



William Henry Butcher

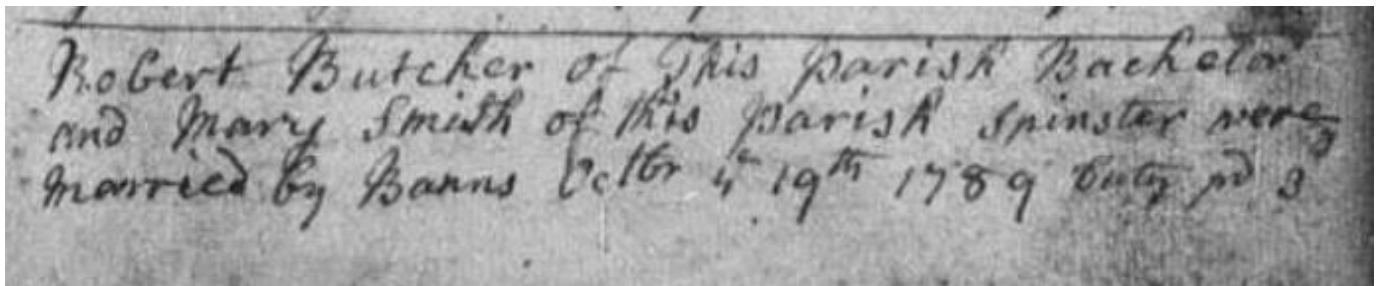
58006/670734 Private, 25th Battalion Royal Fusiliers

He died on 11th December 1918 in No 4 General Hospital, Denmark Hill, London

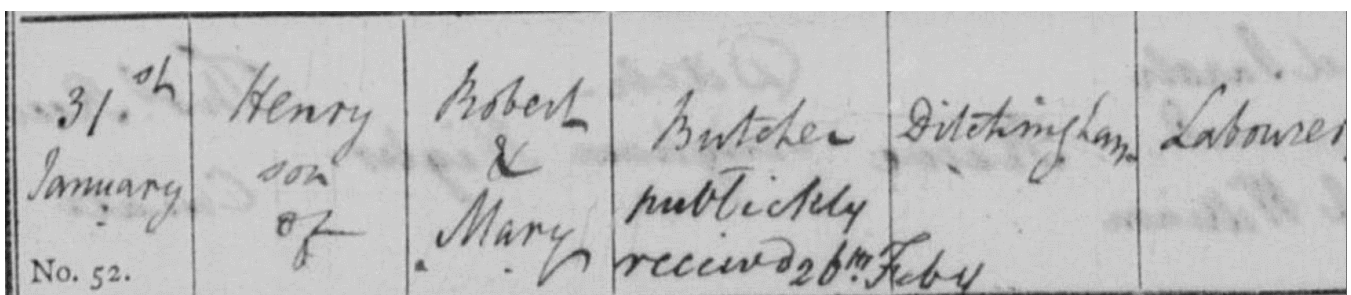
William was buried in the Wortwell United Reformed Chapel Churchyard

Private William Henry Butcher was a family man who died exactly 1 month after the Armistice and the end of World War 1. One of our older soldiers, 42 years of age when he died, it is not surprising that he had been transferred from the Fusiliers 25th to the Labour Corps. Originally made up of men with specific skills, such as carpentry or excavating, who had also been trained as infantry men, as the war progressed more and more of the older or less-fit soldiers were siphoned off to this Corps that tackled anything from unloading ships to track laying or building shelters to burying bodies.

Butcher's history was rooted firmly in the lands either side of the River Waveney; we will start by going back 100 years before his death to the 1815 Ditchingham baptism of young Henry Butcher, the son of Robert and Mary. Robert was an agricultural labourer, the destiny of his descendants, including Henry, and doubtless many of his ancestors too.



Henry was most likely one of the youngest of a largish family. His parents, Robert and Mary nee Smith, married in Alburgh back in 1789. In 1803, George, John and William Butcher, respectively born in 1797, 1799 and 1803 were all baptised in Ditchingham whilst 2 years later on Daniel, son of Robert and Mary Smith was also baptised at Ditchingham, tying neatly together location, maiden name and older siblings in one tidy little package! The splendidly named Sylvanus followed in 1807, Ann in 1810 until we finally get to our Henry in 1815



By the time of the first census in 1841, all the family had flown the nest leaving the elderly couple, Robert and Mary Butcher to quietly lead out the end of their days in the nearby village of Alburgh. The next census, 1851, reveals that Alburgh was, as might be expected by their marriage having taken place there over 60 years previously, Mary Butcher nee Smith's home village although her

husband came from across the border, St Margaret's (Ilketshall? South Elmham?), Suffolk. Robert was 80, his wife 78; not too surprisingly the old fellow was by then a pauper, relying on parish support. Mary died at the end of 1851, her husband lasted in to 1852 but when he was buried, like his wife in Alburgh, another 10 years had been added on to his age and he was described as being 90!

In 1841, their youngest son, farm labourer Henry, was already 25 and lodging with the Grimmer family in Alburgh. Not a lad to rush into things, he married local lass Rachel Pulford, from Wortwell in 1846, she was 9 years his junior and, along with a number of her siblings had been baptised in Alburgh although by the time of the 1841 census she and her family had drifted to Homersfield.

The young couple set up married life in Mill Lane Alburgh when husband Henry was claiming, as expected, Ditchingham birth and his wife Rachel, birth in Wortwell. Their oldest son, Samuel, was to be the first survivor in a fairly prolific family. In 1851, the three-year-old already had a one-year-old little sister, by the 1861 census 5 more younger siblings had been added giving a total of 7 children in just over 14 years of marriage. The youngest of these babies was less than a month old explaining why Rachel's mother, Jemima Pulford, appeared simultaneously in her son's household in Alburgh and with her husband Thomas, in Homersfield – there are times when a mum is really needed to help keep a husband fed, children in order and the household under control!

Henry and Rachel Butcher were then one of two large families living in the 'Town House' next the Church, indicating this house was a remnant of the old system of Parish relief which was now being rented out to local families. If the 'Town House' had been the old Workhouse it would have been ideal for large, but hard-working families – the deserving poor as they were then known.

Oldest son, the then 13 years old Samuel, was out the nest (well it must have been getting a little crowded) and was a live in Errand Boy at the Pied (or Pye, depending on the source) Bridge Farmhouse, Alburgh. This substantial farm of 280 acres was being run by the elderly (77) Nathaniel Parker from Hertfordshire. The 1839 tithe lists Nathaniel Parker at Pye (or Pied) Bridge Farm, owning and occupying (farming) 17 plots including a cottage and garden rented to James Nobbs. Sadly, Nathaniel's second daughter, Charlotte, died of a 'Brain Fever'.

“suddenly, at Manchester. whilst on journey”

Nathaniel does indeed appear at 'Pied Bridge Farm' in the 1841 census along with his wife, a son and daughter and his assumed older brother - Joseph. The family is still at the farm in 1851, joined by two grandsons, 5 years old 'Nathaniel Edward Parker' and fifteen-year-old 'Farmer Pupil' a 'Nathaniel Edward Leader' although by the time of the 1861 census when Samuel was in residence, only Nathaniel, his wife and various servants were in residence. Administered by Henry Parker of Oaklands Farm, Nathaniel's estate was being wound up in early 1868 when he received the following glowing obituary:-

Mr Parker lived to the patriarchal age of 84 years and leaves behind him a character for unblemished reputation, sustained throughout his long life by integrity and uprightness never doubted. In perfect agreement with this, he was marked by a gentlemanly bearing and a maintenance of high Christian principle. We cannot refrain from paying this mark of respect to the memory of the deceased as such characters deserve every honor'.¹

¹ Norfolk News 15 Feb 1868

His widow, Hepzibah, died 6 years later² but when the farm was wound up, our Samuel Butcher remained in situ although when he appeared there in the 1871 census, working for John Prime, he

was described as a Farm Servant. Samuel had not progressed much, essentially, he was doing the work of a labourer but living-in on an annual contract. Things were about to change, if only a little, with Samuel's marriage to Ada Read from Homersfield in December 1875; 6 years into

Page /	(The Year 1875-6)
No. /	Banns of Marriage
Between	<i>Samuel Butcher Single man</i>
and	<i>Ada Read Single woman of the parish of Homersfield</i>
<i>of the parish of St. Andrew</i>	
<i>in the County of Suffolk</i> were published on the Three Sundays underwritten;	
That is to say, On Sunday the 28 th of November by J. D. Turner Curate.	
On Sunday the 5 th of December by J. D. Turner Curate.	
On Sunday the 12 th of December by J. D. Turner Curate.	

married life and Samuel and Ada Butcher nee Read were living next to Pied Bridge Farm, Samuel was probably still working on the farm and they had one four-year-old son, William. Sadly, there were to be no more living children and Ada died, aged only 32, in 1884.

Unusually Samuel did not remarry but instead moved in with his mother-in-law, a Flixton woman who was then living near the Mill House in Homersfield. I say then living but she had been living by Homersfield mill since at least 1871, and was to reappear there up to and including the 1901 census.

Samuel's mother-in-law did not go by the name of Read as you might expect, but instead she had remarried after the death of William Read, her first husband and father of Ada. Although Ada's father was a brick layer from Mendham and her mother Mary had come from Flixton, the couple had set up home in Homersfield and it was there that Ada and her two sisters, one older and one younger had been born.

Following the death of William, Mary Read remarried to a widower, Thomas Guyatt of Wortwell who, with his wife, had already raised at least 8 children. Thomas was 20 years older than his second wife (who was a quarter of a century younger than his first) and as would be expected he pre-deceased her. They did appear together, near Homersfield Mill in 1881, but by 1891 Guyatt was dead and the twice widowed Mary's son in law and grand son, Samuel and William Butcher, were also in situ. By 1901, although Mary was still in residence she was no longer head of the household, instead that honour went to Samuel, 24 years old gardener William was also still in residence.

² Norwich Mercury 9 May 1874

Mary Guyatt died in late 1903 and this seems to have let the 'boys' off the leash. Rather startling but in early 1904, after 20 years of widowerhood, Samuel Butcher remarried to 'Bell' or Isabella Fairhead from the large Fairhead family of Alburgh. Even more surprising was that Isabella, when she married in 1904 was only 23, her husband Samuel, would have been 56. By 1911, two children had arisen from this relationship, sadly only Lily, aged 6, had survived

ALBURGH.

LATE MR. S. BUTCHER.

Many parishioners paid their last respects to an aged and most respected parishioner, at the funeral at the parish church on Monday of the late Mr. Samuel Butcher, who died at his residence on Wednesday week.

Mr. Butcher, who was 91 years of age, was the village's oldest inhabitant. He had lived in the district the whole of his life and worked until he was more than 80 years of age at the Redenhall Farm. Mr. Butcher was an active man for his age and until quite recently attended to his own garden.

The service was conducted by the Rector, the Rev. H. Sneath, and the family mourners were as follows: the widow; Mr. and Mrs. L. Garnham; Mr. and Mrs. Love, sons-in-law and daughters; Mr. A. Grimmer, nephew; Mr. and Mrs. G. Butcher, brother and sister-in-law; Mrs. A. M. Butcher (Homersfield), daughter-in-law; Mr. A. T. Fairhead

Samuel was obviously still a sprightly fellow, another daughter followed, and he carried on working until his 80's at Redenhall Farm. Even when he retired, he continued to mind his own garden before his death at age 91 in 1938 when he was (as might be expected) the oldest resident of Alburgh.

Diss Express 16 Sep 1938

Samuel's son, William Butcher, also married in 1904 but to a young lady of his own age, Alice nee Elliot who, like his grandmother had come from Flixton. At the time of the 1911 census they were living, near Homersfield Mill, and had four children, the youngest of whom was only a month old and they were doing well enough

to have a 'nurse' living in with them. This is not as grand as it seems; the 'Monthly Nurse', often a mature widow, would have had no formal training but a lot of experience with caring for newly delivered mothers, her wages would have been minimal but bed and board would have been provided. Slightly confusingly, like his father, William Butcher also decided to call one of his children Lily although his daughter was two years younger than her half aunt of the same name! On the night of the 1911 census, young Lily, daughter of Alice and William was visiting the Gibbs at Broaditch Wash Farm, Wortwell.

It was this William Henry Butcher who was called up and went to do his bit for his country, whether reluctantly, as he left his wife and family, or with enthusiasm as he recaptured a youthful sense of adventure we cannot now know. Working back from his War Gratuity of £14.00 we can calculate that he had served for about 2 ½ years before his death in No 4 London General Hospital in Denmark Hill London. This would tie in with the introduction of Conscription for all men, aged between 18 and 41, married or unmarried in May 1916.



*Ward hut at the No. 4 London General Hospital
Lewis, George P. (Photographer) 1918.*

We now know this hospital as King's College but during WW1 it led in various medical interventions in Neurological Conditions, some expressions of which were termed 'Shellshock' at the time, but an extension to Ruskin Park specialised in lung injuries and diseases. The residents of the Ruskin Park extension were encouraged to cultivate 'Ward Gardens' as part of their re-habilitation. William may, and only may, have been one of the men who died of T.B contracted during the war and possibly made worse by trench conditions or gassing, may have been one of those unfortunates suffering from Shellshock or could have suffered from any other of a number of conditions.



Buried in the Wortwell Chapel Churchyard, Butcher has a standard CWGC marker stone bearing the legend 'The Beloved Husband Of Alice Mary Butcher Until The Day Break & The Shadows Flee Away'. At the time of the erection of the stone, the Chapel was Congregational, a church with which the family had a long history of involvement, with later reforms it became a United Reform Church. William's widow remained in Homersfield; her address being given as 'near the Police Station'. It is bizarre to think to Homersfield having its own police station!

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Perhaps with her husband actually having an individual military grave in the Churchyard, unlike all the other men of Wortwell whose deaths were commemorated on either or both the Wortwell and / or Harleston Memorials,

it was felt there was no need for William Butcher to have his name on either of those memorials. Perhaps his death of disease after the cessation of hostilities influenced this decision but either way it is right that he be honoured and remembered.

His wife, Alice, herself lived to the grand old age of 90 having never remarried; it is a shame that her husband, who himself came from a long-lived family, was not able to accompany her into old age.