

**A SCARCE VICTORIA CROSS GREAT WAR PHOTO POSTCARD PORTRAYING
SERGEANT CHARLES HARRY COVERDALE. AWARDED THE VICTORIA
CROSS FOR ACTIONS AT POELLE CAPELLE**



Charles Harry Coverdale (1888-1955) was born at 53 Clifford Street, Brooks' Bar, Old Trafford, Manchester, Lancashire on 21st April 1888. He was known as Harry. His father, John Yates Coverdale, an upholsterer, was born at Kirkleavington, Yorkshire. He married Emily Goddard in 1881. She was previously a nurse working for James Fort at Beaumont Manor, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire. She was later a cook working for Charles Richards in Stretford, Manchester. Harry had six siblings – four sisters and two brothers.

Harry was educated at a local church school in Manchester and at Bangor Street Board School, Hulme, Manchester. He was employed as an engineering fitter at Galloway's Boiler Works, Knott Mill, Manchester. Harry wanted to join the Royal Engineers, but had to wait, so on 7th September 1914 he enlisted in 4th (Extra Reserve) Manchester and was engaged on

coastal defence duties at Riby, near Grimsby, Lincolnshire. He was promoted to Lance Corporal on 3rd April 1915 and as charged with neglect of duty on 10th August while in charge of No 4 Blockhouse at Killingholme, for which he received a severe reprimand. He transferred to 11th Battalion and served with it at Gallipoli from 20th September. The Battalion was evacuated on 15th December on the "Carron" and ferried to Mudros. He went to Egypt on 30th January 1916 and embarked for France at the beginning of July 1916. He was appointed Acting Corporal on 27th October and Acting Sergeant on 16th December. He was awarded the Military Medal for holding an objective 200 metres north of the cemetery on the Langemarck-Zonnebeke road after all the officers and senior NCOs were killed on 16th August 1917.

He was presented with the DCM ribbon in the field in error and this was replaced with the MM ribbon a fortnight later. On 4th October 1917 south-west of Poelcapelle, Belgium, when close to the objective, Sergeant Coverdale disposed of three snipers. He then rushed two machine-guns, killing or wounding the teams. He subsequently reorganised his platoon in order to capture another position, but after getting within 100 yards of it was held up by our own barrage and had to return. Later he went out again with five men to capture the position, but when he saw a considerable number of the enemy advancing, withdrew his detachment man by man, he himself being the last to retire.

He was posted to the Depot on 14th January 1918 and to Depot West Lancashire Reserve Brigade, Oswestry as a candidate for a commission on 29th January. He trained at No 16 Officer Cadet Battalion, Kimmel Park, Rhyl from 22nd March, but severely sprained his knee in a football match on 10th April and was in hospital until early June. He was commissioned in the Manchester Regiment on 9th October 1918 and attached to 11th Battalion, but was posted to 3rd (Reserve) Battalion at Cleethorpes. The VC was presented by King George V at Buckingham Palace on 31st October 1918. He was demobbed in February 1919 from 4th Manchester and relinquished his commission, retaining the rank of 2nd Lieutenant on 1st September 1921. On 7th July 1921, he was presented to the Prince of Wales outside Manchester Town Hall along with other VCs George Evans, John Readitt, and George Stringer.

Harry returned to engineering work and on 29th October 1919 he married Clara Florence Travis Riley at Barton upon Irwell, Lancashire. She had been previously married to Frederick Travis, and had a son, George, in 1913. Frederick died of pneumonia in St Omer, France on 3rd November 1918 and was buried in Longuenesse Souvenir Cemetery, France. Harry was one of the VC Guard at the interment of the Unknown Warrior at Westminster Abbey on 11th November 1920. He and Clara had two sons – Charles Harry, born in 1922, and David, born in 1927.

Harry also attended the VC Dinner at the House of Lords on 9th November 1929, and in 1930 he moved his family to Yorkshire, where he became Chief Engineer of four mills owned by Joseph Lumb's & Sons in Huddersfield. They lived at 37 Ingfield Avenue, Dalton, Huddersfield. During World War II, Harry joined the Home Guard and was commissioned in 26th West Riding (Huddersfield) Battalion on 1st February 1941. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 1942 and served until the Home Guard stood down in December 1944. When the Home Guard resurrected against the growing Soviet threat, he was appointed Lieutenant on 8th May 1952 in 25th West Riding Battalion, Huddersfield Sector, East and West Riding District Home Guard. He was promoted to Captain in May 1955.

Sadly, less than six months later, Harry died at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary, on 20th November 1955. He was buried in Edgerton Cemetery, Huddersfield. In addition to his VC and MM, he was also awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-20, Victory Medal 1914-19, Defence Medal 1939-45, George VI Coronation Medal 1937 and Elizabeth II Coronation Medal 1953.



Postcard sized Approx 13.7 x 8.6 cm. The above taken from the fine vconline website:

<http://www.vconline.org.uk/charles-h-coverdale-vc/4586271631.html>

A scarce original period VC recipient VC photo postcard