

## Private Harry Mark TILLER

### 49635 - 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Worcestershire Regiment

15 March 1918



Harry Tiller was born in Witchampton, Dorset in March 1882, the son of Mark Tiller, a hurdle maker from Damerham, and Charlotte Tiller, née Cutler. His sister Rosina married Edward George Haines, who also died in the war. The family moved to East End, Damerham in the late 1800s.

In 1906, Harry married Louisa Adelia Annie White from Damerham (see Photograph 1<sup>1</sup>), who seems to have been known as Annie, though her lineage has not been identified. The couple then lived in the High Street there, where Harry was a gardener, and they had a daughter, Kathleen Leah Tiller, in 1907.

Sometime before the war, Harry and his family moved to 'Mr Davenport's Lodge'<sup>2</sup> in London Road, Oxford where he was again a gardener, then to Hartley Whitney, where he worked as head gardener on the West Green House estate, employed by the Dowager Duchesse of Wellington.



Thereafter, in about June 1916<sup>3</sup>, Harry enlisted at Hartley Whitney into the Worcesters<sup>4</sup>, presumably because this regiment needed new recruits more urgently than the local regiment. He joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion as a private soldier, then the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, both of which served on the Western Front. It has not been possible to ascertain when he made the move, but he probably spent 1917 in Belgium or France.

In March 1918, the 2/8<sup>th</sup> were in the 182<sup>nd</sup> Brigade in the Territorial Force 61<sup>st</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> South Midland) Division and holding the forward defences in an area northwest of St. Quentin, preparing for the anticipated major German Spring Offensive that finally assaulted the British in overwhelming strength on 21 March.

According to the battalion's war diary<sup>5</sup>, the 2/8<sup>th</sup> relieved 2/7<sup>th</sup> Warwickshires on 7 March in the line at Holnon, two miles west of St. Quentin. From 8 to 15 March, during sunny days but chilly nights,

<sup>1</sup> From a private collection, by permission.

<sup>2</sup> It is supposed that 'Mr Davenport' was of the same family as Gilbert Capell Davenport from Oxford, who was the Estate Agent at West Park, Damerham. Perhaps he found Harry a job in Oxford. Gilbert married Maj Richard Purcell's widow Dorothy in 1921.

<sup>3</sup> Calculated from the amount of his War Gratuity.

<sup>4</sup> Cap badge image by kind permission of the Worcestershire Regiment website at: [www.worcestershireregiment.com/](http://www.worcestershireregiment.com/) (Accessed on 09/12/15).

<sup>5</sup> The National Archives WO95/3057/2.



the battalion improved its trenches, dug in some Livens Gas Projectors<sup>6</sup>, undertook some training, and built an enemy trench model to brief a raiding party.

During this time, there was some enemy shelling activity, which caused a number of casualties. On 15 March, during a cold, clear night, the battalion lost 15 men killed in this way, including Pte Tiller, who died whilst out laying telephone wires near his battalion's trenches.

He is interred in the Chapelle British Cemetery, Holnon (Grave Reference 11.B.16) (see Photograph 2<sup>7</sup>). He was aged 36. The original wooden battlefield cross on his grave is held in St. George's Church, Damerham.

After Harry's death, Louisa married Robert Colbourne, a farm worker in Damerham, who had served in the 1/7<sup>th</sup> Hampshires in India during the war.



*This information has been gathered using local knowledge from the families, records held by Ancestry.com, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, The National Archives, and in on-line and published histories. For a full list of these, please visit the [Acknowledgements List](#) and the notes on the pages.*

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*Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this entry is correct. If you know otherwise, or can provide any additional information about the servicemen whose lives are described in the biographies, please contact the Author by email at:*

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## World War 1

### The Western Front Campaign

#### Notes

#### Return to Roll of Honour Names

<sup>6</sup> A simple mortar for projecting poison gas bombs.

<sup>7</sup> By kind permission of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.