The Story of Henry William Hatchard

Market Gardening

United Kingdom

Channel Islands (U.K.)

Channel

Calais

Lille

Amiens

Le Havre

Rouen

Caen

Transferred to Class "Z"

Britons

You

Join Your County's Army

God Save the King

By Lauren Meilrath

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Henry William Hatchard

Henry William Hatchard is my great, great grandad and he fought in World War 1. He was born in 1878 and died in March 1948, aged only 69. Before he joined the army he was a market gardener and lived in 5 Orme Road, Worthing. A story has passed through my family; Henry was drunk one night just after some time at the pub, he was walking past Worthing train station and saw a propaganda enlistment poster, so he drunkenly said “I’ll take the big guns to Berlin” and signed up, aged 36, days later he was suddenly whisked away, yet to discover what a big mistake he had made.

He worked as a market gardener at Sunny-side, West Tarring, Worthing

This is the house he would have lived in before joining the army.
When Henry enlisted for the army, they did a full examination on him and it gave us this information:

| Service Name | Richard Henry William
|-------------|-----------------------
| Date Examined | 15th day of January 1918
| Age | 36 years 90 days
| Trade or Occupation | Drummer
| Height | 5 ft 14 inches
| Weight | 130 lbs
| Chest Measurement | 35 inches
| Physical Development | Good
| Vaccination Marks | Left
| When Vaccinated | 5th March
| Vision | E.E. V = 0.7
| (a) Marks indicating congenital deformities or previous disease | 0
| (b) Slight defects but not sufficient to cause rejection | 0
| Approved by | [Signature]
| Enlisted | 16th day of February 1918
| Age on Enlistment | [Age on Enlistment]
| Transferred to | [Transferred to]
| Become inactive by | [Inactive by Date]
He embarked for Le Havre in France on the 4th April 1915 and was serving there as a private in the RFA (Royal Field Artillery).

Henry was trained at the No 4 Depot in Woolwich and his regiment number was 69599. The RFA was the biggest section of the Royal Artillery, they were responsible for the horse-drawn medium calibre guns and howitzers. The RFA fought close to the front line, they were reasonably mobile and were organised into brigades.

Henry was moved around a lot to different brigades during his time fighting.

On the 14th August 1915, Henry was admitted to a general hospital in Le Havre for syncope, which is a temporary loss of consciousness. Syncope has a number of causes including heart conditions. The hospital was run by our allies, the Canadians, who also had a base at le Havre. After this, on the 31st of October 1915, he was employed in a wash house which was attached to the general hospital, as I assume they did
not think he was fit enough to fight. He went back into duty on the 25th January 1916. His habit of drinking did not stop when he was in the army because on the 22nd October 1916, he was deprived of 14 days pay after returning back to the corps drunk at about 7.45 pm.

His fighting was interrupted again by an admission to hospital for influenza, this turned out to be his 2nd out of 3 trips to hospital and again was put back into the wash house attached to the hospital.

On the 7th November 1917, Henry was transferred to the Labour Corps. The Labour Corps were formed in February 1917 and ended in 1921. It was made up of men that had been in the front line, who had been either taken ill, wounded, not able to return to the front or men who upon enlistment were too old or not fit enough to be sent to fight. By November 1918, 400,000 men were serving in the Labour Corps. Being in this group did not stop you from being killed as some 9,000 men were killed. Their duties would have been anything from helping in stores, taking equipment up to the front, repairing roads, helping
at rest areas by manning theatres and cinema's. Anything that was needed of them they would have done. Whilst in the Labour Corps Henry’s regiment number changed from 69599 to 410950, apparently this was a normal thing to have happened. Then he spent another 4 months working at the wash house.

Also he worked at a Labour Corps Area Employment company, where soldiers helped with rescue work and were usually soldiers who were ranked below the medical condition ‘A1’, the condition you would need to be in to serve at the front line.

After a total of 3 years and 8 months of service in France, Henry was transferred to Class Z reserve on the 18th February 1919, due to the War’s end. There were fears that Germany would not accept the terms of any peace treaty, so the Government decided it would be wise to be able to quickly recall trained men in the event of another war starting. The soldiers who were being demobilised (discharged from the army), especially those who agreed to serve “for the duration”, were first put into Class Z. They returned to civilian life but with an obligation to
Henry tried to claim a pension when he was discharged by claiming that he had heart trouble, due to the strain and shock of the war. In addition to this, he stated the members of his family that he had to look after. But a full examination found there were no physical signs of heart trouble and that Henry's heart was normal. Unfortunately, the pension was rejected.

Henry's brother Percy John Hatchard also fought in War War 1.

After finishing in the army, Henry lived apart from his family and we understand Henry's daughter (my great grandmother) spoke very lowly of him. My family believe he ended his life in a work house in East Preston, a place where those who were unable to support themselves, were offered accommodation and employment.
During his time in the army Henry won the allied victory medal, British war medal and the 1914-1915 Star medal.

The Allied Victory Medal
This medal was also known as ‘Wilfred’. It was decided that each of the allies should each issue their own bronze victory medal with a similar design, similar equivalent wording and identical ribbon. It was designed by W. McMillan and the front shows a winged figure representing victory. The soldiers service number, rank, name and unit was impressed on the rim. About 5.7 million of these were issued.

The British War Medal
This medal was also known as ‘Squeak’ and was established on 26th July 1919. The silver or bronze medal was awarded to officers and men of the British and Imperial Forces who either fought in the war or entered service overseas between 5th August 1914 and 11th November 1918. This was later extended to services in
Russia, Siberia and some other areas in 1919 and 1920. Approximately 6.5 million British War medals were issued. 6.4 million of these were silver versions of this medal. Around 110,000 of a bronze version were issued mainly to Chinese, Maltese and Indian Labour Corps. The head on the front of the medal is the one of George V. The soldiers service number, rank, name and unit was impressed on the rim.

The 1914-15 Star

Also known as ‘Pip’ and was established in December 1918. This bronze medal was authorized in 1918 and it is very similar to the 1914 Star but it was issued to a much wider range of recipients. It was awarded to all who served in the war against Germany between 5th August 1914 and 31st December 1915, except those eligible for the 1914 Star. Like the 1914 Star, the 1914-15 Star was not awarded alone. The recipient had to have received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. The reverse is plain with the soldiers service number, rank, name and unit impressed on it. Its estimated 2.4 million of these medals were issued.
Conclusion

To find my soldier, I asked around my family if they knew of any relatives that may have fought in World War 1 and my Nanny told me of this story that has passed through the family but she had no knowledge of his name but she knew he was my Grandad’s Grandad. I looked through some records and certificates that my Mum had managed to find. As I was looking through them, I saw the marriage certificate of Henry’s daughter Mabel Gladys Hatchard, who was my Grandad’s Mum so on the certificate I found the name of Mabel’s father and it was Henry William Hatchard, so I knew that was my Grandad’s Grandad.

I chose him because I thought it was be really interesting to research someone who is related to me and to find out about what he did in the war.

A lot of my information and evidence came from ancestry.com, this site was really useful because it showed you a lot of records that had been filled out about Henry during the war. Also, I used The Long Long Trail and Google. The Long Long Trail gave me lots of detailed information and Google was just helpful for looking up some old words people use to use and words that were used in the army. I got some information from my family but this wasn’t very reliable as it could have been interpreted wrong or biased, but there must have been some truth in it. I also visit Worthing library where I found a lot of good evidence about what it was like to be in the trenches, from World War 1 newspapers and how the war effected Worthing from some history of Worthing books.

Ancestry.com is very useful as it had showed the real army records that were connected to Henry, during his time in the army. It’s a very
reliable source of evidence and information because the websites purpose is to inform people about their relatives and family trees. It is written by members on the site who put information and sources of evidence about their families onto ancestry.com. It is a factual website and its always being added and improved.

There were many difficulties I have overcome with this project. One of the problems I found was that the handwriting on the army records was really hard to understand because it was very different compared to how people write today. I overcame this by having my help from my Mum, trying different words that might fit in with the sentence and looking at other words I knew and looking to see how different letters were written like. My Mum also helped me to understand what some of the army forms were for. In addition to this, I struggled understanding the structure of the army as there were lots of different brigades and Corps, but the Long Long Trail really helped and it explained about all the different groups of soldiers that were in the army. The Long Long Trail also help me to find out what a lot of abbreviations and numbers meant. I looked up on Google words that I didn’t understand, for example, syncope which means a temporary loss of consciousness.

I have learnt loads from this project, I have learnt all about the Labour corps, the RFA and about the life of my Great, Great Grandad. I have found it really enjoyable and I have loved the challenge of researching and having to put it all together to create a story.