

## **Rifle Range Accident Ends A Promising Career**

### **TZ/5254 Able Seaman Arthur Basil Hallam 3<sup>rd</sup> Reserve Battalion, Royal Naval Division, Royal Naval Reserve**

Arthur Basil Hallam was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1896 at Ilkeston, Derbyshire, the second son of Henry and Annie Hallam. They were living at 4 Blackburn Yard, Ilkeston and the household members recorded in the 1901 Census were, Henry aged 28, Annie aged 29, sons Charlie, Arthur and John aged 5, 4 and 11 months respectively and daughter Annie aged 8. Arthur had been baptised at St Mary's Church, Ilkeston on the 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1897.

Their father, Henry was born in 1873 at Labley, Nottinghamshire and was by trade a Shoeing Smith and General Blacksmith. He had married Annie, (née Marshall) born in 1872 at Barnstone, Nottinghamshire during the autumn of 1893. Tragedy struck the family in early 1904 when Annie died aged 32. Two years later, Henry married Sarah (née Wright) in the Spring at Woodborough, Nottinghamshire, where she had been born in 1882.

By the time of 1911 Census the family had moved to 35 Station Road, Ilkeston. The household members there were Henry aged 38, Sarah aged 29, sons Charles aged 16, Arthur aged 13, John aged 10 and daughters Ellen aged 8 and Keturah aged 4 years. Charles and Arthur most probably had attended local schools, receiving a basic education. As young teenagers they were both employed at a local colliery as Pony Drivers. John and Ellen were both in 1911 attending school.

After the outbreak of the First World War, Henry attested for the duration of the war at the age of 42, having had previous military service with the South Nottinghamshire Hussars. He enlisted at Melton Mowbray on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1915 into the Royal Field Artillery and was then residing at 45 Lord Haddon Road, Ilkeston. Details extracted from his medal index card reveals that he went to France in July 1915 and for his war service received the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-1920 and the Allied Victory Medal 1914-1919.

Two months after his father enlisted, Arthur joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve which was open to civilians with no prior sea experience, on the 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1915. He was described as being 5-ft 4½-inches in height, had a normal chest measurement of 32-inches and expanded of 34-inches, a dark complexion, with brown eyes and dark hair. He had no distinguishing marks, was able to swim, gave his religion as Primitive Methodist and occupation as that of a miner. Arthur was still living with the family and gave the same address as his father had given and nominated him as his next-of-kin.

Ordinary Seaman Arthur Hallam was initially posted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Naval Division and underwent initial training at Crystal Palace before transfer to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reserve Battalion at Blandford on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 1915. His training continued at Blandford where he was granted leave from the 28<sup>th</sup> August, to the 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 1915. After returning from leave he was rated from an Ordinary Seaman to an Able Seaman. On the 9<sup>th</sup> September, Arthur and some of his comrades were practising their rifle skills on the firing range. Unfortunately for Arthur he tripped over a pack which was lying on the ground and as he fell struck his head on a rifle. Such was the injury that it bled profusely and for those who came to his assistance found it difficult to staunch the flow of blood. A doctor who was present at the firing range was called for and he examined the head wound and gave instruction for Arthur to be put into a nearby ambulance van. Arthur was able with help to walk to the ambulance where the injury to his head was dressed and bandaged. The doctor and the ambulance attendant accompanied Arthur back to the camp, which was five miles from the firing range.

After further examination at the camp the doctor decided that Arthur should be taken to Portland Royal Naval Hospital. On arrival at the hospital he was unconscious but during the following morning he regained consciousness. He was able to tell the medical staff that he had accidentally tripped and fallen over at the firing range. His injury, which at first might have appeared to be superficial was very serious. Apart from the wound above his right ear, he had fractured his skull. It was not until the 15<sup>th</sup> September, that the doctors decided to carry out an operation and discovered a large clot of blood had formed between Arthur's fractured skull and his brain. The broken bone was raised to remove the clot removed and the doctors were optimistic that Arthur would recover. Unfortunately, the injury to Arthur's head caused the membrane that covers the brain to become infected, from which he contracted meningitis. Sadly Arthur did not recover and he died during the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> September, aged 19 years.

Southern Times ~ Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1915.

Fatal Accident To A Naval Man ~ Inquest At Portland R.N. Hospital

How a slight slip and fall to the ground caused the death of Arthur Hallam, and ordinary seaman of the Royal Naval Division, was told at the Royal Naval Hospital (Portland) on Friday to Mr G.P. Symes (Coroner) and a jury. Mr T.W. Wilkinson, The Admiralty law agent for Portland district, attended the inquest on behalf of the Admiralty, and Mr J. Watson was the foreman of the jury.

After the formal view of the body, which lay in the accident section of mortuary, evidence of identity was, given by Chief P.O. Archie Stuttard, R.N.D., who stated that the body viewed by

the jury was that of Arthur Hallam, an A.B., of the R.N.V.R., aged 19 years. He was a single man, a native of Ilkeston, Derby, living at 45 Lord Hadden Street. He joined the service on June 6<sup>th</sup>. He relatives had been notified of the death. (Deceased's mother and fiancée arrived at this moment). William Garner, A.B., of the R.N. Division, said that he had known deceased ever since June. On Thursday morning, September 9<sup>th</sup> at about 11 a.m., witness was at the firing range. Deceased was stepping backwards and turned round sharply, falling over a pack which was lying on the ground.



Grave Of Ordinary Seaman Arthur Hallam RND ~ (Front Left)

He fell sideways, his head striking the cut-off of a rifle. Witness was only a yard or two away from deceased at the time. There was no one else near, and the whole affair was a pure accident. Witness went to him, picked him up, and laid him on his side. He called another man, who tried to stop the bleeding from deceased's head. The camp was about five miles from the range. There was a doctor present. Hallam walked to the ambulance van, which was nearby, and was seen by the attendant. His wound was bound up and deceased was taken back to camp. He was quite conscious and could walk and talk. On the way to the camp deceased said "It was quite an accident."

By Mr Wilkinson: The doctor went back to camp in the wagon with deceased.

Sub-Lieutenant Gordon William Whittaker, R.N.V.R., who was on the range with deceased and the rest of the squad at the time, said that he was the nearest officer present. He saw deceased lying on the ground with a crowd round him. He rather believed that the man fell on the back-sight of the rifle instead of the cut-off; but could not say definitely. There had been no skylarking or playing about. Witness sent for a doctor, and left a man to stop the bleeding, which was profuse. The injury appeared to be near the right temple, and a pocket field dressing was applied. The doctor came in about five minutes after being called. Deceased was taken to the camp at once and brought to Portland the same night. Deceased was one of the keenest men in the battalion, and witness knew him well, having been his commander at the Crystal palace. He was a very well-behaved man.

The Coroner: It is extraordinary that he fell with such force.

Witness: He was rather a heavy man.

Witness: I asked deceased when on the range if he was hurt, and he said "No". He walked to the ambulance car.

Surgeon Quinton, of the R.N. Hospital, said that deceased was admitted on the evening of September 9<sup>th</sup>. He was unconscious on arrival and remained so until next morning. After being questioned for some time deceased said that he had fallen over a pack. He had a scalp wound 2-in above the right ear, and the skull was fractured just in front of the ear, the bone being depressed into the brain matter. An operation was performed on September 15<sup>th</sup> and the bone raised, when a big clot was found on the brain. Death was due to cerebral compression and meningitis. Until almost the time of death witness thought that the deceased had a chance of recovery, but the meningitis, the result of the depressed and fractured skull, caused death.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the evidence.

The Coroner, on behalf of the jury, offered sincere sympathy to the mother and fiancée and Mr Wilkinson expressed regret of the Admiralty at the loss of such a promising young man.

Able Seaman Arthur Hallam 3<sup>rd</sup> Reserve Battalion, Royal Naval Division, R.N.V.R., was buried with full naval and military honours in the non-conformist section of the Royal Naval Cemetery Portland. Grave Location: Plot No.557. His name is also commemorated on the Ilkeston War Memorial, Derbyshire.

#### Portland Royal Naval Cemetery

Portland Harbour is a manmade harbour attached to the north of Portland. Originally it was a natural anchorage known as Portland Roads, protected by Portland to the south, Chesil Beach to the west and mainland Dorset to the north. Portland Roads was transformed into a naval base following the building of two breakwater arms in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The Cemetery was established by the War Office in 1876 for the burial of the soldiers garrisoned at Verne Citadel (part of the harbour defence fortifications) and Royal Navy sailors based at Portland. In 1907 the site was transferred to the Admiralty, who went on to extend the site to the west in 1914. Throughout the First World War, Portland Harbour was used regularly for training exercises and patrols for German U-boats. There are 67 burials from the First World War, 50 of which are unidentified. In addition, there is a Special Memorial to a casualty buried in Portland (St George) Churchyard. After the War the maintenance of the Cemetery was passed to the Imperial

War Graves Commission and in November 1926, the Cross of Sacrifice was unveiled in the presence of detachments from ships stationed at Portland and the local garrison. With the outbreak of the Second World War, Portland continued hosting training exercises.

However, after Germany's successful invasion of France, the naval base quickly became the target of air attacks. On the 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1940 HMS Foylebank was attacked while at Portland Harbour, which resulted in her sinking on the



5<sup>th</sup>. Over 70 crew members lost

#### Grave Of Ordinary Seaman Arthur Hallam RND

their lives some of whom are buried at Portland Royal Naval Cemetery, the rest are commemorated on memorials to the missing. By May 1944, both Portland Harbour and Weymouth Harbour were used as part of the D-Day preparations. They were major embarkation points for American troops, particularly the US 1<sup>st</sup> Division who embarked for 'Omaha Beach' in June 1944. There are 103 burials (including 1 Norwegian Merchant Navy seaman and 12 German airmen) 10 of which are unidentified, from the Second World War, the majority of which are in the Church of England section, near the Cross of Sacrifice. The Cemetery was extended eastwards in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, where many post-Second World War burials are found. In 1996 the Naval Base at Portland was closed.

Arthur's step-mother, Sarah Hallam applied for a Dependents Pension, but the Pension application card is marked 'Ineligible Claim Papers'. She died in July 1958 aged 76 years and her husband Henry, died in April 1963 aged 90 years. His father received his son's British War Medal 1914-1920, Bronze Memorial Plaque and Scroll.

+++

Sources

Southern Times Newspaper ~ Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1915.

National Archives ~ Able Seaman Arthur Hallam's Service Record ~ ADM 339/2/1940

National Archives ~ UK Naval Medal & Award Rolls 1793-1972 –Able Seaman Arthur Hallam  
ADM 171/126

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Web-Site ~ [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)

Dependents Pension Record ~ Able Seaman Arthur Hallam – Ancestry & Western Front  
Association

Photographs ~ © Roger Coleman

R.G. Coleman