



## Arthur William Wiles

C/K 57685 Leading Stoker, Royal Navy, 'HMS Woolwich'

He died in Alexandria, Egypt on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1943, aged 41

Arthur is buried at the Alexandria (Hadra) war memorial cemetery, Egypt.



Arthur William Wiles was a career sailor having enlisted in the Navy back in 1919. However, he was not born to a seafaring family, coming from agricultural stock if anything there was more of an army tradition with his father, Arthur William Wiles Snr having served with the 'Harleston Volunteer Detachment of the old Norfolk Regiment'<sup>1</sup>

Our hero's grandfather, Metfield born William Wiles, started off his married life to Elizabeth Ablett back in 1870, appearing in the 1871 census as a 'Kiddier', which depending on the source is either a fish seller or a trader in goat skins! His wife, Elizabeth, was the niece of Alfred Ablett, the first winner of the Suffolk VC giving a nice link to an early hero also marked on our war memorial!

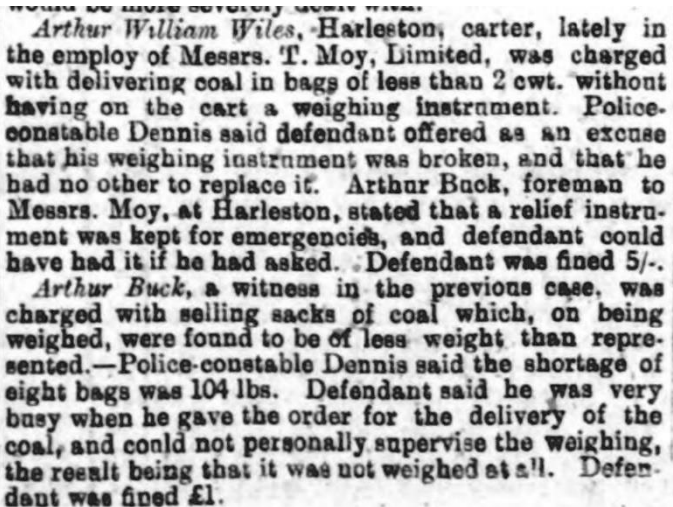
By 1881 William was able to boast farming 9 acres, a small farm but his own! Strangely, after 11 years of marriage they only had one child, 2 years old Arthur William Wiles Snr, 5 more were to follow.

Arthur William Wiles snr married Alice Maud M Pegg in late 1899, appearing next to the Mendham Vicarage in 1901 with Alice's younger sister Olive Pegg aged 11 visiting the household too. There were at least 10 Pegg siblings, Olive being one of a pair of twin girls. Alice would have been pregnant with her and Arthur Snr's first child at the time of the census but sadly, Alice died in early 1902, aged only 23. Her son was (confirmed by Naval Records) born on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Jan 1902; we can reasonably assume that his mother either died during this, her first labour, or of infection a short while after. In those days, when the ordinary working family would rely on neighbours, family or the local wise woman for help during and after delivery, anything other than a normal labour could be fatal. Hygiene was limited and 'childbirth' fever due to infection was also rife.

Arthur William Wiles Snr, with a small child to look after, took the obvious solution and remarried to Susannah nee Sharman<sup>2</sup> in 1904. By the time of the 1911 census a 6 years old half-brother to Arthur William, named William George, was the only issue of this marriage.

Arthur Snr continued to work for his widowed father as did both his brother George and a sister, Ada, who was doing the dairy work. George and Ada, both unmarried, were living in with their father as were two young grandchildren, who may or may not have been Ada's illegitimate children.

Old Farmer William Wiles lived to be 86 but may well have let his younger son take over the farm rather than Arthur snr, perhaps at the declaration of war. Arthur Snr had certainly moved to town



Arthur William Wiles, Harleston, cartier, lately in the employ of Messrs. T. Moy, Limited, was charged with delivering coal in bags of less than 2 cwt. without having on the cart a weighing instrument. Police-constable Dennis said defendant offered as an excuse that his weighing instrument was broken, and that he had no other to replace it. Arthur Buck, foreman to Messrs. Moy, at Harleston, stated that a relief instrument was kept for emergencies, and defendant could have had it if he had asked. Defendant was fined 5/-. Arthur Buck, a witness in the previous case, was charged with selling sacks of coal which, on being weighed, were found to be of less weight than represented.—Police-constable Dennis said the shortage of eight bags was 104 lbs. Defendant said he was very busy when he gave the order for the delivery of the coal, and could not personally supervise the weighing, the result being that it was not weighed at all. Defendant was fined £1.

by 1918 when he was 'done' for short selling bags of coal - accident, incompetence, dishonesty or laziness? Hmmmm, either way him not bothering to find a working set of scales appears to have lost him his job as the report in the paper describes him as being late in the employ of Moy's, the coal merchants!

*Diss Express*  
6 Sep 1918

<sup>1</sup> Diss Express 28 Jan 1949

<sup>2</sup> Married Hoxne in late 1903.

Back in 1933, when his parents, Arthur Snr and Susan(nah) Wiles were living on The Common, and with 14 years Naval service under his belt, Leading Stoker Arthur (William) Wiles II had an exciting wedding day – no sniggers please, this was down to an automobile incident. Stoker Wiles, his step-

**The late Mr. A. W. Wiles.**

Mr. Wiles was a son of a former Mendham farmer, for whom he worked in his early life as a ploughman. He had lived at Harleston for thirty years, working at various farms in the locality. Many years ago he served with the Harleston Volunteer Detachment of the old Norfolk Regiment. He was 69. Mr. Wiles who also leaves a widow and a grown-up family had been ill for a long time, and died at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital following an operation. His eldest son, Mr. Arthur Wiles, was killed during the last war while serving with the Royal Navy.

The Rector (Canon Pickering) officiated at the funeral service. The immediate mourners were: the widow; Mr. William Wiles, Mr. George Wiles (brother), Mrs. W. Elsey (sister), Mr. Stanley Wiles, Mr. Claud Wiles, Mrs. G. Wiles (Needham), Mrs. Frarey, Mr. Wm. Elsey, Mr. Arthur Elsey, Mr. Wm. Wisken, and Miss Nora Ablett.

mother Susan, his wife to be, Eve(a) Pearce and her mother, Mrs H. Pearce of Exchange St<sup>3</sup> were travelling in the car of the landlord of the Hope Inn, Mr George Chipperfield towards Long Stratton. Unfortunately, the wedding party crashed their car into another, coming from Rushall, at the junction of Swan and Wilderness Lanes; 'both vehicles were considerably damaged and had to be abandoned'. Luckily, a replacement vehicle was found, and the wedding still took place at Long Stratton registry office.<sup>4</sup> Their oldest son, Ivan was born later on that year when the couple from The Common' proudly gave Arthur's profession as Royal Navy.

The 1939 census indicates that Arthur Snr and his wife were, living one of three cottages set at right angles to the Common (now combined into a single dwelling), After a long illness culminating in a fatal operation, Arthur Snr died in 1949, being survived by his second wife, his obituary

describes both his involvement with the Norfolk Volunteers and the death of his oldest son Arthur Wiles Jnr, in the war

Leading Stoker Arthur Wiles accidental death whilst serving abroad was reported in the Diss Express of 6<sup>th</sup> August 1943. Having served 24 years in the Royal Navy, and at the time on a Supply Vessel with more predictable deployment, he was expecting to go on early leave home. He 'was buried in a cemetery abroad with full naval honours. Many of the ships officers and men attending. A collection among the officers and men was also been made for his widow and three young children'<sup>5</sup> who at the time of Arthur's death were living in Box Tree Cottage in the Old Post Office Yard.

<sup>3</sup> According to Diss Express 26 July 1940, the Pearces were then living at 1 The Common, the address given when gardener Harry Pearce was fined for showing a light.

<sup>4</sup> Diss Express 13 Jan 1933

<sup>5</sup> Diss Express 13 Aug 1943

### **LATE LEADING STOKER A. WILES**

Further news has now been received by Mrs. Wiles, of Old Post Office Yard, concerning her husband, Leading Stoker Arthur Wiles, who, as reported last week, was accidentally killed abroad.

In a letter from the Lieut. Commander of the ship deep regret is expressed for the accident and the loss of a fine craftsman and good shipmate. Leading Stoker Wiles, the letter adds, was buried in a cemetery abroad with full naval honours, many of the ship's officers and men attending. A collection among the officers and men has also been made for his widow and three young children.

This was a little mysterious – how did he accidentally die? I had assumed a shipboard accident, even in peace time boats are dangerous places, luckily the Naval records go into greater detail.

Leading Stoker Wiles, an experienced sailor, was 41 years old at the time of his death at which time he was serving on H.M.S. Woolwich, a supply ship detailed to deliver provisions to battleships and destroyers operating in the area. Bizarrely,

his death, in the middle of WW2, was not in the heat of battle or even during routine on-board activities. Instead, he died of injuries sustained in a tramcar accident in Alexandria on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July.

Rather touchingly his memorial at Hadra carries the legend 'In loving memory of a devoted husband and daddy. Always in our thoughts'.

The three children Ivan, Diane and Loretta to whom Arthur was Daddy, remained locally to be raised by their mother, all three marrying in Depwade over a span of 16 years. Diane married Arthur Davey in 1957, Loretta married Edward Thacker in 1958 and Ivan Gordon Wiles married Anthea Reeves in 1973. Ivan died, aged 67 in 2001 having served 11 years in the Navy, a tradition that was continued by his son, Stuart, who completed 22 years. Stuart now has custody of three generations of military medals to preserve for future generations and is also the great-great-great-grand-nephew of Alfred Ablett V.C!