



Lionel Lindsay Turner

14288535 Private, 8th Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders

He died on 1st May 1943, in Tunisia, aged 19

Lionel is buried at Medjez-el-Bab war cemetery, Tunisia

Lionel Lindsay Turner was a lad raised on Harleston Common. The Turner family appear there in 1901, headed by Herbert Turner (traction engine driver) and his wife Charlotte. Seven years married, they were raising a small tribe of girls, Herbert also appears there on the electoral register of 1904. Doreen Whurr nee Brown recalled the family in the late 30's:-



'The tiny house to the right of the council houses was occupied by the Turner's - there were lots of them'.

Certainly, by the 1911 census, the illiterate but skilled Farm Machinist, Engine Driver Herbert, had five daughters and one son which whilst not huge by the standards of The Common was certainly a lot of people in one tiny house. The two older girls were working in the hosiery factory up in Keeley's

Yard, the younger children were still at school getting the education which seems to have eluded their parents. The census was completed on their behalf by their neighbour Robert Saunders, living across the way. Like many illiterate people Herbert was rather vague on his age: 44 in 1911; 33 in 1901; and (most accurately 26) in 1891 when he was lodging with Benjamin Saunders, a drill man, and his family in Rushall.

Herbert's mother. Louisa was an extraordinary woman. She came from local farm labouring stock; her own parents William and Elizabeth, known as Betsy, had originated from Hardwick but were in Hedenham (via Pulham) by 1854. On March 5th 1865, Herbert Job Turner (to give him his full names), the illegitimate son of Louisa (aged 18) was baptised at Hedenham Church. Louisa went on to marry, Thomas Mills in Hedenham at the start of 1866, claiming then to be 21 although still only 18¹ thus dodging having to get her parent's consent to the marriage! Thomas was substantially older than Louisa, 16 years her senior.

¹ We can be confident that this is the 'right' Louise Turner as this ties in with her father's name of William on the marriage certificate, and her sister Lucy being a witness.

When the Mills appear in 1871, out on the Seething Fens, Thomas Mills had given little Herbert his name, and, in 5 years of marriage Louisa and Thomas had already added another three children to the family. Herbert was eventually to gain 13 (half) siblings i.e – Louisa was to have 14 children who lived long enough to appear on censuses!

By 1881, Louisa's older brother John was Landlord of the Cap with her younger sister Lucy (who had witnessed Louisa's wedding) working there as a bar maid.

The same year finds Louisa claiming to be only 34, matching closer her true age, and the family (now with 9 children) living on the Harleston Road in Rushall, living next the Brick Kilns. Sadly, one of the children, 10 years old Thomas Jnr, was (in the harsh way of the time) described as an imbecile. This actually gets worse as by 1891, not only was Thomas Jnr described as an imbecile, so was his slightly younger brother, Arthur, three years his junior. The family must have been struggling with 2 parents, 7 children in their teens or above (including 2 'imbeciles') and 5 younger children including a baby – all in a 3-room cottage! Yes, 14 people in total. It is not too surprising that in 1887, the Mills family of Rushall were particularly mentioned in Candler's report to the Depwade Union, as being repeat offenders for overcrowding.

Also in 1891, Louisa's parents, William and Betsy were living in Shipps yard Harleston, not far from the Cap where John was still the landlord. Poor Lucy, married Henry Borrett in 1883, gave birth to a son Henry Jnr in 1884, and was promptly widowed by 1885. She was supporting herself and her son working as a draper's assistant. Slightly surprisingly, her and a widowed older sister were living out in Denton in 1901, renting apartments – a respectable Church of England Minister being their lodger! This really was a family that stuck together. Indeed, when Louisa's children's funerals started appearing in the post WW2 press, her grandson, Spencer Playford, from the Common featured regularly amongst the mourners.

1891 was a challenging year for Herbert Turner's mother Louisa. It was also this year that Henry/Harry was committed for an 'offence' with Anna Hubbard Rant, she was 15 at the time of the offence, he would have been 27. In 1881, Anna's mother was the 'housekeeper' of Richard Hubbard and when Anna was baptised had firmly ascribed the paternity Anna to her so-called employer – standard practise at the time. They finally married in 1888, probably when their second child, Eliza Alice Hubbard was on the way!! Young Anna was not baptised until she was 5, in 1880 and very confusingly, it appears that her mother started off as a Riches!²

He was found not guilty and discharged.—*Henry Mills*, a labouring man, apparently 27 or 28 years of age, surrendered to his bail on the charge of committing an offence against Anna Hubbard Rant, living at Dickleburgh, on June 14th. Mr. Frere was for the prosecution, prisoner being undefended. The offence, it was alleged, was committed in a field in the parish of Rushall, where both parties were seen by a couple of young men, who gave evidence accordingly. The girl reached the age of 16 last September, but the offence took place on June 14th. Prisoner went into the witness-box, where he denied the offence and swore that the girl had previously told him she was turned 16. The jury found prisoner not guilty, believing that he had reasonable cause to think the girl was over 16.

² Eliza Riches married George Rant of Starston in 1871

1880	Feb. 1	Anna Hubbard	Eliza	Rant (e Riches)	Nickleburg Moor	Living with John B. 1896. n.s. Richard Hubbard
No. 895						

This 'assault' was a bit of a blot on the reputation of a family that otherwise, in spite of poverty and overcrowding had in all other respects kept out of trouble. You don't find the Mills up for drunkenness, petty theft, brawling or failure of children attending school!

The case went to court and was tried with two others of a like nature but involving men of 47 and 35 with girls of 14 and 13 respectively; these cases were deeply unpleasant, with elements of what one would now recognise as grooming. Whilst the alleged 'offence' between Harry (23) and Anna (15) had taken place 3 months before Anna's 16th birthday, the couple had not been discreet in their cavorting! I am afraid in the time between the offence and the trial, Anna had wound up in court in Harleston, for stealing from her mother, who had in the meantime had married Anna's father. It does say a lot for the character of this girl that even her mother had lost patience with her; Anna was tried, sent to prison; her credibility was shot to pieces and having decided that it was reasonable for Harry to believe Anna was over 16, the jury acquitted him.

Anna Hubbard Rant, of Langmere, was charged by Eliza Hubbard, of the same place, with stealing 1s. 7d. from her house on the 10th inst., and was sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

Diss Express
27 Nov 1891

In 1894 the Mills oldest son, Herbert Turner aka Mills, married Charlotte Land; I think it no coincidence that back in 1881, one entry below the Mills household appeared the Land household including Charlotte, then 12 years of age and 3 years younger than Herbert. In 1891, Charlotte was a domestic servant in Starston, when they married, in late 1894, Charlotte would have been just about 26 and Herbert 28, possibly 29; glad to know they did not rush into things!

Old Thomas Mills died in Rushall in early 1895, although the register claims he was then 69 – 5 years older than one might have thought, His son Thomas Jnr, one of the two 'imbeciles' died 7 months later in September 1895, aged only 25.

Lord knows how she did it but with hordes of children still in tow, Louisa snagged herself another husband, widower James Buggs, a mere 3 years older than herself. The couple appeared in the 1901 census with 7 of her children and a boarder in the household. James' previous marriage had been a sort of bizarre reverse of Louisa's. James at the age of 26 had married a spinster who was around the age of 40; not too surprisingly no children arose from this union. It must have been one heck of a shock for James Buggs to have gone from a small household of two (becoming a widower in early 1893) to taking on a large household less than 2 ½ years later! At the time of the marriage, Louisa's youngest child would have been only 5!

Hats off to Mr Buggs – he married Louisa on Christmas Day and I hope that this was a good omen for the rest of their life together. This sadly was less than 8 years in duration, Louisa died at the age of 57 on the 15th of January 1903, at this point her youngest child was still only 12. But bless Mr Buggs indeed, in 1911 he still had two of Louisa’s adult children living with him including the baby of the family, Lucy, then aged 23.

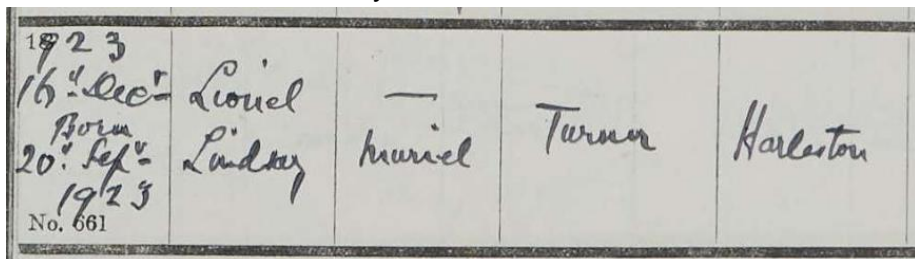
Back to the Common and Lionel’s family which seems positively small in comparison to the Mills! Herbert Job Turner survived to the very respectable age of 71, dying in 1936. His wife outlived him, achieving the impressive age of 88 when she died in 1957.

One of the younger Turner girls, Norah, had a tumble during the “Paul Jones” at a ‘Girl’s Friendly Society Dance’ in George Hall, leading to two stitches – must have been a slow news week!³ Norah went on to marry James Thompson in 1948 at the quite mature age of 41!

9 years earlier, shortly after the outbreak of WW2, Norah was one of three bridesmaids at the wedding of Hilda Phoebe Payne, youngest daughter of Charles Payne from No6 the Close which is basically the row of Council Houses plus the old former farmhouse, Apple Tree Cottage. All wore ‘ring velvet’, the bridesmaids in ankle length grape!

Doreen Whurr nee Brown remembered an old lady living in the small cottage with two or three of her daughters and a younger boy although she was unsure if the boy was the ‘old lady’s’ or belonged to one of her daughters; in 1923, Charlotte would have been 54, not out of the question but a little elderly to become a mother again.

As it happens the parish register reveals that Lionel’s mother was Muriel Murray Turner who would have then been about 21 and two years earlier had been living away from home working as a live in servant at the Waveney Farm, Low Road Mendham.



During the inter-war period, the rural working classes suddenly got more respectable than they had ever been before, a state of affairs that lasted more or less up to the 1980’s. Previously no-one

was too bothered about the occasional (or if truth be told quite numerous) illegitimate children that were absorbed into the families of fathers, step fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles etc etc etc.. Indeed, the Buggs, Mills, and Turners all had slightly complicated family set ups! After the first world war, matters were far more covered up.

³ Diss Express 7th Feb 1930

Lionel Lindsay is remembered by Doreen as being called Leslie; I suspect the discrepancy (Lionel/Leslie/Lester) is not down to an old lady's memory not being 100% accurate but the Commoners lax attitude to official naming versus the use of nicknames! Les or Leslie might have been the version used of his middle name whilst Lionel could have been a bit a burden for a ruffy tufty Norfolk lad! Whatever his origins, the family were obviously very proud of their boy, Lionel Turner of Harleston had his 13th Birthday announcement in the 1936 Diss Express. The 1939 register lists Spencer and Norah Turner, their Mother Charlotte, one more person, redacted, a Blanche Howe and, possibly another person, also redacted, as living on the Common.

Lionel took full advantage of the new opportunities available for young lads of humble back grounds in the interwar period, joining the Sea Scouts set up in the town in October 1936 by a local headmaster. Within 3 months the lads and their leader had built an impressive canoe and Lionel, along with John Drake who was also to die during the war, was pictured showing this off in the local press!

HARLESTON HOME GUARD
RE - UNION DINNER

The excellent spirit of comradeship still existing between members of the Harleston Home Guard was evidenced by the largely attended and enthusiastic re-union dinner held at the Swan Hotel, on Tuesday week, when the attendance of over seventy included as guests several local ex-prisoners of-war, in addition to other service men home on leave. Capt. H. S. Foulsham presided, supported by the Company Commander, Major A. Lombe Taylor, Lieut. W. Foster, Lieut. F. M. Redding, Lieut. W. G. Youngs, C.-S.M. Gower, and C. Q.M.S. Sharman.

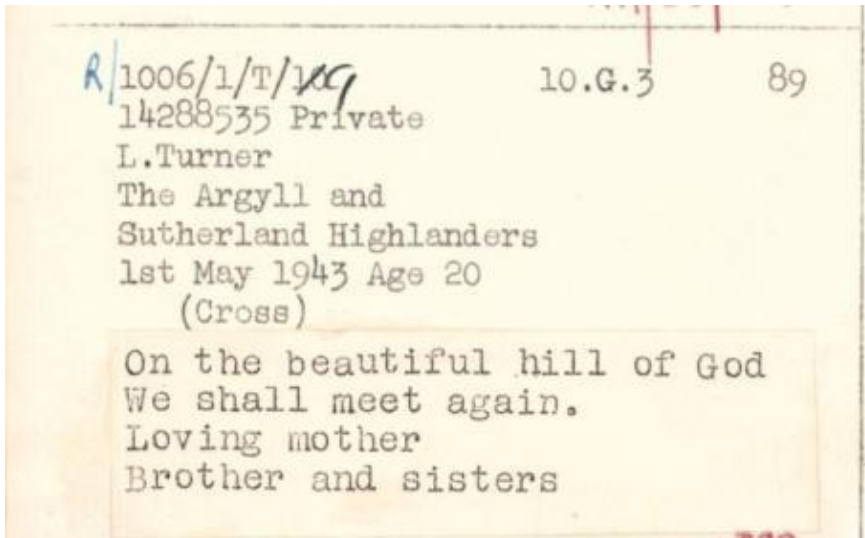
Following the loyal toast submitted by Capt. Foulsham, the company stood in silence in memory of Privates L. Turner and H. Pearce, two former members of the Section who lost their lives on active service overseas.



Their Turner's boy, joined the Harleston Home Guard before he fully enlisted and, along with Horace Pearce, was remembered by them at their Christmas Dinner in 1945. He was killed, aged nineteen, 2 ½ years previously; his name appears as L.L.Turner on the war memorial, Doreen remembers him as being killed and buried abroad and recalls him 'coming into his mother's yard wearing his uniform⁴ and that he was killed early in the war.

⁴ Embarkation leave?

Slightly bizarrely, Lionel had joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders! In a transcribed record his mother's name is given as Mrs C Turner although we now know this was his grandmother. Lionel's death, like his birth, is slightly shrouded in mystery; the records show he was reported wounded and missing on the 1st of May 1943; it was later assumed that he died on or shortly after that date. The war in the desert was a highly mobile, fast-moving series of skirmishes; it is then a little uncertain whether his death was confirmed on or around that date or whether his remains were



discovered some 4 months later on 23rd of September 1943. It seems that his final status was only officially released on the 14th of December 1944; until then the family could have held on to some hope of Lionel having been captured until then. Dying in Tunisia he was then buried in the Chassart Cemetery but later exhumed and reburied, on the 15th June 1944 at the Medjez-El-Bab War Cemetery as part of the 'Grave Concentration' process, designed to

promote manageable maintenance of larger combined sites.

Turner would have been part of the final push to remove the Axis powers from North Africa - more specifically from Tunisia, in cahoots with the American Army. The final push was launched on 5th May so it seems he was killed in one of the minor skirmishes that took place in the run up to this major offensive. The stone mentioned his 'Loving mother, Brother and sisters', it seems a shame that his loving grandmother had not been included; his grandfather was of course dead by then. A Norfolk lad from the lush Waveney Valley lies far from home in a well irrigated settlement on the edge of arid deserts but his name is also recorded on his grandfather Herbert's headstone in the Dickleburgh Churchyard.

