

## Harry Wells



**Sergeant L/8088 Harry WELLS VC. 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment (RSR).** Killed in VC Action Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915 aged 27 years. Born 19<sup>th</sup> September 1888 at "Hole Cottage", Millbank, Herne, near Herne Bay in Kent (a street in Herne Bay itself is named after Harry). From 1910 to 1913 Harry was a Police Constable in Ashford (E Division). In December 1913 Harry left the Police Force and worked for a short while as a barman at the Beaver Inn, Beaver Road, Ashford, Kent. Buried near the scene of his VC action in the Dud Corner Cemetery, Loos, Northern France. Grave reference V.E.2.

Harry's name appears on the Herne village war memorial and on Ashford's war memorial. It does not however appear on Herne Bay's tribute. Despite this, a road in Herne Bay is named after Harry. Ashford merely records H WELLS whereas Herne records H WELLS VC.

Harry's photo (above) was found by the authors whilst searching the Kentish Express newspaper. It clearly shows Harry wearing his police uniform. We can't quite make out his collar number but it might possibly be E198?

Harry left school and became a farm hand working at Ridgeway Farm, Herne Bay. Whilst working on the farm Harry lost two fingers on his right hand in an accident with a haymaking machine! He later worked for a Mrs Wootton at Herne Mill. Wells was a tall youth, over 6 feet tall and at the age of 16 joined the Army in 1904. He served in the Royal Sussex Regiment for 7 years mostly in India where his battalion was stationed on garrison duty. Harry left the Army in 1911 and joined the Kent Police Force. In November of that year Harry became a Police Constable in the Ashford Division. He resigned from the Police Force on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1913 still serving in Ashford. Upon leaving the police Harry worked for a short while at the Beaver Inn, Beaver Road, South Ashford as a barman. When the war came Harry was immediately recalled to the Colours and rejoined his former regiment. Harry rose through the ranks very quickly, not entirely surprising given his military experience and the circumstances of a major conflict pending.

Harry's name appears on the Ashford Civic War Memorial plainly as H WELLS. It was this that first alerted us to Harry's remarkable story. At first it seemed unlikely that this small inscription referred to a VC holder. At first we knew nothing of Harry's connection to the Ashford area. Only after careful and deliberate research was the truth established. Up to that

point no one in Ashford seemed to know of Harry's connection to the town which was disappointing. Harry's name also appears on the Christchurch (South Ashford) civic tribute as Harry Wells VC. Harry's name used to appear on the (now lost) Ashford Branch War Memorial of the **Tunbridge Wells Equitable Friendly Society**. It used to hang in the Ashford Branch office at Regents Place, Ashford. No one knows what happened to it. The authors have tried to trace it's present whereabouts but it seems likely it was destroyed in the 1960's when Regents Place was demolished. Harry must have been a subscriber whilst serving as a Policeman in Ashford.

Unsurprisingly the Kent town of Herne Bay has claimed Harry as their own son. Harry's name appears on that town's small civic war memorial as Harry Wells VC. In the 1950's the people of Herne Bay decided to remember Harry by naming a local road after him. Harry's name also appears on the Royal Sussex Regiment's war memorial, Chichester Cathedral, Chichester, Sussex.

Harry's Victoria Cross was presented to his mother by H.M The King (George V) at Buckingham Palace on 27 November 1916. All Harry's medals are now held by the Royal Sussex Regiment Museum at Eastbourne.

## Victoria Cross Citation



**Battle of Loos 1915**

London Gazette extract no 29371 dated 16<sup>th</sup> November 1915

*"For the most conspicuous bravery near **Le Routoire Farm** on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915, when his platoon officer had been killed, he took command and led his men forward to within fifteen yards of the German wire. Nearly half the platoon were killed or wounded, and the remainder were much shaken, but with the utmost coolness and bravery, Sergeant Wells rallied them and led them forward. Finally, when very few were left, he stood up and urged them forward once more, but while doing this was killed. He gave a magnificent example of courage and determination".*



13088 SERJEANT  
HARRY WELLS V.C.  
ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT  
25th SEPTEMBER 1915 AGE 27



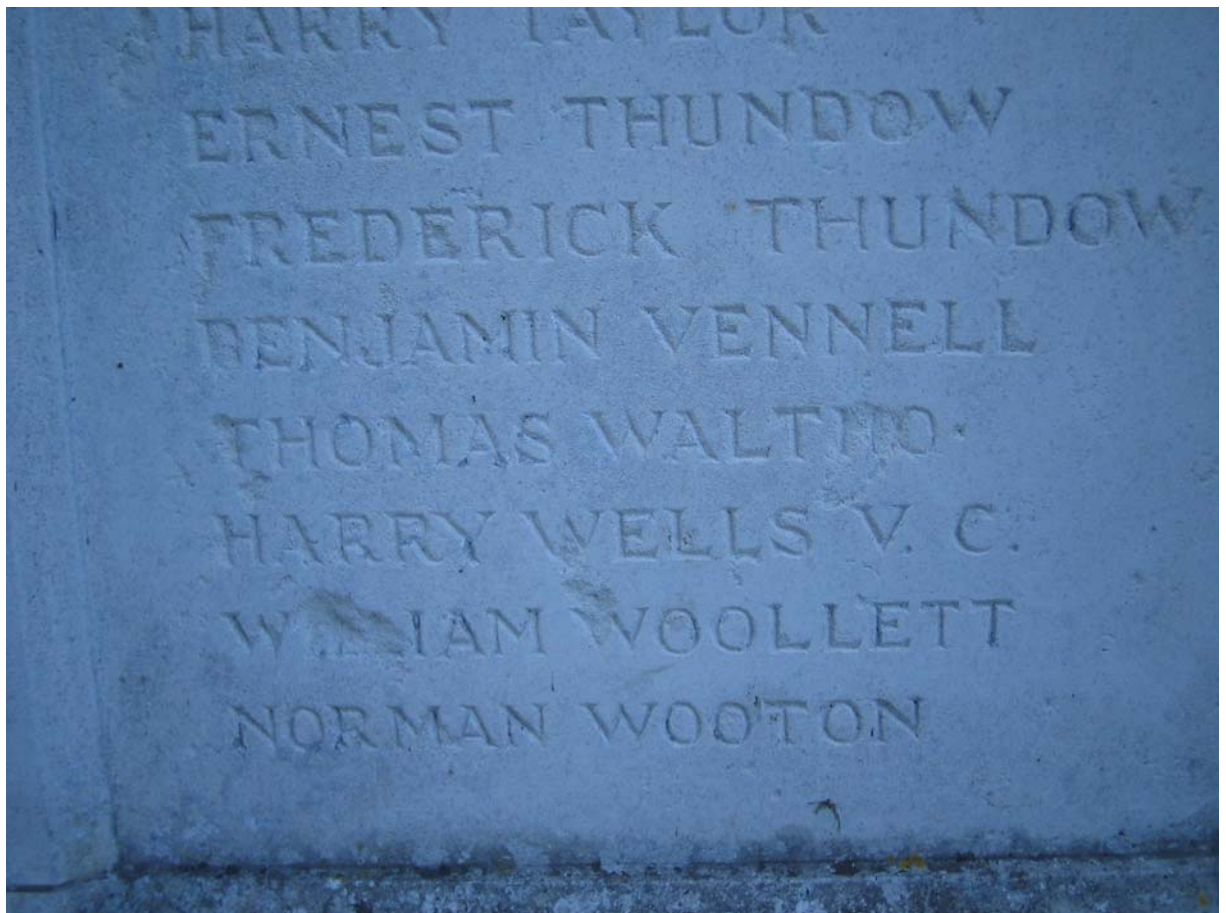
NO MAN IS GREATER  
IN GODS EYES  
THAN HE THAT GIVETH  
OF HIMSELF FOR OTHERS



**Harry Wells VC By Ernest Ibbetson**



Herne War Memorial



Herne



