

MAURICE JAMES HENLEY



**Maurice James Henley
eight months old on
November 21st 1909**

Maurice James Henley was born on the first day of spring at 3p.m. on Sunday March 21st 1909 in 59, Bridge Street Cardiff.

His parents, Frederick and Rosina Henley, ran a dairy business there, his Father being a master Dairyman. With his two- wheeled milk float and horse or pony, they distributed milk to the residents of Cardiff city centre. Due to the rough nature of the city in those days, and being close to the dockland area, Maurice was sent in his early years to live with his Grandparents George and Mary Henley nee Martin in Severn Road, Canton.



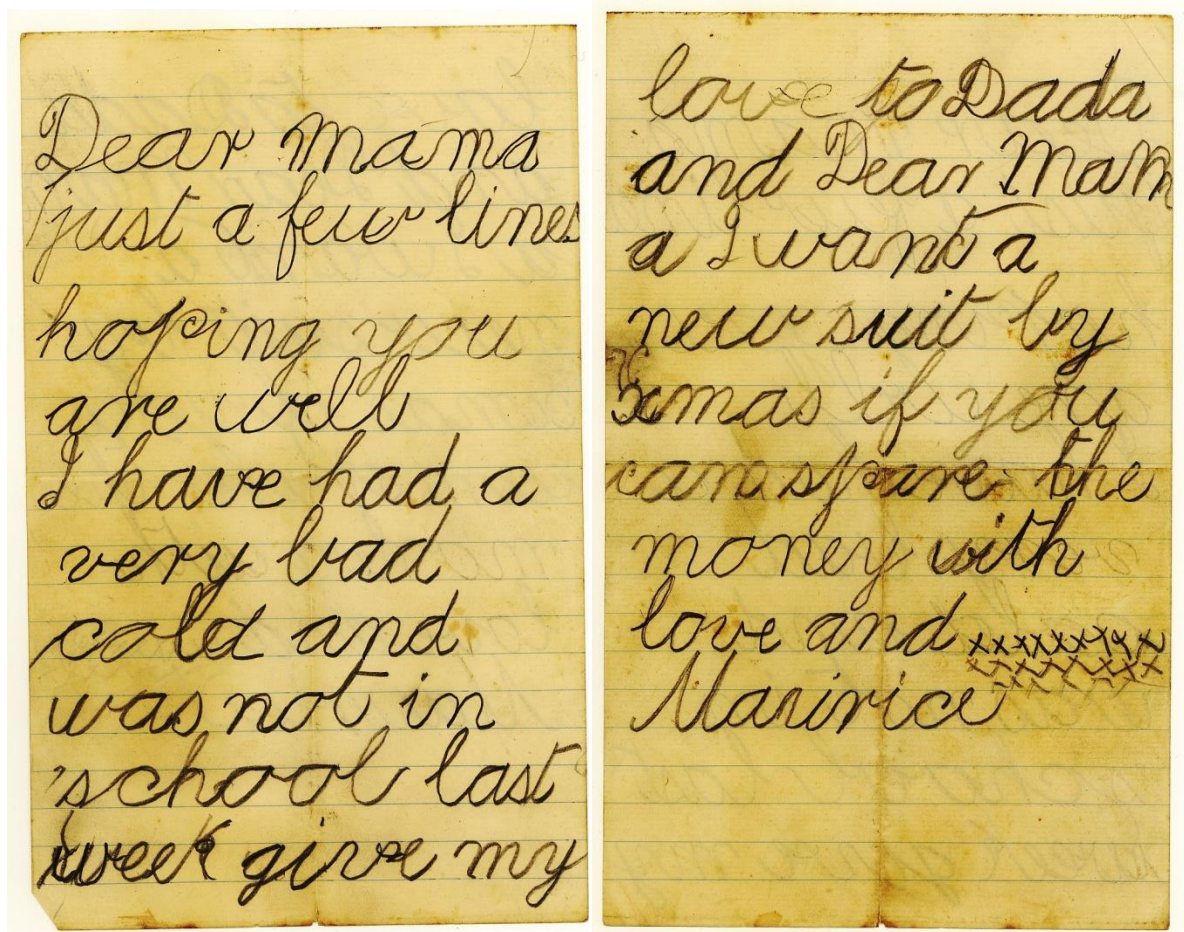
**An oil painting on canvas of Maurice
aged about 2 years old from a
photographic image.**



**Maurice aged about 5 in 1914 at the rear of the shop at
59 Bridge Street Cardiff**



**Maurice (Top row, second from the right), in
his Southern Road School Cardiff. Headmistress
Miss Dawson c. 1912**



Above: A letter written by Maurice to his Mother probably when he was about eight years old c. 1916
He would have been living with his Grandparents in Severn Road , Canton at that time.



Severn Road Boys Standard IV Council School Cardiff. Peace Year 1919. MJH Third from left, second row from the top.

Maurice began his schooling in Severn road Canton, Cardiff. He was taught Grammar, Religious instruction, Dictation, Science and Geography. His favourite subjects included Grammar, Geography, Arithmetic and dictation.



MJH at Severn Road School Cardiff 1919 aged ten



MJH in the Severn Road School soccer team 1922-23 aged thirteen



He was in the boy scouts at 15 when the Prince of Wales visited Cardiff to stay at St. Fagan's castle, then occupied by the Earl of Plymouth. The scouts lined up outside the entrance to Cardiff Arms Park in Westgate Street to await the arrival of the Prince en route to the stand. They stood there for some time without food or water. Maurice's Aunt found him a job in a warehouse with the Maypole Grocery firm in 1926. He didn't enjoy the work; his earnings were ten shilling (50p) a week rising to 39 shillings (£1.95)



Maurice at Cold Knapp, Barry c.1926 aged seventeen.

Maurice won the 1922 Cardiff School's Athletic Championship's 100 yards race at Pengham Farm, later to be the site of the Rover Car Works. His maternal Grandfather was from Curry Rivell in Somerset who came to work as a stone mason at the coal pit in Abercarn. They were survivors of the terrible pit explosion in 1878 when 268 men died. He claimed that Charles Mansfield (1861 -1938) was the only pit survivor. Maurice's Father, Frederick Henley served in Gallipoli, Egypt, Jerusalem and France during the First World War with the Welsh Horse Regiment. During his Father's time in Jerusalem, he had sent home a lace bedspread by sea. En route the vessel was torpedoed and sank. The bedspread amongst other postage was recovered from the sea bed and the item eventually delivered to his Mother's address.

Maurice's paternal Grandfather was a boilermaker at Cardiff Docks and apparently, he looked like Colonel Cody, known as Buffalo Bill. He had a grey goatee beard and moustache. He was over six-foot-tall as was Maurice's other Grandfather who had lived on a Wiltshire farm. His Grandmother was blinded following the shock of seeing her sister being gored by a bull. She never regained her sight.

In 1928 Maurice joined the Royal Tank Corps, although the Fire Brigade had appealed to him but he didn't have the necessary experience required by them, which included knowledge of motor vehicle engines. He'd seen a newsreel at the cinema in Castle Street

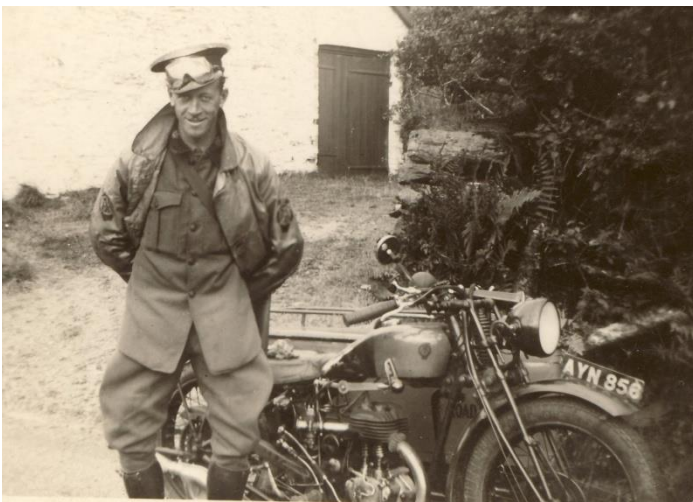
showing armoured cars being loaded aboard ship for service abroad and this induced him to sign on for military service. He began his army life at Bovington camp on June 3rd 1927. It from all parts of the country in the squad, Maurice became fascinated with the variety of accents. Their initial training in 'square bashing' included the use of 303 rifles and webley 45 revolvers. They trained in World war one tanks. Later in the 3rd battalion, WW1 Officers from Kent lectured them. In the southern command athletic championships Maurice won medals for his achievements. Winning the heat, he went on to win the final for which he



was awarded a silver cup. In a team of eight, he went to Aldershot to compete in the army championships. One hurdles runner there was Lord Burleigh from the Royal blues. Following the 18 weeks training, Maurice was posted to a battalion in Lydd in Kent. On arrival, they were met by a band at the station and escorted to the camp. He stayed there for four and a half years. During the first year they were introduced to the Vickers Armstrong Mark two medium tanks. From 1928 he went to athletic meetings in Colchester each year. During service at Lulworth, when the weather was bad, they were issued with rum in their tea.

As a soldier he earned the equivalent of 44p daily. Being an unpaid lance corporal, he earned an extra three pence a day. He managed to save sufficiently to buy a second hand motorcycle on his return to the UK. Swimming was very popular there, although he said he wasn't very good at it. He played and enjoyed hockey and tennis there. When one man

dropped out, he was given the opportunity to go to Egypt. At departure from Southampton a military band played on the quayside while the troop ship was escorted down the Solent by seaplanes. The bed (hammock) and food on board was marvellous and the accommodation was spacious. They had a stormy passage to Gibraltar even though they had avoided the Bay of Biscay. Maurice thought that the shops were like those in Paris, the cost of living and the weather was ideal and perfect. He was stationed at Abacia outside Cairo city. He earned two shillings (20p) a day which rose to four shillings and nine tank battle practice. He was based also at Arabiki which is halfway between Cairo and the Suez Canal. He spent two years in Egypt. On his return to the United Kingdom Maurice joined the Automobile Association as a patrolman.



AA Patrolman Maurice James Henley. Jerome Studios Cardiff August 9 1934



During his time as an AA patrolman he met his wife to be Gwen who lived in Aberystwyth in 62 North Parade. He had previously been stationed in Rhayader in Montgomeryshire then at Lovesgrove junction near Aberystwyth while living in Llanbadarn fawr. Before they met and while on duty Gwen would drive past with her Mother as Maurice would stand to attention outside the patrol box and salute their car as it passed by. Mam loved to tell us kids that story!

Maurice and Gwen on their wedding day in 1938 in Cardiff. They celebrated their marriage at the former Carlton Hotel in Queen's Street. It was destroyed during the WWII blitz. The site was later occupied by the British Home Stores.



He re-joined the Automobile Association for a few years into the 1950s and then became Stores Manager for the Gwalia family motor business in North Parade. When the Garage closed in the mid-1960s he found employment in the Aberystwyth Hospital Stores in North Road and then in the Central Sterile Stores in the new Bronglais hospital until his retirement. Dad had bought a boat which kept him busy for many years afterwards in Aberystwyth harbour. They had never owned their own home and spent the rest of their lives happily in a rented flat in 66, North Parade Aberystwyth.



Maurice seen in the uniform of the National Fire Service in the 1940s at Aberystwyth.



**A Henley family outing to Trafalgar square
London. c. 1948.**

**Left to right: Peter, Alice, Mam, Dad and
David**



Dad and myself Christmas Day 1987

Maurice passed away on August 15th 1988 at Bronglais Hospital Aberystwyth, less than a year after losing his wife Gwen. He is buried with our Mother's ashes at Llanafan Church cemetery near Aberystwyth

Peter Henley July 13th 2020