



COLLINGHAM IN THE GREAT WAR

Name, Rank & Regiment of Soldier:

Harker, John
Lance Corporal, 2nd/5th
Lincolnshire Regiment

No: 15301



Date of birth	Date KIA	Age
12 th Nov 1891 ¹	April 15 th 1918	26?

Background: John Harker

John was the son of Joseph Harker (born in Waddington 1856 died North Collingham 1932), a farm labourer, and Mary Ann Harker (born Horncastle 1857 died North Collingham 1924) of High Street, Collingham. They married in Thorney in 1877, lived in Harby until at least 1901 & were in Besthorpe in 1911.

Children:

- George William 1878 (baptised Thorney)
- Fanny b. 1881 (Harby) married Joseph Wells, a farm labourer at Besthorpe in 1903 d. 1905²
- Betsy b. 1883 (Harby) died 1966
- Joseph b 1885 Bassingham d 1895 aged 9 buried Harby

¹ 1901 census records (31st March) show John as 8. 7b 387 birth register gives earlier – 1892 Jan-March. East Trent Genealogy database gives date of birth 12 Nov 1891, baptism 5th December 1891.

² Ancestry.co.uk Moss Rose Family tree & other dates where not on East Trent Genealogy database

- Henry b 1888 Bassingham date of death unknown
- Kate (born Broadholme, baptised Thorney 1890 m. Wm Saywell 1913 d. 1921
- **John born 1891 (Harby) They were living on Wigsley Road, Harby in 1891**
- Fred (born in Harby 1895) died Aug. 1905 aged 11 after collision with a horse³
Abode -Kettlethorpe.
- Joseph Edward (born in Harby 1898/9 died 1980 - address given as 21 Windsor Close, Collingham at the time of his death) He married in 1925 to Florence Noble.

The family were still in Harby by the 1901 census (on Top Street) with the youngest 4 children (John being 8 years old) and in Besthorpe in 1911, with only 12-year old Joseph Jr. still at home. Joseph and Mary are recorded as having had 13 children with 6 still living.

JOHN HARKER

On the 1911 census, John Harker was shown as boarding with the Dove family of Thorpe-on-the-Hill. His age was given as 17 and occupation a wagoner on the Dove's farm (so his age doesn't fit with others sources, otherwise he'd be 19?). In 1916, a J Harker at Stapleford came 2nd in the Collingham Show for Best Turn out Plough Horse⁴. However, as Harker was serving on the front by then it is unlikely to be the same one (unless he was on leave?).

On the Lincolnshire Roll of Honour his address is given as High Street, North Collingham but this could be his parents' address. If so, they must have moved to Collingham after 1911. In the 1925 Electoral List widower Joseph, his son Henry (Harry) and his wife Hannah Harker are listed as living in 'Bungalow' (as opposed to a Walter Edlin in 'The Bungalow') on the High Street.

³ East Trent Genealogy Burials entry, Fred Harker 1905 Harby All Saints.

⁴ See 'Straight Furrows' (book in CDLHS archives & Collingham Library)

Military History: Lance Corporal John Harker

It is currently unknown when John Harker enlisted. As he was awarded the 1915 Star medal it is to be presumed he joined up early in the war - possibly early 1915. His medal roll record shows his active service (excluding training) was reckoned from 6th July 1915. Harker was initially with the 1st battalion then the 7th, 10th and finally the 2/5th Lincolns. He would have been seen as an experienced soldier by the time he transferred to the 2/5th Lincolns.

Campaign :—		1914-15		(A) Where decoration was earned.	
				(B) Present situation.	
Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)	
(A) HARKER	LINC. R. PTE	PTE	15301	VICTORY	F/105 Bg 1084
(B) John	---	---	---	BRITISH	---
Action taken				15 STAR	
				F/413 1916	
THEATRE OF WAR				Reg: on DEAD?	
				(1) France.	
6/7/15.					
<small>(6 34 46) W234—HP5590 500,000 4/19 HWV(P240) K608</small>				[OVER.	

Above: John Harker's medal index card

The 2/5th Lincolnshire Regiment

Formed in Grimsby on 6 February 1915 as a Second Line Battalion (in other words, part of Kitchener's 'New' Army formed to support the regular army). Attached to 177th Brigade, 59th (2nd North Midland) Division.

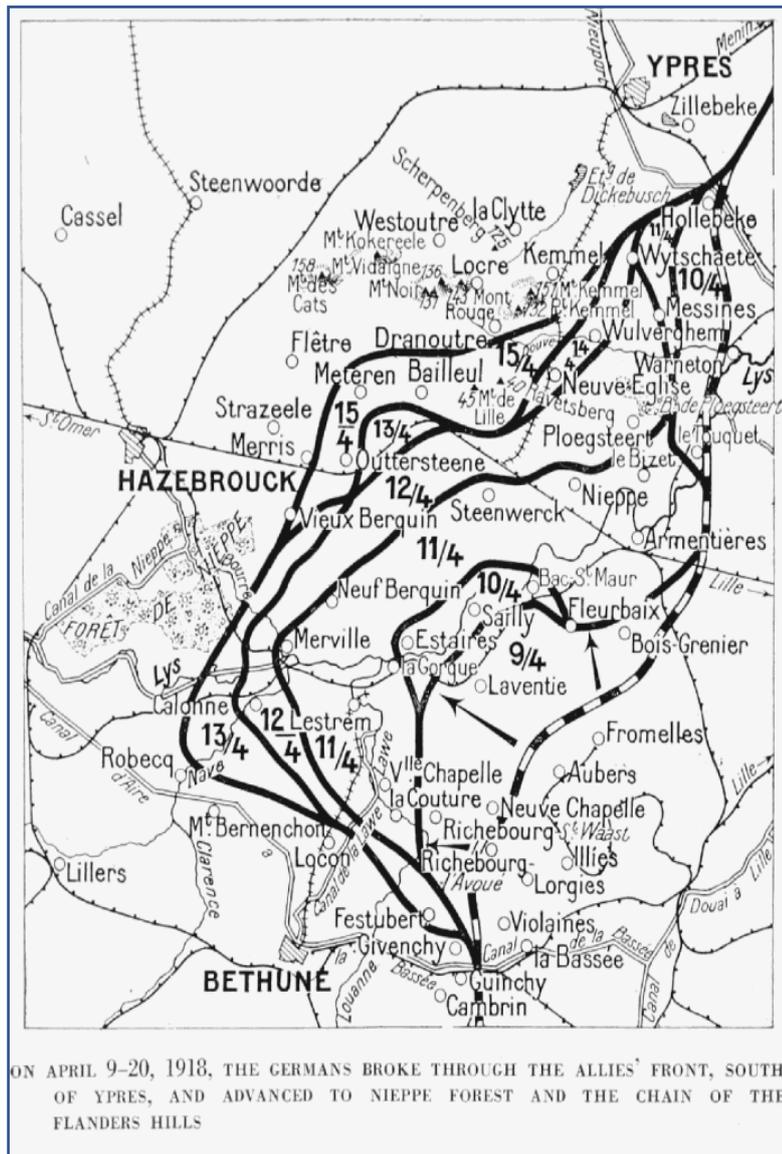
April 1916: Moved with Division to Ireland and took part in actions against the rebellion of the Easter Uprising.

January 1917: Returned to England and moved to France next month.

It is not known when Harker joined the 2/5th so an accurate account of the battles he was involved in from 1915 is difficult to tabulate. From March 1918 the 2/5th were involved in the Battle of St Quentin (21-23 March) followed by the Battle of Bailleul (14-15 April) during which he lost his life.

The Battle of Bailleul (a phase of The Battle of the Lys 7-29th April)

By this stage in the war, the Germans were determined to end the stalemate that had prolonged the war so far. There was also concern from German high command about the fact that the USA had now joined the Allies and had sent almost a million soldiers to the Western Front. Before these fresh troops could 'find their feet' Germany launched a series of 'Spring Offensives' from March onwards. The Battle of the Lys was its third such big push.



Above: Map of the battlefields around Ypres during April 1918. Bailleul, where the 2/5th Lincolns were in action on the 15th is shown between Hazebrouck on the West and Ypres on the NE.

Below is a full account of events that day, downloaded from the regimental history. It is not known which Company of the 2/5th Lincoln s Harker was attached to so it is difficult to know

at which stage during the day he met his fate. Afterwards, the battalion was reduced to cadre strength as losses were so heavy. By July the remains of 2/5th were absorbed into the 1/5th Lincolns.

Extract from Maj. C Simpson's History of the Lincolnshire Regiment

(available to download as a pdf) first published 1931

April 13 - 15th 1918 (Harker was killed on the 15th)

13th APRIL

The 4th and 2 /5th Lincolnshire entrained at Brandhoek during the early afternoon of the 13th April and arriving at Godewaersvelde, marched to Mont de Gats and billeted in huts.

14th April

At 2 a.m. on the 14th, however, they were ordered to march to Locre, where they were temporarily accommodated in huts until 1 1 a.m., when they again moved along the Locre-Dranoutre road and halted while the Commanding Officers and Company Commanders reconnoitred the reserve line south of Dranoutre. The battalions appear to have spent the day in this position, for it was (as already stated)

15th April

5.30 am

The 2 /5th Battalion relieved troops of the 88th Brigade on the **Ravetsberg Ridge**: the 2 /5th were then on the right of the 4th Battalion.

The 2 /5th (all four companies) were now holding a line of four advanced posts on the forward slope of the Ravetsberg Ridge. Each company garrisoned a post with one platoon, the remaining three platoons digging in on the reverse slope of the

Ridge.

6 a.m.

Two hostile patrols, each about twenty strong, advanced against one of the right posts, but were driven off, leaving three prisoners in the hands of the Lincolnshire and seventeen dead and wounded lying out in front.

7.00 am

Another patrol advanced against a machine-gun post on the right: the patrol was counter-attacked and driven off, the 2 /5th taking twelve more prisoners. During the morning, eight German deserters gave themselves up.

12.00-4.00 pm

About noon the enemy heavily bombarded the positions held by the Lincolnshire until 2.30 p.m., when an intense barrage was placed, not only on the 2 /5th, but on the units on the right and left. At 2.45 p.m., the enemy's infantry advanced and attacked the 4th Lincolnshire. The line of the latter remained intact. At 3.40 p.m., the right company of the 2 /5th was attacked, but the enemy was repulsed with Lewis gun and rifle-fire.

4.30 p.m.

An alarming report reached the Commanding Officer of the 2 /5th, his left Company Commander reporting the enemy on the Ridge on his immediate left and that the 4th Lincolnshire had fallen back from the Ridge. The 4th Battalion had, however, formed a defensive flank, still keeping touch with the left of the 2 /5th (D Company).

5.25 p.m - 11.00 pm

The line of the 4th Lincolnshire was north of the Ravetsberg road and

along the railway cutting between Keersebrom and Hill 75. A few minutes later the enemy forced his way over the crest of the 320 hill and breaking the line of the 4th Battalion, got behind the left flank of the 2 /5th, and one, platoon of the 4th, which had continuously maintained touch with the left of the former. Simultaneously a frontal attack was made on the 2 /5th. The left company (D) was last seen in its original position engaged in desperate fighting at close quarters. The Lewis gun section of this company went down fighting to the bitter end, having emptied its magazines into the closely-packed ranks of the enemy at very close range.

The three remaining companies of the 2 /5th, on the Ridge, then came under very heavy machine-gun fire from the left and suffered heavy casualties. The survivors now formed a flank facing east, but were gradually driven back to a line taken up by the 177th Brigade north-east of Bailleul. Patrols sent out from Battalion Headquarters to find the companies, found only the enemy. To conform with the 4th Lincolnshire, Battalion Headquarters of the 2 /5th then withdrew a short distance, having on the right two companies of the 9th Northumberland Fusiliers. Battalion Headquarters personnel were then organized into fire units. The enemy was then checked, but the night of the 1 5th / 1 6th passed anxiously

11.00 p.m

orders were issued from the brigade to withdraw to Locre.

Post-script

The 2 /5th sustained heavy casualties in this action:

Lieut- Colonel H.B. Roffey was killed, 2nd Lieutenant L.G. Dickinson was wounded, and 2nd Lieutenants W.G. Fenton and J.C.

Myers were missing: the losses in other ranks killed, wounded and missing were three hundred and fifty-two.

A SOLDIER OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE REGIMENT

THE HISTORY

of the

LINCOLNSHIRE REGIMENT

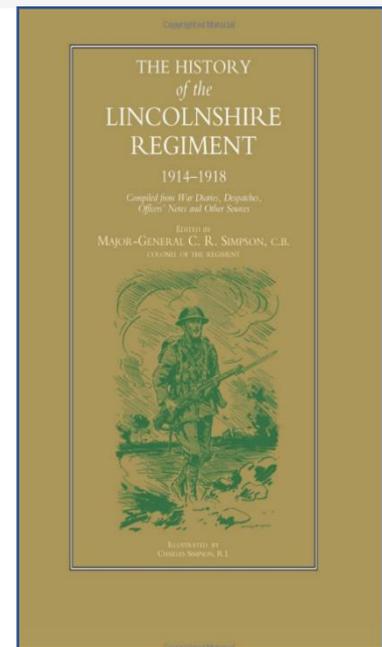
1914-1918

Compiled from War Diaries, Despatches,
Officers' Notes and Other Sources

Edited by

MAJOR-GENERAL C. R. SIMPSON, C.B. 1931

Now available to buy as a reprint from Naval Military Press <https://www.naval-military-press.com/product/history-of-the-lincolnshire-regiment-1914-1918/>



L/Corporal Harker is remembered on:

- ❶ **The Addenda Panel of the Ploegsteert Memorial, Hainault, Belgium (meaning his body was never found)**
- ❷ **North Collingham War Memorial Cross, Parishioners Plaque and Roll of Honour**
- ❸ **Lincolnshire Regiment Roll of Honour, Catherine St George's Chapel, Lincoln Cathedral.**

Others from Collingham & district serving in the Lincolnshire Regiment who were also killed in the Great War:

- ❶ **Thomas H Bacon 2nd Lincolnshire Battalion (KIA 1917)**
- ❷ **Captain P Browne 6th Battalion (KIA 1916)**
- ❸ **F Lyon 1st Lincolnshire Battalion then Machine Gun Corps (KIA 1917)**

See separate profiles

Sources (websites):

East Trent Genealogy

Ancestry.co.uk

Nottinghamshire County Council Roll of Honour

The History of the Lincolnshire Regiment:

<https://archive.org/details/TheHistoryOfTheLincolnshireRegiment1914-1918>

<https://archive.org/about/>

News article about the new Roll of Honour to the Fallen in Lincoln Minster:

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/news/together-again-%E2%80%93-the-names-of-every-lincolnshire-ww1-soldier-immortalised-in-new-books-of-remembrance/122429.article>

Visit:

Museum of Lincolnshire Life, Burton Road, Lincoln LN1 3LY (former regimental barracks)



HP 16/4/2018