

Harry Marks

The next soldier commemorated on Rownhams church War Memorial is Driver Harry Marks, of the Royal Field Artillery. Harry was born in Rownhams in 1897, the son of William Marks, a timber dealer originally from Millbrook, and his wife Emma from Chichester: the family lived in Rownhams Road. In 1911, William's father, a widowed hoopmaker (presumably hoops for barrels) was living with them, and there was a house full of Harry's siblings (six in all), including Albert* who was a groom. Harry was 13 and still at school.

Harry served with the Royal Field Artillery, but the term "driver" shouldn't make us think of cars. Drivers in the RFA cared for & maintained the horses needed to move the artillery pieces around the battlefield. Some of them had the sole job of driving the horses and were found in the ammunition columns. Some were gun team drivers; these were also trained as gunners. The fact of Harry working with horses is very poignant, at a time when Romsey is remembering its war horses and the huge Remount depot at Pauncefoot hill which supplied some 120,000 horses and mules for the front.

From July 19, 1916, A/298th Bde RFA (Harry's brigade) was essentially 2/1st Hampshire RHA TF – this replaced that originally designated battery on re-organisation. You can find photographs of the RFA here:

<https://www.facebook.com/Ww1PhotoPostcardsOfTheRoyalArtilleryRgaRfaRh>

Harry landed in France on 15 March 1915. He died of wounds during the 3rd Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) on 5th October 1917. The battle had commenced on the 31st July 17, so by October had nearly stalemated in appalling conditions of mud and slime and at a cost of nearly a quarter of a million casualties. Driver Marks is buried in Dozinghem Military Cemetery which is located about 6 miles west of Ypres, Belgium.

*While I was researching Harry, I ran across Albert's will. He died on 23rd August 1937 on HMS Cornwall at Gillingham, Kent. It was being refitted around this time. He left a widow, Elsie Marks and was at the time living in St Kevin's Cottage in Rownhams.

Sources include the great war forum, <http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com>

Ann Laird - Rownhams November 2013