



A Burial Service for

Serjeant Henry Ashton

14th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry

15:00 hours Tuesday 10 June 2025

CWGC Loos British Cemetery Extension, France

**Service conducted by Reverend John Storey CF
Chaplain to 5th Battalion, The Rifles**

*Déroulement de la Cérémonie présidé par
le Reverend John Storey*



Sjt Henry Ashton shown back row, second from left

A memorial to Henry at Nottingham Road Cemetery,
Chaddesden, Derbyshire reads:

*Serjeant Henry Ashton
Durham Light Infantry
Killed in Action near Lens, France
April 20th 1917,
Aged 44 years.*

*Sleeping peacefully in the battle line
He died to save others, himself he could not save.*

Serjeant Henry Ashton
24 March 1873 – 22 April 1917

Henry Ashton was born in Glossop, Derbyshire in 1873, the second of five children of John Ashton, a railway wheel-smith, and his wife Harriet.

In the late 19th century Henry joined the Seaforth Highlanders, and served a term of 12 ½ years with them, earning medals for campaigns in India, Egypt, Sudan and South Africa. On leaving the army he joined the Midland Railway Company.

Henry married Hetty Martin in 1905, and together they had two children – Herbert William born in 1905 and Winifred Beatrice born in 1909.

In March 1915, Henry rejoined the army – first attesting for service with the Derbyshire Yeomanry. He underwent a period of training and service at home before leaving for France in late-September 1916. In October 1916 he transferred to the Durham Light Infantry, and at around the same time he was promoted to the rank of Serjeant.

Henry joined his new unit near Meaulte, in the Somme region of France, where they were based until November 1916 when they moved north towards the industrial towns around Lens and Bethune. Much of early 1917 was spent in training and reinforcing the front line, work that stepped up in intensity as preparations were made for what would become known as the Battle of Arras. On the night of 20 April 1917, the 14th DLI were in trenches in the Loos & Lens sector – occupying Netley Trench and Novel Alley, with the objective to capture a concrete point and Dynamite Magazine. These objectives were won by the time the Battalion was relieved on the morning of the 23rd April, but not without cost – 35 men had lost their lives, whilst a further 24 were missing and 183 were injured. Henry was one of those killed.

A letter received at home from his officer, Captain Allden Owles, stated that he had died instantly and served bravely. Following the war Henry's body was not recovered, and he was listed on the Memorial to the Missing at Loos.

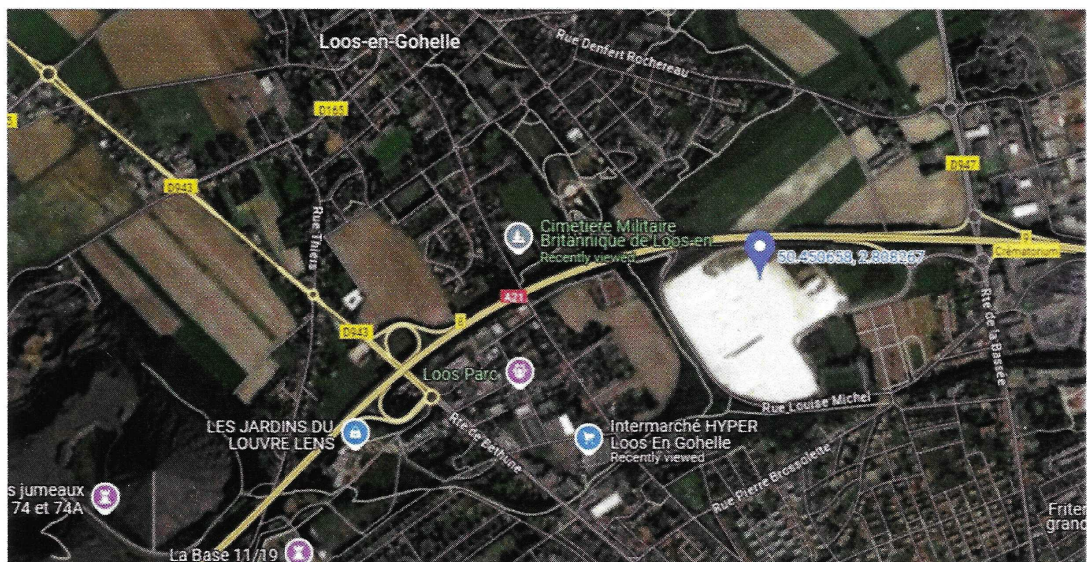
During works to build a new hospital in Lens in the early 2020s human remains were recovered. Research showed that they belonged to a man of the Durham Light Infantry, with extensive pre-war service. DNA testing has proven them to be the remains of Sjt Henry Ashton and today we are finally able to lay him to rest in the presence of his family.

A FINE RECORD OF SERVICE.

Sergeant Henry Ashton, second son of the late Mr. John and Mrs. Ashton, of 1, Wood-street, Nottingham-road, Derby, and brother of Staff-capt. John H. Ashton, D.C.M., has been killed in the recent severe fighting round Arras. Originally belonging to the Seaforth Highlanders, he saw much active service in India, Egypt, the Soudan, and South Africa, being in possession of five medals for the different campaigns. On leaving the army he entered the service of the Midland Railway Company, being employed as a foreman cleaner in the running department. On the outbreak of the present war he joined the Derbyshire Yeomanry, being transferred later to the Durham Light Infantry, where he was sergeant of the Lewis gun team. His officer, Captain Allden Owles, reports that he was killed instantly, and also speaks with the highest regard of the deceased soldier's fine work in the trenches. He hoped all his relatives would accept his death as bravely as he always went through everything at the front. Sergt. Ashton leaves two young children.



This map is from February 1917, a few months before Henry's death. The British trenches are in blue and the German in red. On the day of Henry's death, the situation had changed and some of the British trenches were already in British hands. His battalion's objectives were to secure the Dynamite Magazine, which has been circled in red.



The blue pin on this modern map highlights where Henry's body was discovered. The Route de la Bassee, which is the road running up to the right of the pin, can be seen on both maps.

The Cemetery

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Loos British Cemetery Extension was opened by H.R.H. The Princess Royal on 26 September 2024 and is only the second new cemetery established by the CWGC since the work to construct the Second World War cemeteries and Memorials was completed. It has been designed to be in keeping with the Commission's First World War cemeteries in France. It provides a fitting place of burial for those Commonwealth casualties still being recovered today from the former battlefields across France, including Sergeant Henry Ashton, who is laid to rest here today.

Introduction / Welcome

L'Introduction

'I am the resurrection and the life,' says the Lord. 'Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.'

John 11.25,26

Bidding Prayer

Prière

My Brothers and Sisters, we meet in the name of Jesus Christ, who died and was raised to the glory of God the Father.

We remember before God our brother Henry,
giving thanks for his life, service, and sacrifice;
we commend him to God our merciful redeemer and judge,
and commit his body to be buried.

God of all consolation,
your Son Jesus Christ was moved to tears
at the grave of Lazarus his friend.

We pray for those who have grieved for Henry:
look with compassion on your children;
give to troubled hearts the light of hope
and strengthen us all by the gift of faith,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading – The Soldier in the Frame

Lecture

Written by the Brookes family –
the granddaughter and great-grandchildren of Sjt Ashton

Read by Lieutenant Fintan Yeatman, 1st Bn, The Rifles

Henry, the Grandad she never knew,
A framed photo on the bedside, quiet and true.
A face with a smile, kind eyes in his gaze,
She wondered who he was, lost in time's haze.

Grandma never spoke of him, the silence was deep,
A secret kept, in memories she'd keep.
But time unfolding and history revealing,
Remains from the past, now the truth is healing.

Henry earned medals in fields of grey,
For acts of bravery, night and day.
Courage in battle, a legacy long,
Now laid to rest, where heroes belong.

Now remembered with pride by his great grandson,
For future generations, Henry now lives on.
A life once hidden, now shining bright,
In the story of valour, he takes his flight.

Scripture Reading: John 14.1-6

Lecture des Écritures Saintes

Read by a representative of the British Embassy Paris

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'

Reading – The Soldier by Rupert Brook

Lecture

Chosen by the Hunt family, great-grandchildren of Sjt Ashton

Read by a soldier from 1st Bn, The Rifles

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam;
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;

And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

Address

Allocution

Blessing of the Grave

Bénédiction de la Tombe

O God, whose Son Jesus Christ was laid in a tomb:
bless, we pray, this grave as the place where the body of your
servant Henry may rest in peace, through your Son, who is the
resurrection and the life; who died and is alive and reigns with
you now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

Commendation

God our creator and redeemer, by your power Christ
conquered death and returned to you in glory.
Confident of your victory and claiming his promises,
we entrust Serjeant Henry Ashton into your keeping in the
name of Jesus our Lord, who, though he died, is now alive and
reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

The Committal

L'Enterrement

We have entrusted our fallen comrade to God's mercy and now we commit his body to the ground: earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust: in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our frail bodies that they may be conformed to his glorious body, who died, was buried, and rose again for us. To him be glory for ever.

All **Amen.**

The Exhortation

L'Éxhortation

Read by a soldier from 1st Bn, The Rifles

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.

All **We will remember them.**

The Last Post

Sonnerie aux Morts

Played by Lance Corporal Curtis Jones,
The Band and Bugles of The Rifles

Silence
Reveille

Kohima Epitaph
L'Épitaphe de Kohima

Read by a soldier from 1st Bn, The Rifles

When you go home tell them of us and say:
'For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'

Laying of Wreaths
Dépôts des Gerbes

Collect of the Durham Light Infantry
Récitation du Durham Light Infantry

Read by Lieutenant Fintan Yeatman, 1st Bn, The Rifles

Almighty God, who requires that thy servants be faithful, grant, we pray thee, that we, the Durham Light Infantry, who twice a year remember the great valour of those who went before us, may ever be ready as they to fight the good fight, and above all things to give obedience to thy call, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Lord's Prayer

Prière du Seigneur

Trusting in the compassion of God, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

The Blessing

Séparation de Dernière Bénédiction

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to the Church, The King, the Commonwealth, and all humankind, peace and concord; and to us and all his servants, life everlasting; and may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, come down upon you and all those whom you love now and always.

All **Amen.**



The Ministry of Defence, through the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre, is responsible for the research, identification and burial of all British casualties worldwide.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for the graves, memorials, records and memory of the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two World Wars.

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