

Harry Eales

died of his wounds 26 April 1918

age 29 years



Harry Eales was born in Dummer in 1889. His father Charles was an agricultural labourer who had also been born in Dummer. Charles had 7 children by his first marriage to Jane Prior but after her death in 1881 married Elizabeth Allen (widow of Alfred Allen) from Nutley. In addition to her own son, Alfred Archibald, the couple had another 5 children including Harry. Harry was the nephew of George Eales, the hero of Dummer, who rescued a boy from the well.

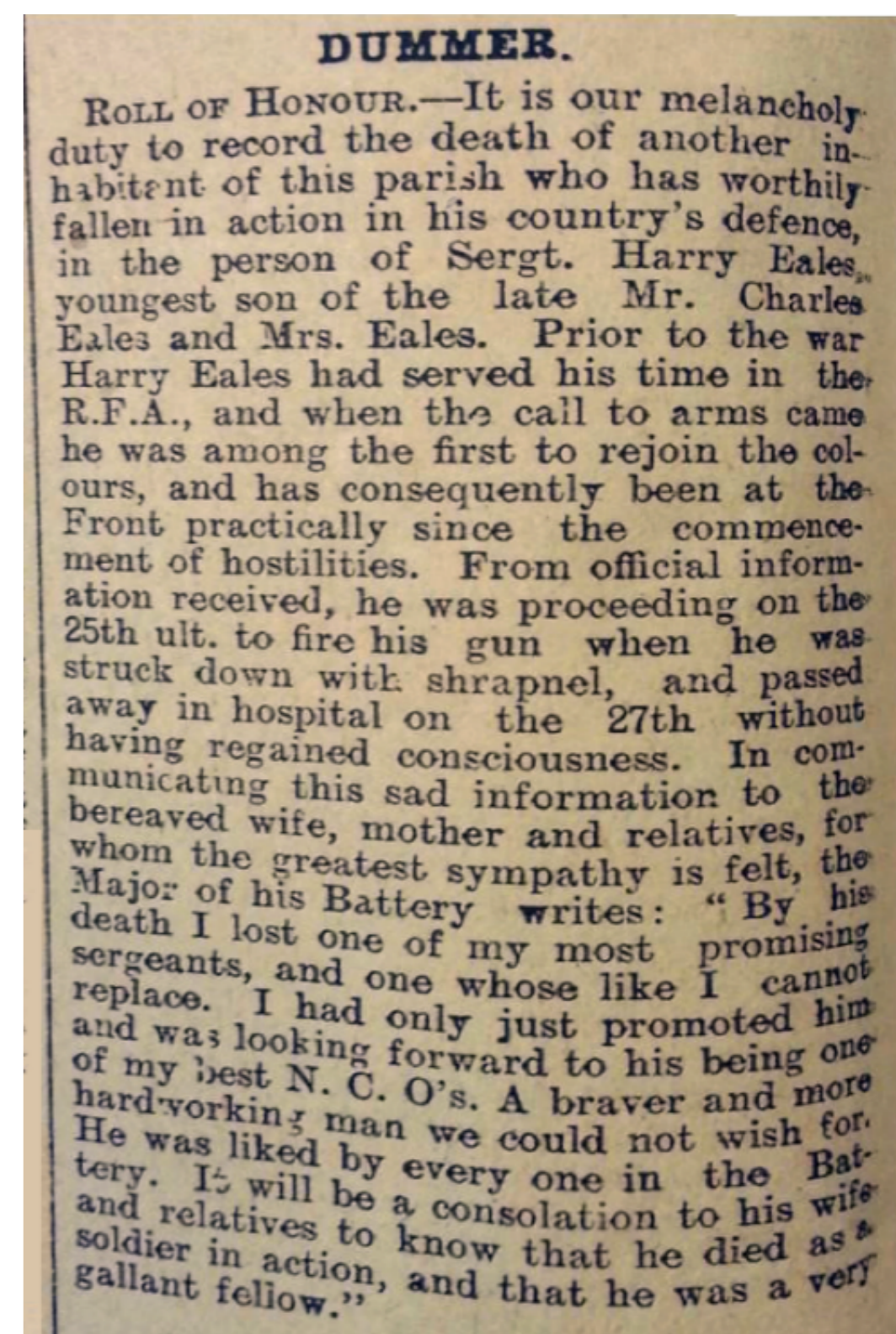
By 1911 Harry had left the family home and was working as a cowman, living in Cliddesden at The Carters Cottage. He was still single. By 1914 he was working as a Telegraph Labourer and living back at home in Dummer.

In 1914 Harry married Elleanor Winifred Harris, who was also a Dummer resident, at the Basingstoke Register Office.

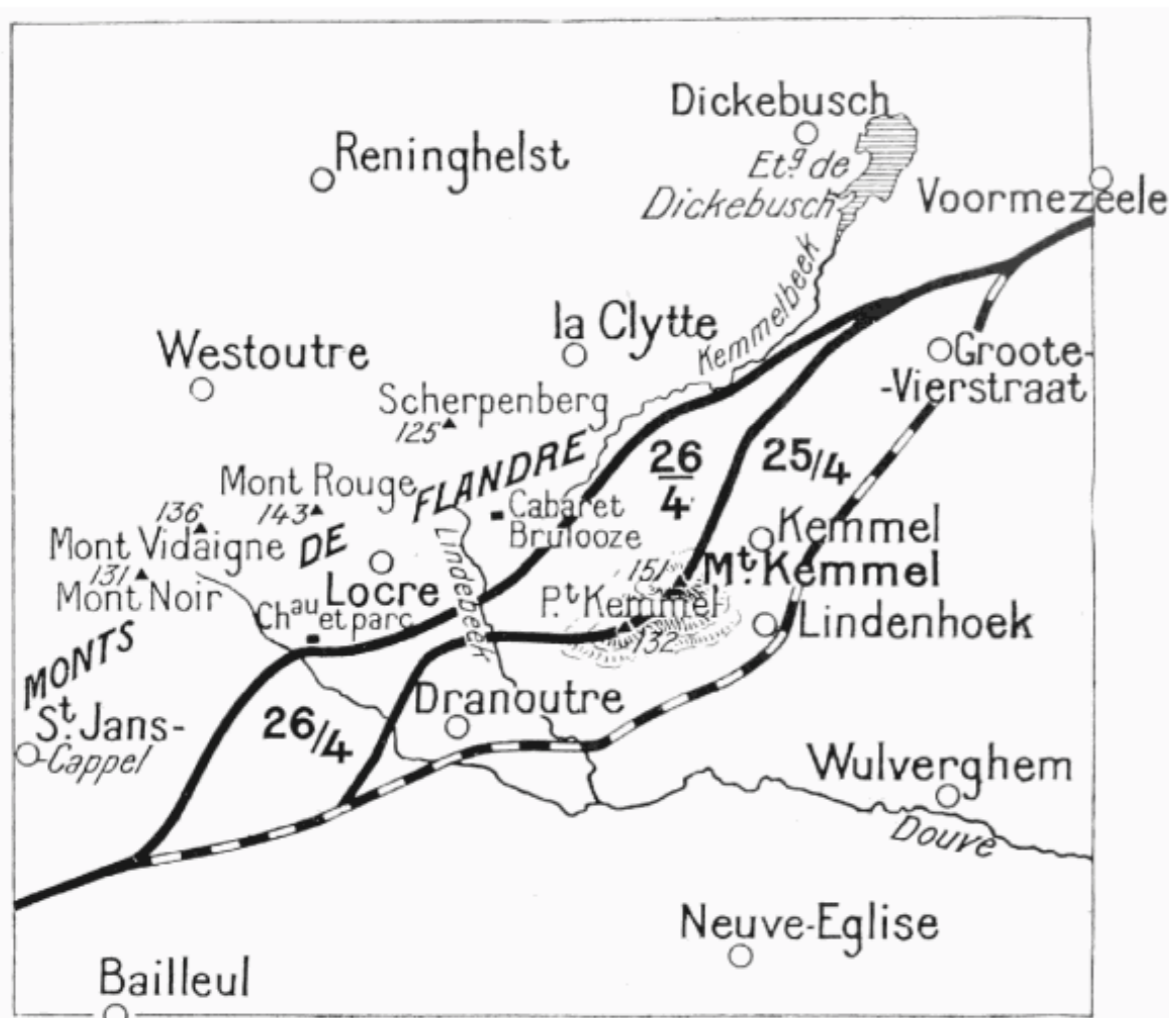
Harry was mobilised from the Royal Field Artillery Reserve in August 1914. He enlisted in Basingstoke, rejoining the Royal Field Artillery - regimental number 39859. When killed he was a Sergeant in the 24th Battery 38th Brigade RFA. He died of his wounds on 26th April 1918 and was buried in Belgium at Abeele Aerodrome Military Cemetery, Watou. Amongst other Battles, he fought in, and survived, the Marne, the Aisne, Ypres and Neuve-Chapelle.

The Major of his Battery wrote: By his death I lost one of my most promising sergeants, and one whose like I cannot replace. I had only just promoted him and was looking forward to his being one of my best N.C.O's. A braver and more hard-working man we could not wish for. He was liked by everyone in the Battery.

Harry's sister Ellen, who married Sam Elmer in 1914, gave birth to a son in 1920 and named him Harry.



The Roll of Honour entry in the local paper in full.



The Germans had attacked the chain of hills which protected Ypres. By 26 April 1918 they had reached the outskirts of Locre. Harry's artillery battery was fighting near Mont Rouge and the Westoutre Road.



Ruins of Locre and Rouge Hill in 1918



Royal Artillery Cap badge

The Spring Offensive 1918

The German plans for the Spring Offensive 1918 sought to divide the British and French forces on the Western Front using infiltration tactics rather than the usual long artillery bombardments and massed assaults previously employed. Artillery was used only briefly and small groups of infantry were targeted at weak points, such as command and logistics areas. These isolated positions were then destroyed by more heavily armed infantry. Points of possible serious resistance were bypassed. These tactics were initially very successful. In France an attack on British forces near Amiens took the British forces by surprise, and the Germans achieved an advance of 60 kilometers, an unprecedented distance at that time. The front moved to within 120 kilometres (75 miles) of Paris but there the advance was halted. Foiled, the Germans turned their attention to Flanders, launching the Lys Offensive, the (Fourth Battle of Ypres), also known as Operation Georgette which ran from the 9th to the 29th April 1918. Harry Eales was in the 24th Battery 38th Brigade RFA based around Mont Rouge.

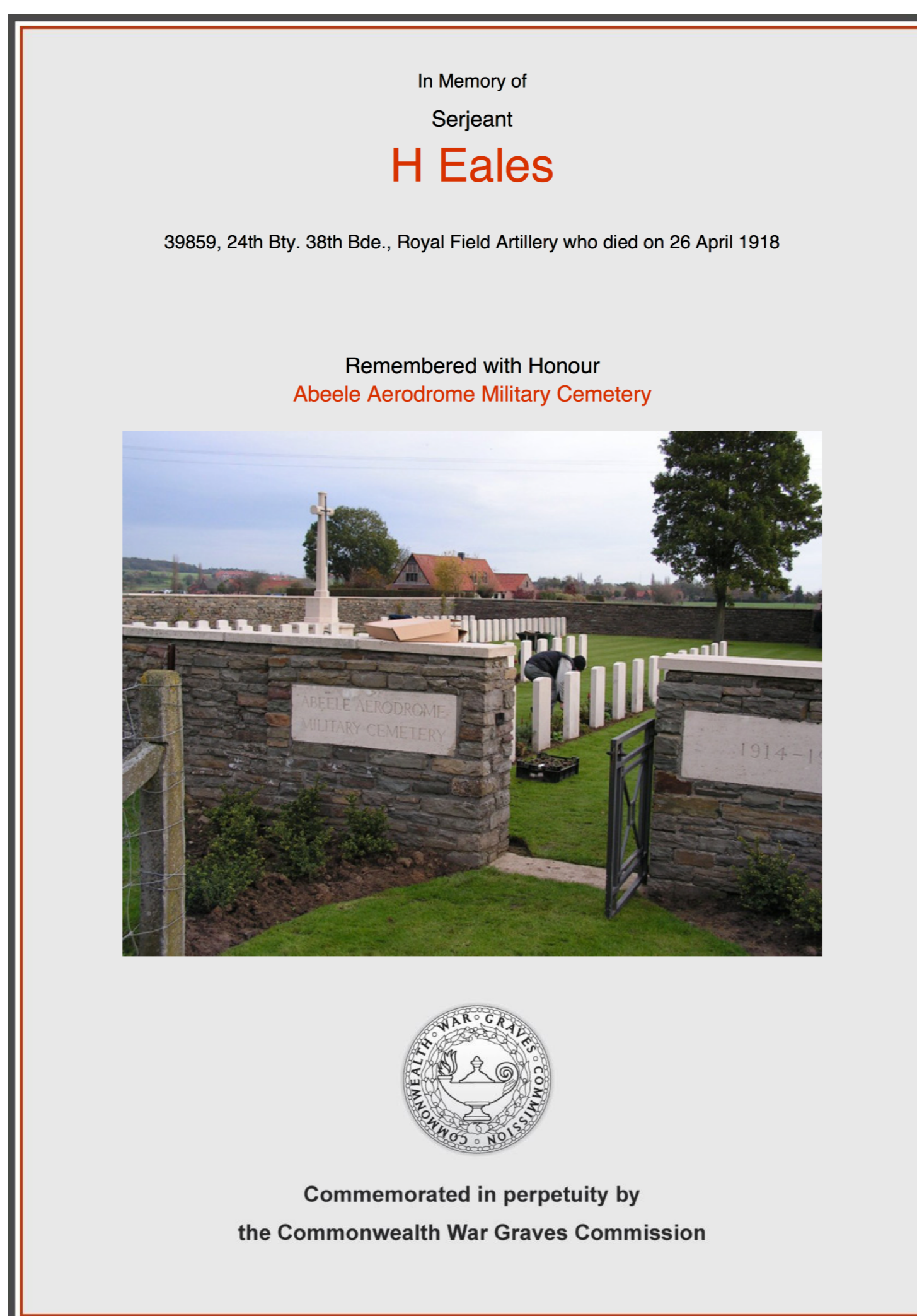
The Brigade War Diary for the 25th April 1918 says:

Warning of attack sent to Batteries. S.O.S 2.30am and all lines immediately cut. Out of communication with everyone. No lines held. Firing continued till 8.30am. Very intense enemy barrage along and behind ridge MONT ROUGE. 72nd Battery suffered considerably. All officers wounded, Battery temporarily in charge of a No. 1. Numerous casualties on all roads to men, horses and equipment, notable on MONT ROUGE to WESTOUTRE road. Enemy reported to hold KEMMEL, LOCRE Hospice, and ½ SCHERRENBERG. Moved HQ 1500 *S.E of DRANOUTRE with 11th Brigade RFA. Continuous intermittent shelling up to 10pm.

Casualties:- Officers, killed 1, wounded 6
O.R. killed 5, wounded 37, Gassed 17, Missing 1

26th April 1918

Headquarters moved to a house just N.E of WESTOUTRE with 11th Army Brigade RFA. Quiet day.
Casualties:- O.R. 4 killed, 22 wounded.



A battery of 18-pounder guns of the RFA moving up 26 March 1918. IWM Q8631

Royal Field Artillery

The Royal Regiment of Artillery at the time of the Great War comprised three elements:

The Royal Horse Artillery: armed with light, mobile, horse-drawn guns that supplemented the heavier guns of the Royal Field Artillery.

The Royal Field Artillery: the most numerous arm of the artillery, the horse-drawn RFA was responsible for the medium calibre guns and howitzers deployed close to the front line and was reasonably mobile. It was organised into brigades.

The Royal Garrison Artillery: In 1914 the army possessed very little heavy artillery but the RGA grew into a very large component of the British forces. It was armed with heavy, large calibre guns and howitzers that were positioned behind the front line.

Eales served in the 24th Battery, 38th Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery. 38 Brigade RFA (based at Fermoy 1914) embarked to France with 6th Division on the 9 Sep 1914, arriving at St. Nazaire, and only fully disembarked on 11 Sep 1914.

The Brigade originally consisted of 24, 34 and 72 Batteries. 24 Battery participated at the famous Christmas truce though this is not recorded in the War Diaries. 34 Battery later left on 4 Feb 1916 and was redeployed.

In 1915 each of its 3 batteries had a compliment of 198 men broken down as: 5 Officers, 10 Serjeants, 2 Trumpeters, 181 Ordinary Ranks and 172 Horses; with a further 118 men in the Ammunition column and 36 at its base headquarters. The batteries were later renamed A, B, C, and D.

38 Brigade, along with others, became an Army Field Artillery Brigade on 14 Jan 1917.

In March 1917 the Army Brigade was part of the 1st Army Troops; 2nd Army in July 1917; 5th Army August 1917; 2nd Army Oct 1917; 4th Army Dec 1917 and finally 2nd Army in May 1918.