BARBER, George William

7266012, Private,
5th Light Field Ambulance,
Royal Army Medical Corps
Place of birth: Haverhill
Date of death: Friday, 12th December 1941
Killed in Action
Cemetery: Halfaya-Sollum War Cemetery, Egypt
Aged 23 years



George William Barber was born in Haverhill in 1918, the son of George Isaac Barber and his wife Edith, nee Suckling and formerly Gault. Edith who was a drabbett weaver had married Charles Gault in 1903 but was widowed the following year and moved back in with her parents in Eden Road. On 30th September 1911 she married fish hawker George Isaac Barber from 3 Swan Yard. They were to have four children, the oldest being George William. He was joined by sisters Gladys (born in 1920), Connie (born in 1921) and a brother, Roy, in 1925.

George was a member of the 1st Haverhill Scouts. Before the war he worked at Chauntry Mills.



At the time of the 1939 Register the family were living at 54 Crowland Road and George Isaac was employed in the Post Office Engineering Dept as a skilled workman class 2 working as a telephone communications lines man.

George William was deployed with the Royal Army Medical Corps, 5th Light Field Ambulance. The RAMC is a specialist corps which provides medical services. This is not a fighting force and under the Geneva Conventions, members of the RAMC may only use their weapons for self-defence. During World War Two technology enabled the RAMC to have greater access to mechanised land and air transport, allowing specialists and operating teams to get right to the front-line in an

increasingly mobile war. There were major medical developments pioneered by the army, such as the use of penicillin for the first time in the North African campaign and also the development of blood transfusion, which was so crucial in wartime.

It would seem that 5th Light Ambulance were supporting the Eighth Army that had been formed in September, 1941 under the command of Lt-Gen Sir Allan Cunningham.

It first went into action as an Army on 17th November, 1941, when it engaged with Rommel's Africa Korps. Sidi Rezegh was the key battle of this opening campaign, and was a pitched battle between armour.

British tanks at this time were greatly inferior to the German ones, but in spite of heavy losses which inevitably kept the RAMC very busy, the German armour was almost wiped out. The battle lasted from 19th November to 1st December. The relief of Tobruk was completed by 10th December, after an eight month long siege. The enemy retired and made a stand at Gazala. The Eighth Army attacked on the 13th and had broken through by the night of the 16th /17th December. However, George William was killed in action on 12th December.

George William Barber was originally buried at El Cuasc, approximately 30 miles dues south of Tobruk (Libya) but in 1943 he was moved to Halfaya- Sollum, on the coast just inside Egypt.

The family had this inscription added to his Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone:

IN EVER LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR SON AND BROTHER,
FOREVER IN OUR THOUGHTS.





IN MEMORIAM

Barber.—In ever-loving memory of our dear son and brother, George Barber, who was taken from us by enemy action, December 12th, 1941.

Beautiful memories are all we have left,
Of one we loved, and shall never forget;
A loving smile, a happy face,
A broken link we can never replace.

54, Crowland Road,
Haverhill.



Happy times: George is with friends Joe Pannell, left and Jim Page, right.