

Name	Harry James AMBLER
Birth Place	Urchfont, near Devizes, Wiltshire
Occupation 1911	Trainee Architect
Date of Birth	16 May 1895
Date Enlisted	6 July 1915



Second Lieutenant H.J. AMBLER, RE

October 1916



Captain H.J. AMBLER, SADF

July 1941

Parents	Lewis James AMBLER & Harriet Emma AMBLER (née PLANK)
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Married	(Edith) Grace in South Africa
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Information from National Roll of the Great War	No entry found.
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Additional Information
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Harry AMBLER moved with his family to Loddington in Northamptonshire before 1900, when his father, Lewis, was employed as a Gamekeeper. By 1911, the family was living at Brook Farm in Bugbrooke, where Lewis was a publican (possibly at *The Five Bells*). Harry attended the village School before moving on to Northampton Grammar School, from which he went on to study architecture at the acclaimed Northampton Technical College, which was actually on Regent Street in central London.

Harry was employed as an Architect and Surveyor's Assistant at the time of his enlistment in the ranks of the Royal Engineers (RE) on 6 July 1915, at Whitehall in London. He was a Private soldier, numbered 108269 in the basic RE 'Trade' of Pioneer and after initial training, he was transferred to Biggleswade Signal Depot in Bedfordshire, in early January 1916.

Here, on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday (and thus not requiring parental consent, which is absent from the forms), Harry applied for admission to an Officer Cadet Unit. This was endorsed by the Reverend Ernest Harrison in Bugbrooke, Mr Edward Reynolds, Headmaster of Northampton Grammar School, and three senior officers (the Lieutenant-Colonel in command at Biggleswade, and a Colonel and a Brigadier-General at the Signal Service Training Centre at Woburn, both of whom specifically recommended him for the Signal Service, the latter being the Commandant who also added '... as a result of his course of instruction').

While this application progressed, Harry was 're-mustered' as a Sapper (still a Private soldier) on 19 May, though he had been appointed as an unpaid Lance Corporal since the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month and that is the rank on his application for officer training.

On 2 June 1916 Harry was transferred to Fenny Stratford Signal Depot, relinquishing his unpaid NCO appointment. He also re-attested, on 20 July, and his form has the manuscript note 'Operator "Boy Learner"'. [Did this allude to wireless telegraphy instruction at school in Bugbrooke?]

Harry was discharged via Dunstable Signal Depot on 30 September and appointed a temporary Second Lieutenant (on Probation) in the RE from 1 October (announced in the *London Gazette* Supplement of 4 November, at page 10718).

He was destined to serve with the East African Force fighting well-led German forces in what had been German East Africa. He sailed from Devonport (Plymouth) on 9 March 1917, transferring ship at Durban, South Africa, on 19 May and disembarking at Dar-es-Salaam on 29 May.

Harry served as a Signals Officer (in an 'Imperial Signals Company', RE) on operations in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) until 10 December, when he was invalided home with a 'sprained knee'. He returned to East Africa the following year, from 3 May to 22 November.

He embarked for England on 29 November 1918 and was released from service in due course, relinquishing his commission on 6 November 1919 (as belatedly announced in the *London Gazette* of 20 September 1921), retaining the rank of Captain, which he had achieved temporarily during the later stages in East Africa.

Harry's military service earned him the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. He only applied for these in late October 1956, receiving the pair in April 1957 (both impressed with 'LT. H.J. AMBLER. R.E.' around the lower rim).

He returned to Bugbrooke and was quickly a stalwart of the football and cricket teams, while also finding time to employ his talent as an accomplished artist.

Perhaps responding to his wartime experience, Harry returned abroad in 1922, settling in South Africa and establishing a successful wholesale textile business in Johannesburg, from which he retired in 1939. While running this business, he had married (Edith) Grace.

Harry volunteered again during the Second World War and was appointed a Lieutenant in the South African General Service Corps on the day he attested, 9 February 1941 (personal number 164850).

He served at first in South Africa with the Cape Corps and was promoted Acting Captain on 15 July 1941, before embarking for Egypt on 16 November and disembarking at Suez on 26 November. Here he served with NEAS (Non-European Army Services), first with a Water Maintenance Company and later with a Vehicle Reception Depot, receiving promotion to Temporary Captain on 5 March 1942.

Harry returned to South Africa, leaving on 14 November 1943 and arriving on 7 December. He remained on the strength of NEAS until 30 August 1945, when he was transferred to the Demobilisation Corps until 5 May 1946, though his formal release from service was not until 12 June 1947, retaining the rank of Captain and with a 20% disability pension.

He had earned the 1939-1945 Star, the Africa Star, the Defence Medal, the 1939-1945 War Medal and the Africa Service Medal, which were sent to him in October 1956, probably prompting the late application for his medals for the First World War.

Harry's medals are with his nephew, less the original 1939-1945 Star, the remainder for the Second World War all officially impressed '164850 H.J. AMBLER'.

Harry died on 14 August 1985 in South Africa.

*Harry AMBLER's full medal entitlement*

