

**Harold Tyler 9<sup>th</sup> Home Defence Battalion, Suffolk Regiment s/n 5828594.**

**Henry Thomas Tyler 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars (Prince Alberts Own) s/n 7907694**

Henry and Harold Tyler came to live in Hoxne in 1923 when their Grandmother, Emma Tyler, married her second husband, Arthur Sparrow, a resident of Heckfield Green. Before this move the boy's maternal family came from the Occold/Eye area. Their grandfather, David Tyler, had a long association with the Army having joined the 57<sup>th</sup> foot in 1871 as a nineteen year old. He served with the regiment in Cornwall, Ceylon and then in South Africa where he participated in the battle of Gingindovu during the Zulu War. On returning home he re-enlisted for a further term in December 1882 when stationed in Alderney.

David was discharged from the Army in June 1890 with the South African Medal and a Medal for Long Service and Good Conduct. In the Autumn of 1890 he married Emma Barker from Occold and in November 1890 the couple's first child, a daughter named Olga Ada, was born. The 1891 census records the family living in Thorndon All Saints and that David was employed as an agricultural labourer. Tragically David died at the early age of 47 in 1899 leaving Emma a relatively young widow.

The 1891 census reveals that Emma is now the head of the family and living at Hestley Green Road, Thorndon. Before his death, David and Emma had two more daughters, Gertrude who, in 1891, was 8 and Olga Mary 4 and a son Fredrick who was aged 7. Tragically their first child, Olga Ada Tyler, had died on the 12 April 1892. In addition to her own children Emma also has three children boarding in her home. Ethel Cooper aged 10, Minnie Colling aged 5 and Herbert A Potter aged 1. The census does not indicate where the children were born. Boarders such as these were protected by the Infant Life Protection Act of 1897 legislation that was enacted following a number of scandals involving child boarders, so it is probable that Emma was registered with the local authorities.

The 1911 census records that Emma remains the head of the family and that they are now living in The Street, Thorndon. Gertrude has left home and is working as a domestic servant in Felixstowe. Frederick, now 17 and a farm worker, together with Olga Mary, aged 14, are still living with Emma. There are also two young borders, Alfred Coward, aged 3 from Fulbourne in Cambridgeshire and Emily Branton aged 1 from Crowhurst in Sussex.

By 1921 Emma has moved to Occold but as well as having two child boarders, Kathleen Gritting aged 3 from London and Iris Mullen, aged 2, from Lowestoft she now has two grandsons living with her. Henry Thomas Tyler born in 1916 in Woodbridge and Harold born in 1918. Both boys were the sons of Emma's daughter, Olga Mary, although there is no mention of who their father (or father's) were. The 1921 census records that Olga, now aged 24, was living as a servant in the London at the Oxford Street home of William James Pettitt a licensed Victualler.

In 1923 Emma married Arthur Sparrow and moved to 46 Heckfield Green, Hoxne with her young grandsons in tow. Unlike the majority of their contemporaries Henry and Harold would, thanks to the Diss Express, leave a window into their teenage years.

On the 16 June 1933 Harold, whilst returning from an area sports event at Eye, was thrown from his bicycle breaking his left arm and suffering numerous grazes. After initial treatment in Eye he was driven to Hoxne by the police where his injuries were attended to by Doctor Gardner.

1935 was an eventful year. In February 1935 Henry is summoned to attend the Hoxne Petty Session, where he is fined 5 shillings for carrying more than one person on his bicycle. At the same Petty

Sessions, Harold summoned Guy Jolly for assault and malicious damage to his bicycle on the 24 December 1934. Apparently Jolly was irritated by Harold's anti-social behaviour stating "I will teach you to throw stones at my door" before hitting Harold and throwing his bicycle against the railings of the school. When PC Brewer arrived Jolly remarked "I did give him a smack, but you don't blame me do you". Not surprisingly, given such an admission, Jolly was fined £2 plus costs of £1 15 shillings and told to pay up within the month.

Harold wasn't finished yet. He also summoned Albert Lawes for an assault that occurred in Hoxne on 3 January. Lawes' defence was that he only slapped Harold when the latter pushed his bicycle into Lawes. Lawes was fined £1 plus costs.

In May 1935 matters took a more serious turn for Harold when he was brought before Stradbroke Magistrates Court charged with wilful damage to a window of Denham Church. Clearly the bench were not amused by Harold's antics. The Clerk to the Court, Colonel Voysey, saying there had been many complaints about the defendant's behaviour with the Chairmen adding "Did you once bring a man here for striking you" when Harold answered yes the Chairman continued "It was a pity he did not strike you again". For good measure the Rector of Denham, the reverend J.K. Wood, added that although the cost of repairs to the window was only 2 shillings and 6 pence he felt that Harold was a lazy unemployed boy who needed half a dozen strokes of the birch or put into the Army or Navy. The Chairman concluded that Harold was a juvenile delinquent and needed a "good thrashing". Emma is recorded as Harold's guardian and bemoaning the fact that she cannot control her grandsons. Harold was put on probation for 3 years and bound over in the sum of £5.00. Clearly there was an undercurrent in the Village that Harold was a bit of a nuisance and that the Bench were quite aware of these complaints.

However, by June 1935, Harold was gainfully employed as an ice cream seller by a Mr J Camp of the Blue Bird café in Diss. Whilst cycling down Oak Hill in Hoxne Harold lost control of his cart and was flung off without suffering serious injury. The cart, however, was badly damaged and had to be taken to Diss on the back of a lorry. It is not recorded whether Mr Camp retained Harold's services.

In January 1937, Harold was summoned before the Hoxne Petty Sessions charged with riding his bicycle without lights on the 3 December 1936. A fine of 10 shillings was imposed and Harold was given three months to pay up. In April 1937, Lieutenant H R Scroggins from the Suffolk Regiment and one of the organisers of the Hoxne Boxing Club, arranged a match at the St Edmund's Hall, Harold entered and was quickly floored by George Turner. Harold and Lieutenant Scroggins may have met again in 1940 when they were both serving in the 2/6th Battalion.

In November 1938 Harold Tyler and James Feavearyear were summoned for discharging fireworks in the yard of Hoxne Chapel. Harold was fined 10 shillings and was cautioned about his future conduct. Clearly Feavearyear was not regarded as the prime mover in the enterprise as he was only fined 5 shillings. An exasperated Harold declared he was "framed up" and admitted that he had been in trouble before but did not see why he should always be accused. Almost immediately Harold applied for an extension to pay the fine and costs amounting to £1 and 2 Shillings. He stated he was unemployed.

In January 1939 Harold appeared in the Diss Express as a hero when the Goldbrook River broke its banks and flooded the Village Hall and the cottages nearby to the height of four feet. Fred Bridges having already lost livestock in the flood was faced with the loss of his dog which was stranded on the roof of its kennel. Harold, wading up to his waist, rescued the dog and brought it to safety.

The 1939 Register records Emma still living in Heckfield Green though by now she had been widowed for a second time Arthur having died in 1935. Henry, now classed as a general labourer, is still living at home. By March 1940 we know that Harold had been called up to the Army as the results of a whist drive held at Hoxne Village Hall informs us "Pte Harold Tyler came last".

As the international situation deteriorated, the British Government were forced to make preparation for a war against Nazi Germany. The Military Training Act was passed by Parliament in May 1939 which resulted in some 240,000 men registering for six months military training. At the declaration of war in September 1939, the National Service (Armed Forces) Act brought in conscription for all males aged between 18-41.

Whilst we know that Harold was in uniform by March 1940 we do not know when Henry joined the forces. They would have undergone basic Military training which would, at that time, have taken three or four months. Harold's short military career started and finished in Suffolk. In November 1940 the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment split into the 1/6<sup>th</sup> and 2/6<sup>th</sup> Battalions. The Headquarters of the 2/6<sup>th</sup> was initially in Ipswich and a month later was moved to Fornham St Martin near Bury St Edmunds. In December 1940 the 2/6<sup>th</sup> became the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Home Defence) Suffolk Regiment. Somewhere in this administrative melee was Harold Tyler. The purpose of the Home Defence Battalions was to guard vulnerable points, such as bridges, ports and as in Harold case an airfield, RAF Mildenhall.

Between June 1940 and April 1941 the Luftwaffe directed a series of intensive bombing raids against British ports and RAF Bases. On the night of 30 December 1940, the Germans attacked RAF Mildenhall and during this raid Harold and one of his colleagues were killed.

On 10 January 1941 Harold received a full military funeral complete with a firing party, his coffin being carried by six of his comrades from his company. He is buried in the Churchyard of SS Peter and Paul. Both his mother and grandmother attended the funeral as did a large number of villagers. Henry, however did not attend as he was "on active service overseas". On the 26 December 1941 Harold's mother and grandmother put a memorial notice in the Diss Express which reveals that Henry was serving in Egypt.

Whilst we know that Henry died serving with the 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars (Prince of Alberts Own) we do not know when he joined them although we know he was on "active service overseas" before Harold's death in December 1940 and the fact that he was serving in Egypt in December 1941. The 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars had been serving in the Middle East since 1934 and were actively involved in putting down the Arab Rebellion in 1936 and then spent the next three years shuttling between Egypt and Palestine when unrest erupted into violence.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars were back in Egypt when the Second World War began and were heavily engaged throughout the North African Campaign and present at its conclusion when the Axis forces surrendered at Tunis on the 13 May 1943. The next three months were taken up with rest, recuperation and training at a camp near Tripoli. On the 16<sup>th</sup> September the regiment were embarked on a convoy of Landing Ships and landed on the Italian coast near Salerno on the 19<sup>th</sup>. By the end of October the 11<sup>th</sup> were located near the town of Pizzone to the north of Naples. On the 26<sup>th</sup> October Henry drove his Commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Smail together with two other officers to a meeting. The Regiments War Diary record that:-

"October 25<sup>th</sup> was marred by a serious motoring accident involving the C.O. (Lieutenant Col Smail), Major Roberts, Captain Lockett (the adjutant) and Tpr Tyler. In the C.O.'s jeep they were driving back in the dark and unfortunately crashed over a blown up bridge into a drop of about 25 feet. The

Adjutant escaped with a shaking but the others were all taken to hospital and it would seem likely that the C.O. will be out of action for at least 3 months, Major Roberts for about 6 weeks and Tpr Tyler 2 months. This is a serious blow to the 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars and we all hope for better news of the injured”

Unfortunately, Henry succumbed to his injuries and died on the 31<sup>st</sup> October. Lieutenant Colonel Smail was evacuated to England and recovered sufficiently from his injuries to resume command of the Regiment, albeit briefly, in January 1944 when the 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars returned to the U.K.

Henry is buried in the Commonwealth War Graves cemetery in Naples, the last resting place for many of those who died in one of the three General Hospitals based in Naples. Henry is also commemorated on the Royal Armoured Corps Roll of Honour in the Memorial Room at the Royal Armoured Corps Museum at Bovington Camp.