

## ***The Morris Brothers (sons of Charles Henry and Emily Morris).***

Prior to the commencement of the Great War there were two families that shared the same surname of Morris living within the parishes of Wellesbourne. The family of Henry Charles Morris and Emily, his wife, were relative newcomers to the area whereas John Henry and Alice Morris could trace their roots within Wellesbourne to at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It appears that the families were not closely related.

Entries in the local South Warwickshire newspapers during the years of the Great War suggested that there were two members of Henry Charles's family that served in that war, his sons Harry and Jesse.

Henry Charles Morris was born during the early months of 1867 in the south Oxfordshire village of Horspath. He married Emily Pinn in Headington, Oxfordshire during the spring or early summer of 1892. She was also a native of the county. Records<sup>i</sup> suggest that the couple had 11 children yet only 6 survived infancy.

## ***Harry Morris.***

### ***Private, Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry (Believed).***

Harry was born on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 1894 in Headington Oxfordshire and subsequently baptised in the Holy Trinity Church of Headington Quarry on 25<sup>th</sup> November of the same year. The family then appeared to move around the country possibly as his father sought work. They arrived in Wellesbourne around January 1905 when his son Harry was registered to join the village school<sup>ii</sup>, the family having previously lived in Chandlers Ford, Hampshire.

The 1911 census, the last prior to the commencement of the Great War, indicates that Harry, then aged 16 years worked as a General Labourer. A newspaper report in September 1914<sup>iii</sup> recorded the names of the men from Wellesbourne, including Harry who had 'nobly' volunteered for active service and had been accepted. The majority of the men had joined the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, the regiment that Harry's father had served in as Sergeant Major<sup>iv</sup>. It is likely that Harry served on the Western Front but unfortunately further information regarding his military career has not yet been forthcoming.

Harry's name appears on the Wellesbourne Church of England School Roll of Honour. His medal awards can only be assumed as the British War and the Victory Medals and possibly the 1914-1915 Star.

***Jesse George John Morris.***  (WWII)

## ***Sergeant No. P.O/ 215134 Royal Marines.***

Jesse was born in Headington, Oxfordshire on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 1898. Upon arriving in Wellesbourne with his family he attended the village Church of England school and left there in 1911 to work as a Farmer's Boy.

He was employed as a gardener living at No. 9 Kinton Road, Wellesbourne when on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1916, in London, he enlisted into the Royal Navy, initially as a Private in the Royal Marines Artillery before transfer in August of the following year, with the rank of Gunner, to the Dreadnaught Battleship HMS Malaya, a veteran of the Battle of Jutland. He left that ship in August 1919 but nevertheless continued his service at sea.

He served for a period on the Iron Duke class Battleship HMS Emperor of India and then on the HMS Ajax, the predecessor of the ship of the same name that took part in the Battle of the River Plate during World War II.

Whilst stationed at the Portsmouth Division's land base at Eastney Barracks on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1923 the Royal Marine Artillery (RMA) and Royal Marine Light Infantry (RMLI) amalgamated. From that date Jesse's rank changed from that of Gunner to Marine. In March 1928 he commenced his second period of engagement. Joining HMS Dauntless in May of 1928 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July the ship ran aground off the coast of Halifax, Nova Scotia and was so badly damaged that the crew had to abandon her.

During the 1930's Jesse spent approximately three years as a member of the crew of the famous Admiral-class Battle Cruiser HMS Hood, later to be sunk in 1941 by the German Battleship, Bismarck.

In April 1937 he began his second period of re-engagement.

For his service during World War II Jesse was attached to a Naval Unit called HMS President III. This was in reality purely a land accounting base for naval gunners that served on Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships. (DEMS). Jesse may have served on a number of these ships but we only know for certain the name of his last.



*S.S. Lancastrian Prince*

During the spring of 1943 of the 44 men on board the Merchant Ship S.S. Lancastrian Prince, Sergeant Jesse Morris was the senior member of a seven man team of Marines. The ship was on convoy duties off the coast of Newfoundland. At 1.30 hours on the 11<sup>th</sup> April the convoy was attacked by the German U-boat U404 which fired 4

torpedoes at the convoy. The Lancastrian Prince was the only ship to be hit and it sank with the loss of all of those on board.

Jesse has no known grave but is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial Panel 79, Column 2 and on the Wellesbourne War Memorial, (those that died in World War II).

At the end of the First World War Jesse was awarded the British War and Victory Medals. In 1932 the Long Service and Good Conduct Medals together with gratuities for both awards added to the list. It is not known however what medals were awarded for his World War II service.

*Researched by Grev Hudson (Nov 2016)(grev.hudson)*

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<sup>i</sup> Census 1911

<sup>ii</sup> Wellesbourne School records, CR371/1, CR371/2, 371/3, 271/4- Warwickshire County Record Office).

<sup>iii</sup> Stratford upon Avon Herald 14/9/1914.

<sup>iv</sup> Stratford upon Avon Herald 3/2/1956.

[www.1914-1918invasionzone.com](http://www.1914-1918invasionzone.com)



(WWII) – Died in WWII)