

John (Jack) Tyrrell – My Dad

By John Tyrrell

John Tyrrell - my dad, was born in 1895 at 69 St. John's Street, Northampton, the second son of John Tyrrell and Mary Ann Lambert. His baptism took place on 4th February 1896 at St. Luke's Mission church, a satellite church of All Saints. St. Luke's was located between Bridge Street and Cattle Market Road, the last service held there was in 1930 before being demolished.



Mary Ann Tyrrell and youngest son Reginald John Tyrrell

Dad had an older brother Walter Charles (1893-1933), and then followed six sisters, Norah Eveline Maud (1897-1918), Eva Charlotte (1899-1916), Nellie Elizabeth (1902-1977), Florence Emily (1904-1980), Kathleen Mary (1907-1911), Rose Lilian Alice (1910-1990) and finally a younger brother Reginald John (1913-1958). Sometime between the Census taking place in March 1901 and Nellie being born in April 1902 the family moved to 33 Alton Street, Far Cotton, Northampton.

Grandfather John was a coach painter's labourer by trade, and worked for Arthur Mulliner leading coach-builders located in Bridge Street. They had been producing fine horse carriages since 1760, but in 1907 they went over entirely to motor-carriage production. Dad worked two years for Phipps Brewery then followed his father, and started working for Mulliner's as a 'chassis blacker'. In those days cars and lorries were delivered without bodies to specialist vehicle builders like Mulliner's and Grose's of Northampton. It would have been the young boy's job to

paint everything black before cabs and bodies were fitted.

Dad progressed well to become a fully-fledged coach painter, able to tackle any job. In those days, paint would be applied by hand with a brush, rubbing down between as many as seventeen coats, before finishing with varnish. Vehicle bodies would be painted with fine lines to highlight the contours of the shape, I recall dad said: you needed a very steady hand to do this type of work. Mulliner's promoted him to foreman of their Paint Shop after a time.

Grandfather died suddenly in 1913, and grandmother had nine young children to bring up, so the wages of the two oldest boys would be the only money coming into the house. Dad's two oldest sisters died in 1916 and 1918. Dad followed his older brother into the army during the First World War, but was transferred to the Royal Flying Corps. when it was formed (for-runner of the RAF). Here his painting skills were put to good use, doping the cloth skins on the fuselage and wings of early fighter planes to tighten them up on the wooden framework.



John Tyrrell - 1917 in Cairo during the First World War

Dad and his older brother both returned home safely from the Great War, but in late 1920 Grandmother Mary Ann Tyrrell was admitted to hospital for long term care, so dad had to take on responsibility for his younger sister and brother. Grandmother died in 1943 in Northampton and was buried in Towcester Road cemetery.

Dad's older brother Walter Charles married Violet Jeanetta Hukins in 1924 in Northampton; they had three children, Violet Marjorie, Roland John, and Ernest Arthur. The local newspaper the Chronicle & Echo reported on Wednesday, 31st May, 1933. 'Foundry Workers Death'. Inquest to be held on Northampton man, an employee at Northampton iron foundry, Walter Tyrrell, age 39, of Pleydell Road, Far Cotton, has died in Northampton General Hospital. When he came home from work at Messrs. Rice's Bridge Street, at mid-day on Thursday last, he told his wife he had lifted a 40-pounds hammer and hurt himself. Dr. Noel Stone was called in, and he ordered the man's removal to the hospital on Sunday, Tyrrell leaves three young children, age nine, seven, and six. The Borough coroner will hold an Inquest at the hospital to-morrow afternoon. Burial register for Towcester Road cemetery, Northampton: Age 39 years, 2 Pleydell Road, Far Cotton, Northampton.

My mum, Doris Chapman, also worked for vehicle builders Mulliner's, she married dad in 1921, at St. Katherine's church, in King Street, Northampton. This church was an overflow facility for All Saints' and was demolished in 1950. Douglas John (1921-1994) was their first child, born at 33 Alton Street, before the family moved to a council house at 97 Queen Eleanor Road. Here their second son Leslie Valentine (1925-1980) was born, and daughter Marjorie Florence (1927). I should explain at this point, I was born in 1937 so only know about this period in our family history from what I have been told and found out.



97 Queen Eleanor Road



Douglas, Marjorie and Leslie on the beach at Great Yarmouth.

I remember dad telling me that at a number of the early London Motor Shows, he was responsible for the paint finish on the cars on Arthur Mulliner's stand. He was very proud that one year they won a trophy presented by the organisers for the best turned-out car. I have a post card which dad sent to mum from London while at the show in 1921, it simply said: "Dear Doris, All aboard the 9-20 tonight, all's well, be down home about 11.30. Have fish super. Best Love Jack".

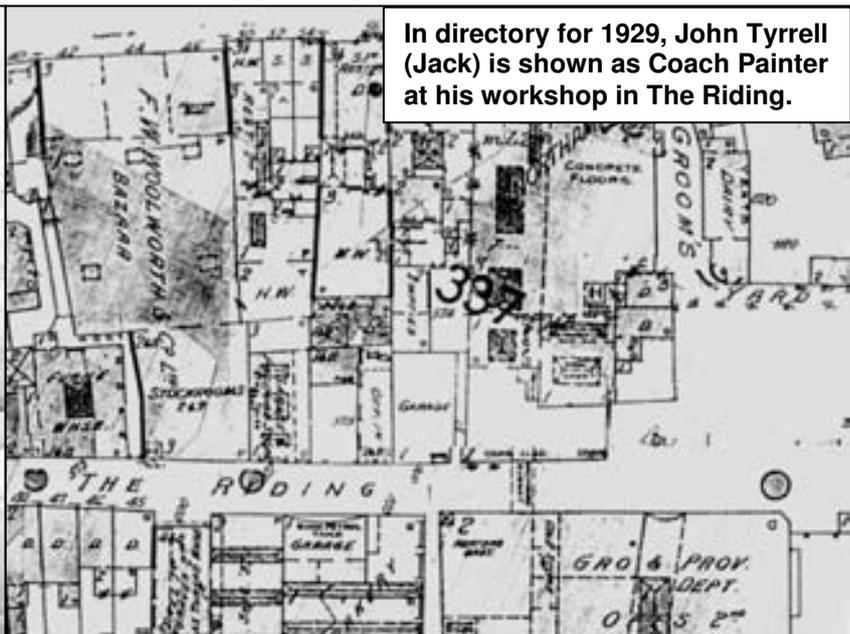


Mum & Dad - having pictures taken at back door of 97 Queen Eleanor Road in late 1920's.

In those days the post and the trains all arrived on time, so I bet he got the 'fish super'.



Dad's first paint-shop in The Riding



In directory for 1929, John Tyrrell (Jack) is shown as Coach Painter at his workshop in The Riding.

◀ In the 1927 dad decided he would put his talent and determination to use, so he started his own coach painting and cellulose spraying business, and set-up in The Riding, at the back of what is Woolworth's now in Abington Street, Northampton. He always told me, he was one of the first to carryout cellulose spraying in Northampton. Money was obviously tight, so he made-up his own compressor from an old motorcycle engine and converted an old hot water tank into an air reservoir. Can you imagine what the present day 'Health & Safety' brigade would make of that now?



In directory for 1936, John Tyrrell (Jack) is shown as Coach Painter at 18 Kingswell Street, Northampton.

Business must have gone well; he was doing work for many of the early garages in Northampton, such as J Grose and F & E Beeden the motor char-a-banc operators. His brother in-law Jack Chapman was working for him and he needed more space. So he moved the business to property at 18 Kingswell Street, at the rear of the Grand Hotel. This much bigger building had been used by world-renowned model makers Bassett-Lowke to produce their large models and they no longer needed the space. In the adjoining yard at No. 20, were T. Wall's & Sons, Ice Cream manufacturers, dad painted their vehicles, thus started a long association with Wall's.



Dad's car stopped by the monument on the A11 on way home from holiday in Great Yarmouth.

Now dad must have been doing reasonably well in 1933, because he decided he would move from the council house in Queen Eleanor Road, and invest in a new house Wilson's was building at 17 Towcester Road, Far Cotton, Northampton. Being always careful (a Tyrrell characteristic), he decided he would also have a corner shop added at No. 19 for a business for wife Doris to run (Note the name above shop door is D Tyrrell). This was a safeguard in case the vehicle painting business ever failed. When the shop was built there was no flat above it, but he added this later and his sister, Florence Emily (Aunt Flo) who had married Eric Ronald Knight (Uncle Eric) in 1935, moved in. In 1940 their daughter Sylvia was born.



17 & 19 Towcester Road, has first built. (The flash is a car passing by)



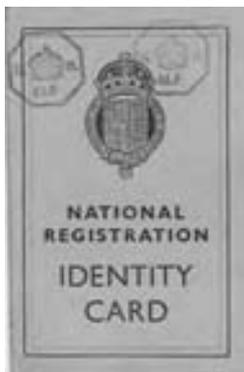
Uncle Bill, Aunt Rose, Aunt Glad and Uncle Reg in 1935

Dad's sister, Nellie Elizabeth (Aunt Nell), married Walter W Pittuck (Uncle Walt), his other sister, Rose Lilian Alice (Aunt Rose), married William Sydney Emery (Uncle Bill) in 1932 in Northampton. Dad's younger brother Reginald John (Uncle Reg) married Gladys Lewis (Aunt Glad) who had one son Rodney born in Northampton.

In 1937, I arrived on the scene; I gather I had not figured in the planning. Dad wanted my older brother Douglas, who was working for Henley's garage to take over the Paint shop. This would have allowed him to help mum with the shop while I was an infant, but Douglas was not interested. So, dad had to make the decision to close the paint shop business down, and become a full-time grocer/confectioner.

Second World War started, and dad was too old this time, but he did his bit, returning to paint spraying of lorries, being built for the war effort by a company called Hasker's at 2 Semilong Road, Northampton. I can recall as a boy, being

told by dad how he had to take a completed flax lorry up to Aberdeen in 1941. He was also drafted into the ARP and issued with a hand water pump and a steel helmet. I never did see any hose to go with the pump, and early on the local group fire watched for a short time.



My Identity card dated 22-5-1940

Douglas went into the army on 29th January 1942, Leslie went into the Navy on 22nd February 1943, sister Marjorie worked in a shoe factory, no doubt making boots and shoes for the forces, and I went to the local school.



Early photo of Ice Cream man & milkman standing outside No.19 with their carts.

In the shop there were restrictions on what could be obtained and sold. Many items which customers brought required coupons from ration books. But dad was very ingenious, always looking for ways to obtain a little extra from suppliers to increase his sales. Children would cross the Towcester Road just in front of the shop on their way to and from Far Cotton Infant and Junior School, helped by a policeman – yes you could find one in those days.



House and shop 17/19 Towcester Road, flat is 19a Towcester Road.

On returning home (on their own I would add), they would come into the shop to buy flavoured drinks and ice blocks at 1d each, which dad had made for them. The bottles could not be taken out of the shop, they were washed and refilled for the next day, ice blocks were literally small blocks of flavoured ice, no stick you couldn't get them in those days, so everyone just held them in their handkerchief. He always kept ½d and 1d items for the children to buy, have you ever tried liquorice wood? In later years if I ever told people who I was, out would come - "Tyrrell's Corner Shop - We remember going there as a kid".



Mum's Ration Book - 1939

I remember when the war was over it was announced shops could once more use electric light for advertising, dad had one cigarette sign hanging on front of shop (see photo above) so he put that on for a few nights as did all the other local shops.

Dad had sold Wall's ice cream from the start, but while the war was on there wasn't any available, it went to hospitals only. Just before the restrictions came off, the Wall's salesman asked dad if he would like some. Dad jumped at the chance and got the fridge switched on. Two cans of plain white ice cream duly arrived; these stood about twelve inches high and six inches round. (This was the first I had ever seen).

Dad put a sign in the shop window saying ice cream would be available at a certain time in the afternoon, no cornets or wafers, so bring your own cups or saucers, one scoop each. The queue that formed was three or four hundred yards long down the street, dad sold out in no time at all. Word soon got around Tyrrell's shop was selling ice cream again, and this became a weekly event for sometime, with people arriving from all over the area. Those without something to put the ice cream in had it on a piece of cardboard 3 inches square.



Me on dad's motorbike & sidecar, note the Air-Raid shelter in background

Dad's eldest son Douglas John got married in 1945 to June Shaw at St. Matthews's church, Northampton, and daughter Marjorie Florence to George Richard Wanstall in 1947 at St. Mary's church, Far Cotton, Northampton. Due to building restrictions you were not allowed to build new homes, so we all had to make the most of 17 Towcester Road for some time, with Marjorie and George using the front room as a bedroom. I the youngest, married Rita Bounds while serving my National Service in the R.E.M.E., we married in 1959 at St. Mary's church, Dallington, Northampton. Leslie never did get married.



Doug & Uncle Eric outside 19a during the war

Dad could turn his hand to anything; he made wooden step ladders, children's wheel barrows and trolleys etc. No project



Mum standing in doorway of caravan dad built, with is Morris Eight car in background

was too big, so in the late 1950's he decided he

would make himself and mum a caravan. He bought a genuine chassis from the caravan makers and set to and built it out of wood and hardboard. It had gas lighting, a small gas ring, plus it was fitted out with road lights. So he could join the 'Caravan Club' he had them inspect it as they would only allow propriety vans on their sites – it passed with flying colours.

Time moved on, and things started to change, for years people had purchased their bulky items, like tins of vegetables, fruit, washing powder etc from the local corner shop. They only went to town on the bus to buy the special items from the likes of Sainsbury's, a relatively small shop in those days, no Tesco's or other supermarkets.

But in Northampton around the late 1950's we had a local shop called Brierley's and Frank Brierley would sell anything he could get his hands on very cheap. He would be selling things like a light bulb for a shilling, a tin of Nescafé for two shillings, and even 20 woodbines for 3/5d. He would give away sugar at times and dad could not compete with these prices, wholesalers would only supply at these prices if you were prepared to buy bulk, which the corner shop could not do then.

So dad started to plan for his retirement, he purchased a part of a small field in the village of Wootton a few miles outside Northampton. His intention was to build a bungalow for mum and him. He roughed-out what it should look like, and I drew the plans for him, which we submitted for planning permission, this was granted, and we all set to digging out the footings. Most jobs were done 'in House' but dad employed bricklayers and plasterers, with George my brother in law, who worked for the local electricity board doing the electrics.



Bungalow dad built in village of Wootton

Aunt Flo and Uncle Eric moved out of 19a after living in the flat above the shop since it was built. Dad tried to sell shop, house and flat but without success, so he let the shop and house, plus the flat separately.

By the late 1960's the very large garden at Wootton was getting too much for dad to manage, he no longer had a car and getting into town was problematic. He decided they would move back to 17 Towcester Road, carryout some modernisation, make the kitchen larger, and divide the house off from the shop. He knocked down the old garage, and built a small workshop and started breeding budgerigars. They sold up the bungalow at Wootton, and sold off the shop and flat.

I recall the times we had together with great affection, for a number of years Rita, the children and I would always have a week's holiday together. In the later years we would visit mum and dad on a Sunday afternoon with our children.



Aunt Flo in 1971



**Mum and dads Golden Wedding party in 1971.
Les Tyrrell, June & Doug Tyrrell, John & Rita Tyrrell, George
& Marjorie Wanstall, Mum & Dad, Christine Wanstall.
Sitting on floor my daughter Ann & son John**

Mum would make the cakes ready for us, dad and I would often disagree over something, perhaps the 'big issue' of the day, but we could always part on the very best of terms. Throughout my life I can never recall a harsh word between us.

Mum and dad were returning home from town in 1977, and had just got off the bus when she was knocked down by a car. She died at Northampton General Hospital a week later on 14th October 1977. Dad was left on his own when Leslie died on the 17th July 1980. Dad fell ill over Christmas 1981 and died on the 30th December.

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