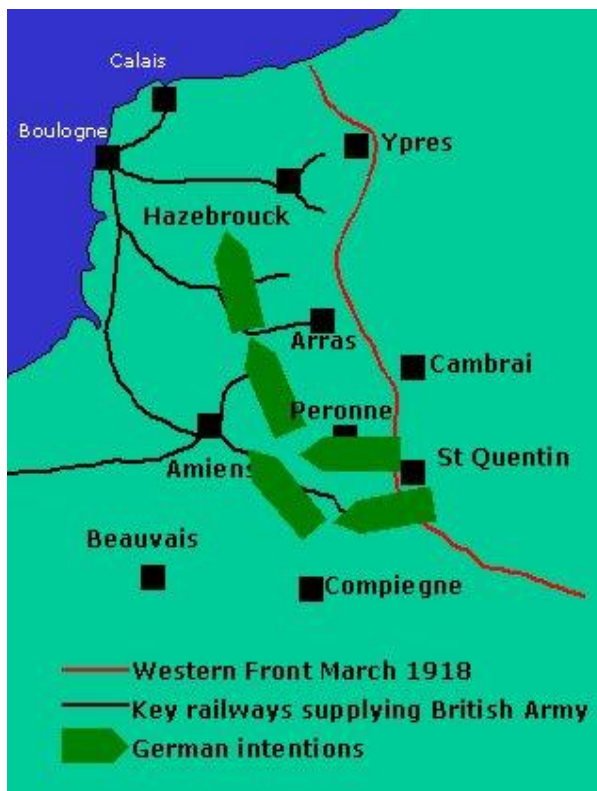
Just a week later, on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1917, in the British front line near the Henin-Croisilles Road, 'B' Coy was attacked by the enemy from behind the Hindenburg Line. The battalion drove the Germans back three times before they eventually secured the front line again. It was during this action that Harold was injured again. He received

a slight gunshot wound to the neck and also showed symptoms of shell shock. He was sent back to England a second time and admitted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Western General Hospital, Manchester on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1917. He was given leave from 30<sup>th</sup> May to the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1917.

Harold made a good recovery and was sent to Withernsea to join the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reserve Army. Harold remained in reserve in England until December 1917.<sup>xiv</sup>

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1918 Harold was back with his battalion in France at Longavesnes, attached to 'D' Coy. He was sent on a musketry course soon after, returning to his battalion at Epehy on 14<sup>th</sup> February. The battalion diary records Harold attached to 'D' Coy at the start of March and based in Saulcourt.<sup>xv</sup>

Following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed on 3 March 1918, Russia's participation in World War I came to an end. As a result, large numbers of German divisions from the Eastern Front were freed up and transferred to the Western Front. On 21<sup>st</sup> March 1918, the German Army launched a large-scale offensive against the Allied front on the Somme battlefield codenamed Operation Michael, The offensive known as the Kaiserschlacht or the Kaiser's Battle was designed to separate the French and British Armies and crush the British Forces by pushing them back towards the north coast.



It was during this Battle that Harold's Battalion as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Division, 64<sup>th</sup> Brigade of Gough's Fifth Army found itself attacked and outflanked by 72 German divisions in positions ready to attack in three waves. Thousands of infantrymen from three German Armies (Seventeenth, Second and Eighteenth Armies) left the German Front Line after a five hour artillery bombardment by over 6,600 artillery pieces. Some 3.2 million shells were destined to land on the British-held front during that first day of the attack.

Figure 6: Map showing the German plan codenamed Operation Michael on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1918

To the German's advantage there was fog in the Somme battlefield sector, enabling the infantry to appear in the British forward positions without being seen to have left their German trenches. As a result the British Forces were forced to withdraw unable to withstand the German advance.<sup>xvi</sup>

It was during this attack that Harold was killed on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. He was just twenty years old. Three other officers were also killed, two reported missing, five wounded and missing and five wounded. Harold's body was never found.<sup>xvii</sup>

Harold is commemorated on the Pozières memorial in the Somme region, France. It lists the names of 14,657 British and South African soldiers of the Fifth and Fourth Armies with no known grave who were killed between 21 March 1918 and 7 August 1918. He is also commemorated at St Mary's Church Moseley, St Mary's Church, Beverley, the WW1 memorial at KES, Sandhurst College and is named on the Roll of Honour at the Hall of Memory, Birmingham

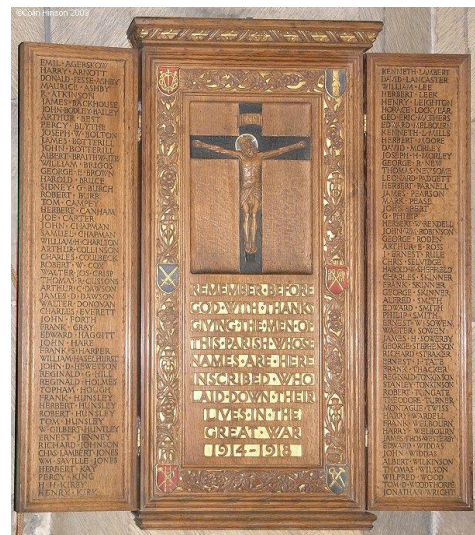


Figure 7

(Above left) Pozières memorial

(Above right)) WW1 memorial St Mary's Church, Beverley

(Left and above) KES WW1 memorial, Edgbaston depicting Harold's name

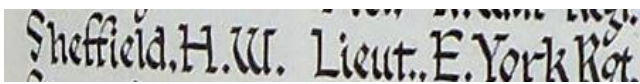


Figure 8

(Above) Harold's name on the Roll of Honour at the Hall of Memory, Birmingham

(Top left) WW1 memorial, Sandhurst College

(Right) WW1 memorial St Mary's Church, Moseley

Written and researched by Edwina Rees

Moseley Society History Group

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## Endnotes

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- i England Marriages, 1538-1973 for Beverley  
1841 census  
*Beverley and East Riding Recorder*, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1902
  - ii England, Births and Baptisms 1538-1975  
England Marriages 1538-1973
  - iii *Beverley Guardian*, 11<sup>th</sup> October 1856
  - iv *Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette*, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1848
  - v *Beverley and East Riding Recorder*, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1902
  - vi *Evening Despatch*, 7<sup>th</sup> January 1939  
British History online  
<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol15/pt2/pp23-30>
  - vii *Yorkshire Gazette*, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1896
  - viii National Archives, Officers after 1913, Ref WO 339/59482
  - ix *London Gazette*, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1916, Issue No 29537, p3683  
National Archives, Officers after 1913, Ref WO 339/59482  
The Sandhurst Collection
  - x War Diary 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment Ref WO 95/21612, p 45
  - xi *Birmingham News*, October 1916  
National Archives, Officers after 1913, Ref WO 339/59482
  - xii *Birmingham News*, October 1916
  - xiii War Diary 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment Ref WO 95/21612, April 1917, p 6
  - xiv National Archives, Officers after 1913, Ref WO 339/59482
  - xv War Diary 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment Ref WO 95/21612-2, pp 56, 64, 70
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- xvi The Battle of St Quentin  
<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/battles/somme/1918-somme-spring.htm>
  - xvii War Diary 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment Ref WO 95/21612-2, pp 78-79

## Illustrations



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- Figure 1 WW1 memorial St Mary's Church, Beverley, Yorkshire  
<http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/YKS/ERY/Beverley/BeverleyStMaryWMplaquePhoto>
- Figure 2 British History online  
<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol15/pt2/pp23-30>  
*Beverley and East Riding Recorder*, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1902
- Figure 3 A Birmingham paper, 1917
- Figure 4 Hospital ship SS ST Patrick  
<https://anzac22ndbattalion.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/st-patrick.png>
- Figure 5 Henin / Croisilles map, 30.4.1917  
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/294422894379349632/>
- Figure 6 Operation Michael March 1918. The Long, Long Trail  
<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/battles-of-the-western-front-in-france-and-flanders/the-first-battles-of-the-somme-1918/>
- Figure 7 WW1 memorial St Mary's Church, Beverley, Yorkshire  
<http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/YKS/ERY/Beverley/BeverleyStMaryWMplaquePhoto>
- Figure 8 Sandhurst War memorial  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandhurst\\_War\\_Memorial#/media/File:Sandhurst\\_war\\_memorial\\_3303.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandhurst_War_Memorial#/media/File:Sandhurst_war_memorial_3303.JPG)