

63962  
Private  
Harry  
Rhodes  
Bullock

A LOST SON:  
Harry  
**Bullock**



JACKWRIGLEY

*My mother Vera Wrigley, (nee Thorley) came from a large family. Her parents Samuel and Ethel Mary Thorley, (nee Bullock) had 11 children. Tragically, another 5 were either still born, or died in infancy.*

# A LOST SON: Harry **Bullock**

**Ethel's surviving children were:**

**Samuel (Sam),** b.1904

**John Thomas (Jack),** b.1905

**Florence (Flo),** b.1906

**Leonard (Len),** b.1907

**Gladys** b.1910

**Phyllis** b.1910

**Norman** b.1913

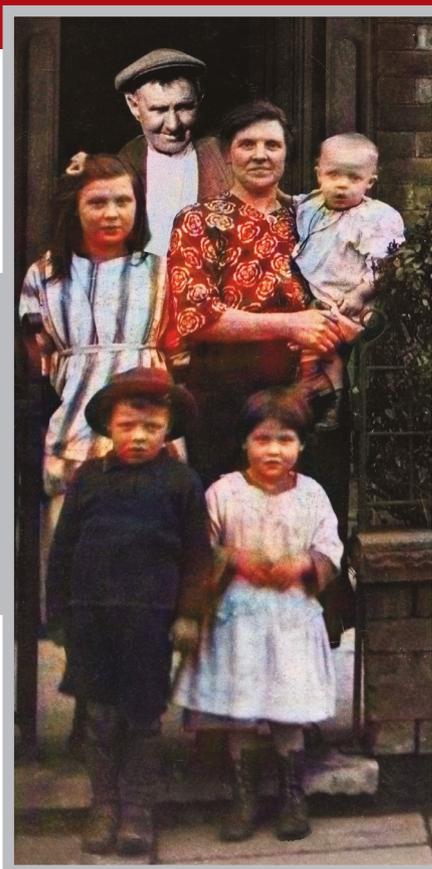
**William (Bill),** b.1914

**Frank** b.1918

**Vera** b.1919

**Harold** b.1922

*This is the earliest surviving Thorley family photograph taken around 1925 outside the front door of No. 6 Vernon Road, Bredbury, Stockport. Samuel and Ethel Thorley are with four of their children (clockwise from the left) Gladys, Harold, Vera and Frank.*



However, Sam Thorley was not Ethel's first child. In 1898, aged 17, she had an illegitimate son called Harry. The father was a married man called Samuel Rhodes from Macclesfield. There are no known family photographs of Harry.

Within my mother's family, Harry was said to have died during World War One, but this was hardly ever discussed. When I started thinking about what had happened to Harry there was no one left alive to ask.

An initial search of the deaths records in Macclesfield suggested that Harry Bullock had died in March 1920. This was 17 months after the war ended and if Harry had died later of war injuries, why was this not acknowledged by the family?

The next line of enquiry was to check the 1911 Census records. This revealed the members of two Cheshire village households, one in Odd Rode and one in Eaton. Harry Bullock was living as the twelve year old 'son' of Ethel's parents and Ethel now had four additional children with her husband Samuel Thorley.

## CENSUS OF 2nd APRIL 1911

### Ethel's Parent's House

Thomas Bullock	Head	56	Married	24	8	0	Labourer Colliery 160	Worker	Bollington, Cheshire
Sarah A. Bullock	Wife	53	Married	24	8	0			Bollington, Cheshire
George Barnett	at home	78	Widower				at home		Bollington, Cheshire
Peter Bullock	Son	18	Single				Miner Colliery 150	Worker	Bollington, Cheshire
Fredrick Bullock	Son	14	Single				Coal Pit Bank Screens 70	Worker	Bollington, Cheshire
Harry Bullock	Son	12	Single				School 390		Bollington, Cheshire

### Ethel's Own House

Samuel Thorley	Head	39	Married	29	7	6	Waggoner on Farm 30	Worker	Widmore, Cheshire
Ethel Mary Thorley	Wife	29	Married	29	7	6	Waggoner on Farm		Widmore, Cheshire
Samuel Thorley	Son	7					School		Widmore, Cheshire
John Thomas Thorley	Son	6					School		Widmore, Cheshire
Leonard Thorley	Son	2							Widmore, Cheshire
Gladys Thorley	Daughter	6 months							Widmore, Cheshire

Presumably, Ethel's parents had covered up Harry's illegitimacy by accepting him as Fredrick's younger brother. What's not known is if Harry ever knew who his real mother was. We also don't know if Harry had a trade or profession as the next census was not until 1921. I then decided to obtain the death certificate of the Harry Bullock, who had died in March 1920. This at least would tell me the cause of death.

Registration District MACCLESFIELD.									
1912. DEATHS in the Sub-District of MACCLESFIELD in the County of CHESTER.									
Column 1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	
No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
412.	First March 1920 London Road M.D.	Harry Bullock	Male	21	Black Butler for 1st Regiment and 1st Search Light Bullock Sikh Mess.	Mitral Disease W Bronchitis Complicated by A Myocard M.B.	Walter Bullock Father Resident at the death 9 London Road Macclesfield	Second March 1920	H. Jones Deputy Registrar.

## Harry Bullock Death Certificate

This certificate for a Harry Bullock born in 1898 gave the cause of death as Mitral (Heart Valve) disease and Bronchitis, but gave the father's name as Walter Bullock. Was this the same Harry Bullock listed as the 'son' of Thomas and Sarah Bullock in the 1911 Census? It seemed unlikely that there were two Harry Bullocks in the Macclesfield area, both born in 1898, but even if this was not Ethel's first son, it was very sad to learn of his tragic and short life.

This was the only death certificate where the name and place of death recorded fitted our Harry Bullock. Where to try next? What followed was a remarkable series of coincidences. In the space of a few days, I watched an interesting programme by Daniel Cruikshank on the history of British and European war memorials and cemeteries. From a Facebook advert I followed a link to a genealogy website, where I entered Harry's name and immediately found a link to the Harry Bullock name on the War Memorial at All Saints Church, Scholar Green in Cheshire. A further search found the following reference to Harry on the **Mow Cop Interactive History** website in the 'Fallen Heroes' section:

### Harry Rhodes Bullock

**1/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Prince of Wales Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 1898 in Mow Cop, he was christened on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1899 in All Saints church, Odd Rode, he was the son of Samuel Rhodes and Ethel Mary Bullock, they lived in Kidsgrove.**

**Harry enlisted in Stoke-on-Trent after 1915, there are no surviving military records for Harry, so we have no details or dates of when he went to France, he was killed on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 1918, his body was never found, he is remembered on the Vis-En-Artois memorial panel number 4. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has Harry as "Henry Rhodes Bullock" this is incorrect.**

I had been very moved by the scale and beauty of the War Cemetery at Vis En Artois in the television documentary only days before. The day that I found out what had happened to Harry was 15th November 2021.

This would have been Harry's 123rd birthday...

Rifleman **HARRY RHODES BULLOCK**

**63962** West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own) 1st/7th Bt.

**Born:** 15th November 1898

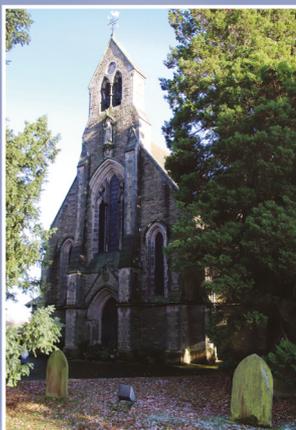
**Christened:** 16th June 1899 at All Saints, Scholar Green, Odd Rode, Cheshire

**Father:** Samuel Rhodes

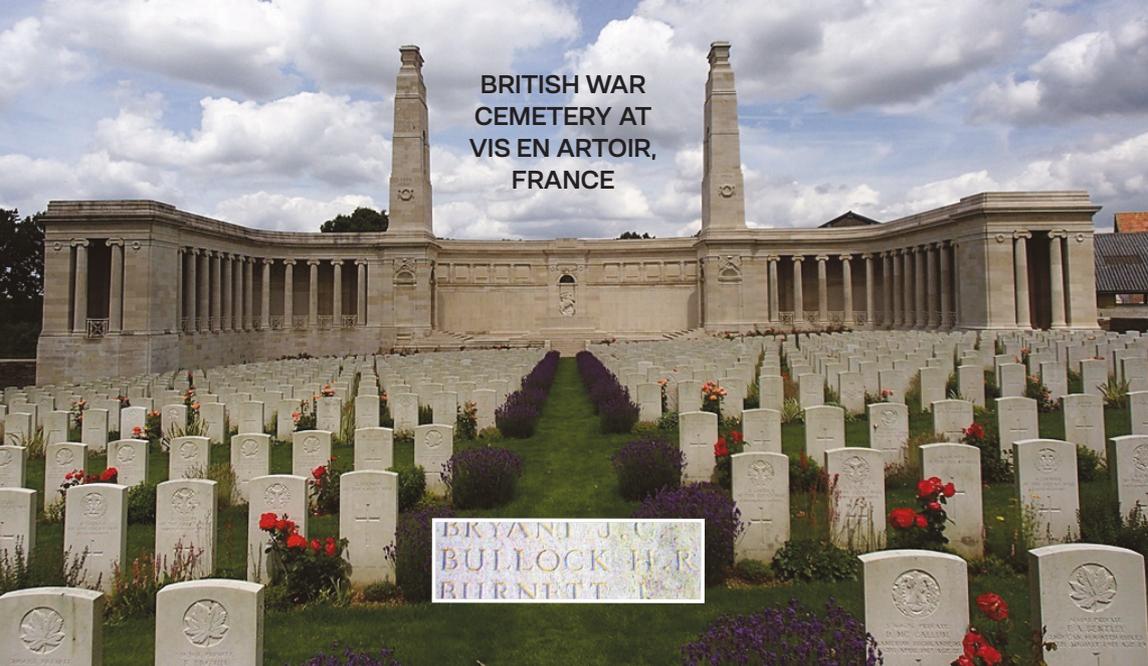
**Mother:** Ethel Mary Bullock

**Died:** 11th October 1918 in France during WW1 aged 19

**Commemorated at:** All Saints, Scholar Green War Memorial and the British War Cemetery at Vis En Artois in France



ALL SAINTS CHURCH, SCHOLAR GREEN, CHESHIRE



BRITISH WAR  
CEMETERY AT  
VIS EN ARTOIR,  
FRANCE

BRYANT J. C.  
BULLOCK H. R.  
BURNETT I.

200 2120586/453154 720

344912 *63982*

*Bullock 11-16-18 York 11 16 4*  
*Henry W. Jones*  
*Rhode*  
*63962*

*11-16-18 York 11 16 4*  
*France 3/19*

*11-5-19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 11 16 4*

**HARRY BULLOCK'S WAR TIME SAVINGS: £11 16s 4d**



Name	Grade	Rank	Regt. No.
BULLOCK	<i>World's War</i>	<i>Plt</i>	<i>58345</i>
<i>Henry R.</i>	<i>Tr. York R.</i>		<i>63962</i>

Medal	Roll	Page	Remarks
VICTORY	<i>1st York Bde</i>	<i>3500</i>	<b>HARRY BULLOCK'S MEDAL CARD</b>
BARRAGE			
SPAN			

Locations of War first served in

Date of entry therein

K. 1980

**A POEM FOR HARRY BULLOCK**

**Half Of My Heart Is Gone**  
 by Barbara J. Rouse

My son, I wish I could wake up and see you standing there.  
 Then I would know that it was just a nightmare.

My son, I remember when you were small and how you would hold my hand,  
 and as you grew older you became my best friend.

My son, I have 19 years of memories that I will treasure and keep safe in my heart.  
 We share a bond that time and distance can never break apart.

My son, oh how my heart aches so.  
 I would love to have you back and never let you go.

My son, where there was happiness,  
 now there is sadness.

My son, how I long to hear your voice and see your beautiful smile  
 and have you back for just a little while.

My son, until that day I see you again,  
 I will look to the sky and search among the stars for my son and best friend.

With All My Love,  
 Your Mother

**HARRY BULLOCK'S WEST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT**



# Ethel's Children

*In 1918 the Thorley family moved from the country village of Eaton, near Congleton to the industrialised town of Stockport. They lived at No. 6 and No. 10 Vernon Road and finally at 97 Stockport Road, Bredbury.*

*Vera and Harold were both born in Bredbury, Stockport.*



**Harry**



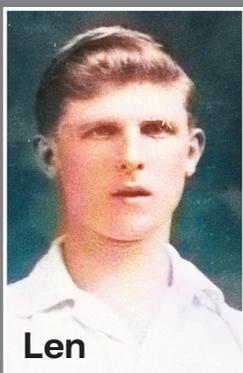
**Sam**



**Jack**



**Flo**



**Len**



**Gladys**



**Phyllis**



**Norman**



**Bill**



**Frank**



**Vera**



**Harold**

# A Lost Son: **Postscript**



*A late 1930's photograph of Ethel taken at 97 Stockport Road, Bredbury. She lived to be 84 and died in July 1966.*

Although this search has revealed so much about the story of Harry Bullock, it also posed many more questions about my oldest Uncle.

I have to admit that when I started to research the story of Uncle Harry I was looking at it from my own perspective. Harry was my lost Uncle and surely my Grandma's reluctance to discuss the subject was perhaps evidence of a hidden agenda.

But, in the context of an illegitimate pregnancy in the nineteenth century, it must have been a terrible ordeal for my Grandma. Doubtless, the arrangement of Harry becoming part of Ethel's parent's household was certainly the best option, but how torn was my Grandma over that decision? How much pain did she suffer in seeing her first son passed off as her younger brother? Did she ever tell Harry the truth about Sam Rhodes, or did Harry think that Rhodes was just an unusual middle name?

We don't know when was the last time Ethel saw her son before he returned to the conflict in France. For Harry to be killed just one month before the end of the war and his twentieth birthday must have been dreadful for Ethel.

I have heard several people say that their relative was not willing to talk about their war time experiences and they would only find out the truth after their relative had died.

Perhaps, once Ethel had got over the worst of the pain of her loss she opted to remain silent about it to minimise her own pain.

The most frustrating part of this story is that I couldn't find a photograph of Harry. Did Ethel ever have one, could she no longer bear to look at it and perhaps discarded it?

When I first saw the group photo of the West Yorkshire Regiment I was drawn to one particular young man on the front row, he was a rifleman like Harry. I thought he resembled Ethel's third son John Thomas (Jack) in a surviving photo in his army uniform. I used this image as a 'placeholder' for Harry in the expectation that once I had an actual photo of Harry I would replace it with that, but I never did and used my photo of the All Saints Scholar Green war memorial instead.

Finally, I would like to thank Robert Tabinor who maintains the **Mow Cop Interactive History** website. Without this I might never have found out the fate of Uncle Harry.

If you can add to Harry's story, please email:  
[robert@info@mowcop.info](mailto:robert@info@mowcop.info)