

## HARRY GREEN

1361, Private, Royal Guernsey Light Infantry    Born 1888    KIA: 13/4/1918

Harry Green was born in 1888, at 8 Clifton Terrace, Brook St, **Benson**, the son of William and Minnie Green. He had three older siblings, William, Alfred and Minnie, and his father (William) was a road labourer. Originally the Green family came from near Bampton, but by 1861 they had moved to Benson.

Most of the male Greens worked on the roads but not Harry. He left school around 14 years old and took up gardening work from 1903, and worked at the French gardens at Howbery Park. This was in fact a nursery leased from Howbery Park and run by the Sibley family. It may have been this French connection, but certainly he travelled to Guernsey for the potato picking season with Sydney and John Luker of Crowmarsh.

They must have decided to stay on in Guernsey, for in 1910 Harry met and married a local girl Gladys Amy Guille, who was aged 15. In 1911 they had a baby, who sadly died very young. At this time they lived at Cabo Catel in Guernsey with Gladys' parents and siblings. Lodging with them were the two Luker brothers. Through his marriage to Gladys, Harry was now a Guernsey resident and had become a house painter. In 1917 Harry and Gladys were living in Portinfer Vale, Guernsey and had a young son Gerald Henry (born in October 1915). Harry was 5ft 8inches tall, with a chest measurement of some 38 inches according to his attestation papers when he enlisted.

In late 1916, the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry were established, and over the next two years some 1,300 men enlisted – including Harry Green. Training for war followed, and on 1st June 1917 the battalion shipped to England and trained near Canterbury for four months. On 24th September 1917, the RGLI 1st Battalion (44 officers & 964 Ordinary Ranks) crossed to Le Havre and went to war. They were posted to 86 Brigade, and travelled in cattle trucks to Proven in Flanders.

From 9th to 14th October the battalion was bloodied in the Battle of Poelcappelle and acquitted themselves well. After a short break for rest and training, they then took part in the Battle of Cambrai from 20th November until 3rd December 1917. The battalion suffered heavy casualties, with 40% of the men wounded or killed.

Harry Green was sent to France on 2nd December, probably as part of a draft to replace these losses. He joined the battalion on 4th December 1917. A move to the Passchendaele front provided some relative rest, but then came the big final German offensive, with the German 6th Army smashing a hole 5 miles deep through the Allied lines in the Battle of the Lys.

The RGLI were amongst the units rushed south and thrown into combat in an attempt to stop the German advance. Hopelessly outnumbered, the RGLI fought gallantly but took appalling casualties for the second time, amongst them Harry Green, who died on 13th April 1918. A day later they were relieved by Australian troops and shortly after the few survivors of the battalion were withdrawn from combat and became a guard unit at General HQ for the rest of the war.

A first-hand account from a fellow RGLI man records that final attack..... “we moved up on duck boards at night, and were ordered not to stop should anyone fall off into the mud and

water. We moved into the forward trench where I was standing on something which I eventually found to be the leg of a partially buried man. We went over the top and it was not long before I was hit and fell down. The attack failed, the enemy counter-attacked and I was taken prisoner...”

Sadly Harry Green was not so lucky: he was recorded as killed in action 13th April 1918.