

Harold Wise, 1892–1916

Harold Wise was born on May 28, 1892, in Faversham, Kent, England—a market town located about 16 kilometres from Canterbury. His baptism came three weeks later on June 17, 1892.

At the time of his birth, his father, Robert John Wise, was 28, and his mother, Charlotte (nee Knight), was 26. The third child to be born to Robert and Charlotte, Harold had four brothers (Harry John, William, Horace, and Frederick) and three sisters (Florence Ellen, Hilda May, and Ella).

In 1901, according to the census, the family lived at 4 Vicarage Street, Faversham. Charlotte's brother William Knight, 40, is listed as a boarder and working as a brickyard worker in the census record for that year. It is expected that Harold, 8, would have been a scholar at the local Grammar School for Boys.

The Wise family's ecclesiastical parish was that of Faversham St Mary of Charity—an Anglican church. Although an exact founding date is not known, we do know that Faversham's parish boundaries were established about 636 AD and the first documented evidence of the church goes back to 1070 AD in a Charter of William the Conqueror. The family's home on Vicarage Street was within walking distance of the church—308 feet to be exact. It's likely Harold's baptism in 1892 took place at St Mary of Charity.

In 1911, Harold, 19, and his friend, Samuel Mathews, 19, also of Faversham, left Bristol, England for Canada. The pair, arriving by ship (Royal George), landed in Halifax, Nova Scotia on March 28, 1911. They were destined for Toronto, Ontario to work as butchers.

In the 1911 census record for York South, Harold and Samuel are listed as lodgers at 282 Weston Road in Toronto—the home of Edward and Alice Theabold, and their one-year-old daughter, Elsie. Harold's religious denomination was recorded as Anglican.

Harold later boarded at 45 Cooper Avenue, which was on the east side of the city, three houses north of Adrian Avenue. He worked in Charles Meyer's butcher shop at 58 Cooper Avenue, which was at the southwest corner of Cooper and Kingsley avenues. One block to the west, and seven houses north of Kingsley was 521 Perth Avenue—the home of Mrs. Duncan Campbell.

Harold's time in Toronto would be cut short with the start of the First World War in 1914. On June 25, 1915, Harold enlisted with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) at Niagara (Camp), Ontario. Specifically, enlistment was with the 48th Highlanders of Canada. He was 23 years old. On his attestation paper, it is recorded that Harold was 5 feet 7 inches tall and had a fair complexion with brown eyes and hair. He suffered with external hemorrhoids, but was found medically fit for military service.

Harold was a Private and his regimental number was 451965. Harold sailed from Montreal, Quebec on November 22, 1915. Destination was the battlefields of France. He joined his unit (Canadian Infantry—Eastern Ontario Regiment, 2nd Battalion, CEF) in the field on December 26, 1915. The 2nd Battalion fought in all the major actions in France

and Flanders, including the first gas attack at Ypres, Vimy Ridge, and Passchendaele. They were known as the 'Iron Second' for their toughness in action.

Harold died on September 9, 1916, in Somme, Cher, France, at the age of 24. News of his death reached Canadian soil on September 25, 1916 when the *Winnipeg Tribune* reported that Harold was killed in action.

His body was never recovered from the battlefield. Instead, his name is inscribed at the Vimy Memorial in Pas-de-Calais, France. Over 11,000 fallen Canadians having no known burial in France are honoured on the memorial. Harold's sacrifice is also honoured and remembered at the Faversham Memorial Garden in Kent, England. The Memorial Garden includes a series of eight tablets bearing the names of First and Second World War fallen.

A note in his military file indicated a letter was to be sent to a Mrs. Campbell living at 521 Perth Avenue, Toronto to notify her of his death. His mother Charlotte would eventually receive the Memorial Cross, a Canadian medal often known as the Silver Cross for Mothers that was established in 1919.

There is a theory that Harold, before he left Canada for the battlefields in France, may have been courting one of Mrs. Campbell's daughters—Catherine/Katherine. It's also possible the Campbell family was a patron of the Meyer butcher shop. It doesn't appear that Harold lived with the Campbell family, and they wouldn't have attended the same church, as Harold was Anglican, and the Campbell family Presbyterian. However, Harold listed on his attestation papers that he was Presbyterian. Is it possible he converted with the expectation that he would return home from the war and marry Miss Campbell? Unfortunately, he never made it home. In 1920, Catherine/Katherine married William Ransom/e Atkinson in Toronto and the Campbell family moved to California, United States. Catherine/Katherine appears to have died February 6, 1962 at Felton, Santa Cruz County, California.

In 2019, I had the opportunity visit his childhood home at 88 Abbey Street. And below is a photo of Harold's sister Hilda with my grandfather, John Harold Adey, on a visit from Canada in 1933. Hilda moved to Canada in 1921 to work as a domestic servant in Montreal. On her oceans arrival form it indicates the person she is destined to is a cousin - looks like Alfred Adey. I have yet to figure out the cousin connection though given that she marries an Adey. Hilda married John Albert Adey in 1924 in Lachine, Quebec. John was born in Faversham and was the son of Albert John Adey. John's mother was also a Knight - Charlotte Elizabeth Knight. Is it possible that Hilda's mother Charlotte (nee Knight) was somehow related to Charlotte Elizabeth. I will keep digging.

Research completed by Michelle Rickard. Harold Wise is Michelle's great-granduncle.