

# Henry Rowland Phillips 1892-1916

Henry Phillips was a local man who was born and lived in Leyton, as man and boy. Although he died in Belgium, he is commemorated in the churchyard of St Mary's next to the road in which he lived throughout his life. His parents were Martha Bennett & Frederick John Phillips, who were married in St Mary's Church, Leyton on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1885. He came from a large family, having five brothers (Frederick, John, Stanley, Sidney, George) and three sisters (Caroline, Florer Rose).


In 1911 the whole family of ten lived in 123 Goldsmith Road, a six room house, so must have been quite crowded. On the gravestone Henry is called Harry, so I presume this was the family name for him.



Grave NWa 4.13



As regards occupations, his father was a house-painter and his two elder sisters worked as machinists making underwear. Henry's brothers were mostly clerks, although his eldest brother was an "umbrella cutter". Henry himself was a "market clerk".



**Your King and Country  
Need You.**

Will you answer your Country's Call? Each day is fraught with the gravest possibilities, and at this very moment the Empire is on the brink of the greatest war in the history of the world.

In this crisis your Country calls on all her young unmarried men to rally round the Flag and enlist in the ranks of her Army.

If every patriotic young man answers her call, England and her Empire will emerge stronger and more united than ever.

If you are unmarried and between 19 and 30 years old will you answer your Country's Call?

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General Service for a period of 3 years or until the war is concluded.

**JOIN THE ARMY  
TO-DAY!**

**RECRUITING OFFICES:**

Walthamstow: Town-Hall, Orford Road.  
Leyton: Town Hall, High Road.

**GOD SAVE THE KING.**

**Britain declared war on Germany on the 4th August 1914.** Harry Phillips became one of the 2.5 million volunteers who became part of what is sometimes called the "New Army" or "Kitchener's Army". We know that he enlisted in Leyton Town Hall on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1914.

1905



From the August 29<sup>th</sup> 1914 edition of Walthamstow, Leyton & Chingford Guardian.

## **Enlisting in the army**

In the Walthamstow, Leyton & Chingford Guardian on Friday August 21<sup>st</sup> 1914 there is an account of a meeting of the local recruiting committee, headed "Offices opened at the Town Hall"

To quote the *article*: " A meeting was held at the Town Hall, Leyton on Tuesday evening ..... It was decided to open an office at the Town Hall immediately, where information will be given to men desiring to join the Army. Here, also all particulars will be received, but the men will be required to enlist at Stratford. The hours will be from 12 to 2 & 7 to 9 every week day ..... It was also decided to circulate throughout the district a leaflet appealing to the young men of Leyton, Leytonstone and Wanstead to answer the call of the King and country while large posters will be exhibited in the shops and on public hoardings."

Harry Phillips was one of those who responded to the posters and leaflets which were circulated in Leyton. He joined the Wiltshire Regiment and was one of 340 men who enlisted in this regiment on this date. His army number was 12814.

Shortly after joining the army he was transferred to the 6th Battalion of the Leinster Regiment and his army number was 1276. It was not unusual for men to be transferred from one regiment to another if they were needed in that regiment. It was with this regiment that he went to fight in the Balkans theatre of war i.e. Gallipoli in Turkey in July 1915.

## **Background to the Gallipoli Campaign**

Gallipoli is the name given to the Turkish peninsula to the west of the Dardanelle Straits. This is a waterway that links the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmara. The peninsula is only 10 miles at the widest point and approx. 45 miles long. The terrain is inhospitable, consisting of steep-sided hills, deep gulleys and ravines and rocky scrubland, with little drinking water.

Turkey entered the war on Germany's side in October 1914. The Gallipoli campaign lasted from February 1915 to January 1916, and the reason for the fighting was that the Allies wanted shipping to be able to get through the Dardanelles into the Sea of Marmara and then into the Black Sea to

link up with their ally, Russia. The Turkish army, led by Mustafa Kamel, fought the French, British, Australian and New Zealand troops. Gallipoli was where the Australian troops and New Zealand Army Corps (usually called ANZAC) first went into action during the First World War.

It is estimated that in this 10 month campaign the Turkish army suffered 300,000 casualties (including the many sick) and the Allies, 265,000. The ANZACs alone suffered 10,000 men killed and 26,000 wounded. This was an unsuccessful campaign for the Allies, as they gained no land and did not get to control the Dardanelles.

Mustafa Kamel, known as Ataturk, went on to become the founder of the Republic of Turkey.





## Harry Phillips and the Gallipoli campaign

On the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1915 there were 32 officers and 1,002 men of other ranks, one of whom was Harry Phillips, in the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Leinster Regiment. They were based at Basingstoke and it was from there that they left on two trains to arrive in Liverpool on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 1915, at between 2.30 and 3.30 am. They had been issued with one set of boots as they got on the trains. They then sailed on the SS Mauretania, and after calling in at Gibraltar on the 12<sup>th</sup> July, they arrived at the Aegean island of Lemnos on the 16<sup>th</sup> July. This had been selected as a base and headquarters of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and served as a transit area for the British, ANZAC and French forces on their way to Gallipoli, which was approximately four hours (60 miles) away. It had a deep-water harbour, Mudros Bay, but had an inadequate water supply. On the 20<sup>th</sup> July they landed at Mudros and “bivouacked on the western side of the harbour”. By the 29<sup>th</sup> July over 100 men were sick with diarrhoea.



## Fighting

On the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1915 Harry Phillips landed, along with the rest of his battalion, at Anzac Cove, in Gallipoli. The fighting had been going on for 3 months when he arrived. On the first day of fighting in April, each side had lost 2,000 men and the casualty rate had continued to be high on both sides.

## Wounded at Gallipoli

As soon as they arrived the battalion were in dug-outs and were being continually shelled with shrapnel by the Turkish soldiers. Between the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> August the casualties were:- 30 killed, 163 wounded and 23 missing.

The overall conditions were horrific. Throughout August they were very short of water and the terrain and the close fighting did not allow for the dead to be buried. Thus flies and vermin were rife, which led to sickness. In fact the entry in the War Diary for the 31<sup>st</sup> August notes:- “CRESOL has no effect on flies”. Even when the men were away from the front line, repairing a road, they were being wounded by shrapnel and many were sick with dysentery. To take an example from the Battalion War Diary, between the 24<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> August 75 men are listed as having dysentery and being sent to hospital.

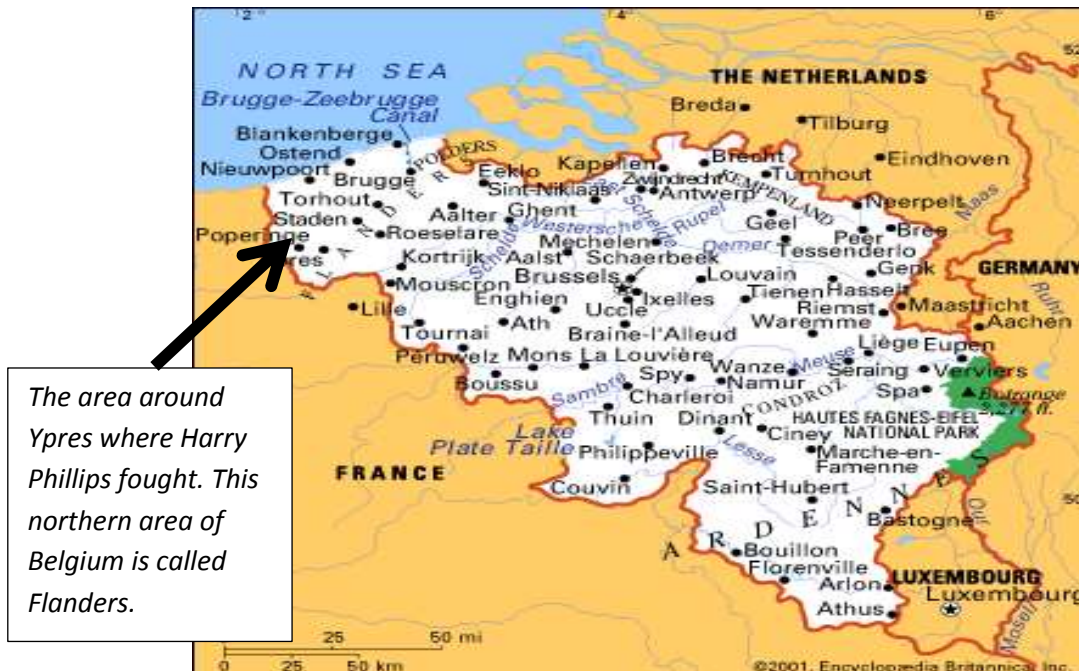
**We do not know the exact date in August that Harry Phillips was wounded in Gallipoli and sent to hospital. We do know that he never returned to the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Leinster Regiment.**



*Above is one of the many sentimental post-cards produced during the First World War. One feels that the picture shown is far from the reality that Harry Phillips would have experienced when he was wounded.*

## Transfer to the 2nd Battalion of the Leinster Regiment

After his recovery, Harry was transferred to the 2nd Battalion of the Leinster Regiment, which were sent to fight in Belgium. The area he fought in is shown on the map below .



The Commanding Officer of each battalion wrote a diary of events when the battalion went overseas; many of these are in the National Archives and are called the War Diaries. Below and on the next page are a random selection of entries from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion War Diary of the Leinster Regiment for the period November 1915 until the beginning of June 1916, which hopefully give some idea of how Harry Phillips lived in the last six months of his life. This seems to have been in a constant state of uncertainty and bombardment. He must have seen many soldiers wounded and die around him.

After his time in Gallipoli with the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, he became a Lance Corporal, so was in charge of a number of men.



<b>Place</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Summary of events</b>
RENINGHELST	Nov 2	4.00p m	"Left camp and marched to Voormezele to take over a new line of trenches. These were in a terrible state and communication trenches were in places two feet deep in mud and water. There are two lately exploded mine craters in the front of the right of this line and there has been a considerable amount of bombing activity lately. Bomb posts established on our edge of crater. Enemy have posts on opposite edges. Very wet night."
<u>St ELOI</u>	Nov 3		Still raining heavily. Trenches getting worse and parapets falling in as fast as they are put up..... Enemy threw about 10 bombs at our posts but this was checked by our rifle fire
St ELOI	Nov 5		Quiet day. Our right company was shelled by whizz bangs and suffered about eight casualties

RENINGHELST	Nov 7		Company inspections, cleaning up and resting. Several men suffering from bad feet after last trying period in trenches
VOORMEZEEL	Nov 17		A German deserter..... walked over and surrendered to our right Coy. He was a very young soldier but well dressed and clean. Sent to BHQ.
GANSPETTE	Dec 1-16		Training carried on daily on a progressive system for about four hours daily, special instruction of grenadiers, machine gunners, signallers and snipers. Platoon and company training, route marches and lectures to officers and NCOs.
	Dec 11		The Army Commander inspected the Btl on a route march and expressed himself very pleased with the marching and appearance of the men.
GANSPETTE	Dec 25	1.30 pm	Christmas Day. Finals and contests in Regt. Boxing Competition. COs visited men at special dinners.
RAILWAY WOODS	Feb 10		Heavy sniping during last night..... Considerable shelling all day..... Two pioneers and seven men of A Coy wounded by shell at the RE dump. Capt. Nolan killed.
	Feb 12	4.10 pm	Heavy artillery active all morning. About 4.10 pm what appeared to be a gas cloud was observed moving from our left....Gas helmets were donned in front line and "Gas Alert " message sent. Heavy rifle and machine gun fire to our left. At 4.45 some bombs were thrown by enemy ..... a few enemy showed themselves and were fired at.
	Feb 13		A very heavy bombardment of the Hooze trenches commenced about 7am and continued almost without cessation until 5pm. All kinds and size of shell were used by the enemy. Our artillery retaliation appeared weak and did not commence until the afternoon. Our front line was heavily shelled at intervals during the morning.
	Feb 14		Cleaning up camp and inspections of smoke helmets, clothing and feet.
VLANERTINGHE	Feb 23	10am	Hard frost and snow in the morning. Working parties of 200 men conveyed to trenches in buses.
ZILLEBEKE	March 7		Killed 5. Wounded 6. Very cold weather with snow.
	March 8-12		Very cold with snow on ground. Working parties each night on Hooze line
	March 13		A fine bright day. Enemy quiet in the morning but about 3.30 pm he commenced a heavy bombardment of Hooze and the trenches near Menin road which lasted an hour. A great variety of shells used chiefly 5.9 and 4.2 H.E our casualties 7 killed and 8 wounded. Our artillery retaliated effectively.
HOOZE	March 15		Enemy again bombarded Hooze and trenches north of road with H.E and shrapnel for one hour continuously... Our casualties – Killed 8. Wounded 10.
VLANERTINGHE	March 17	2.30 pm	Baths at Poperinghe allotted to the battalion in the morning. A special entertainment for the battalion was arranged in the Cinema hall and was paid for out of regimental funds.
WULVERGHEM	April 1-6		On the 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> the enemy bombarded heavily causing some damage... On the 5 <sup>th</sup> another heavy bombardment ... Considerable damage & several casualties.
KORTEPYP			Casualties during period 30 March – 6 <sup>th</sup> April:- Killed - 6, Wounded - 36.

### **Harry Phillips death – 13/6/1916**

WULVERGHAM	June 3-11	11.20 pm	During the tour 3rd-11th inst. The enemy artillery was fairly active causing a moderate extent of damage to our trenches but not inflicting many casualties. The first 3 days were noted by an absence of artillery activity. On the fourth day he shelled in vicinity of RATION FARM and HIGGINSON AVENUE destroying the ----- -- the latter for some distance. Following day shelling with whizz- bangs & shrapnel causing a few casualties. From then onwards he shelled at interval daily. On the 10th inst..... the enemy retaliated with shell, rifle, grenades & trench mortar. These did little damage except in one place (DIAGONAL) where our Trench mortar bomb registered a direct hit destroying the trench for some distance. Machine gun fire was as usual at night. The casualties during this period were Other Ranks killed 6 Wounded 29. Officers killed 1 wounded nil.
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In the diary entry on the previous page there is a reference to 29 men wounded on the 11th June and it is possible that Harry was one of these who died two days later or one of the 6 who were killed outright. **However he could have been wounded before this. What we do know is that his Medal Index Card states he was "killed in action" and the Leinster Regiment database states "died of wounds". In any event he died at Wulverghem in Flanders on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1916 and is buried at Ration Farm (La Plus Douve) Annexe in Belgium.** The farm itself was used, at times, as a Battalion headquarters and is also mentioned in the diary entry on the last page. The graveyard was in use at this time.

As stated above, Henry Rowland Phillips is buried in Belgium. He is also commemorated on the family gravestone in St Mary's Parish Churchyard and on a plaque in a room at the back of the church.



RATION FARM  
ANNEXE

In the valley of the river Douve, north of Ploegsteert Wood, were two farms, 'La Petite Douve' and 'La Plus Douve'. This was also known as Ration Farm, because battalion transport could approach it at night with rations. Henry Rowland Phillips was buried in Ration Farm (La Plus Douve) Annexe, grave reference 11.B.10. This started to be used as a cemetery in January 1915 and was used until January 1918. It contains 202 Commonwealth graves of men who died in the First World War.



**Extract from the Leinster Regiment Memorial List.**

*PHILLIPS HENRY ROWLAND  
United Kingdom Lance Corporal Leinster  
Regiment 2nd Bn. Age: 24 Date of Death:  
13/06/1916 Service No: 1276 II.B.10.*

IRELAND'S MEMORIAL RECORDS 1914-1918

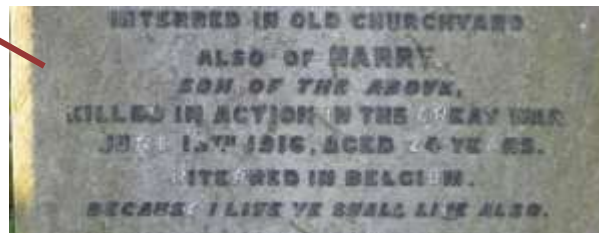
PHILLIPS, HENRY. Reg. No. 1276.  
Rank, Lance-Corporal, 2nd Leinster Regi-  
ment; killed in action, France, June 13,  
1916; born Leyton, London.



## St Mary's Churchyard, Leyton



Henry is commemorated in the north-western part of St Mary's graveyard. His name is on the gravestone marking the grave of his father, Frederick, who died November 20th 1921 at the age of 65, his brother George who had died on the 20th April 1901, aged 3 years, and his mother Martha, who died after the Second World War, on December 30th 1946 at the age of 87 years. See detail of his inscription below.



This is a plaque commemorating those who died in the First and Second World Wars in a room at the back of St Mary's Church, Leyton.



## Medals

Henry Rowland Phillips was awarded the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the 1914-1915 Star, as he had served in a theatre of war against Germany between 5th August 1914 and 31st December 1915, *i.e.* he had volunteered, not been conscripted into the army.

## References for Henry Rowland Phillips.

With thanks to the following:- All the staff at the Vestry House Museum and Local Studies Library;  
Chris Bacon archivist for the Wiltshire Regiment;  
The National Archives, Kew –War Diaries of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions of the Leinster Regiment.  
The Web sites:- Wikipedia; Ancestry; The Long, Long Trail; Great War Forum; Forces War Records; The Commonwealth War Graves Commission; The Bignote.com; History Learning Site; Ireland, Casualties for World War 1.