

Henry Tyler (Conservative politician)

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Sir Henry Whatley Tyler (7 March 1827 - 1908) was a British Inspector of Railways, Railway Company director and [Conservative](#) politician who sat in the [House of Commons](#) from 1880 to 1892.

Early life^{[\[edit\]](#)}

Tyler was born in [Mayfair](#), London the son of John Chatfield Tyler and attended the [Royal Military Academy](#) Woolwich.^[1] He joined the [Royal Engineers](#) and in 1851 was a lieutenant called upon by Henry Cole to assist with the organisation of the [Great Exhibition](#). In 1860 he donated a set of prospectuses to the State Library of Victoria.^[2]

Railway Inspectorate^{[\[edit\]](#)}

Tyler was appointed an [Inspecting Officer for Railways](#) in 1853 a function which is normally carried out by Royal Engineers officers, holding the position for 24 years.^[3] A typical investigation is reported in the press in 1858.^[4] Other important investigations included the [Wootton bridge collapse](#) and the [Clayton Tunnel rail crash](#), both of which occurred in 1861. The former involved failure of cast iron beams supporting the track in a wooden bridge, through which a coal train fell, killing the driver and stoker instantly. The Clayton tunnel crash involved a collision in the tunnel and was the worst rail disaster at the time, killing 24 passengers in the rear coaches. He also reported on the [Bull bridge accident](#) when yet another [cast iron](#) girder failed suddenly as a train was passing over.

His expertise was called upon not only in the UK but also in various locations in Europe. In 1866, he was sent to inspect the railway systems of France and Italy, in order to determine how best to transfer mail destined for India from northern France to the Italian [port of Brindisi](#). On his recommendation the route was accepted.^[5] In 1867, he investigated [London's water supply](#) following an outbreak of [cholera](#), an investigation which involved emptying a reservoir of the [East London Waterworks Company](#) next to the [river Lea](#), and tasting the contaminated water. His report helped confirm that cholera was water-borne rather than by the air.

In 1868, he spent two periods of leave building the first railway in Greece from [Athens](#) to [Piraeus](#). In 1871, he received promotion to Chief Inspector of Railways, and in 1874 he went to America to inspect the Erie for British investors. He was a member of the abortive [Channel Tunnel Commission](#) in 1875 to 1876. On retirement from the government post, he became President of the [Grand Trunk Railway of Canada](#) in 1877 where he established a successful working relationship with [Sir Joseph Hickson](#).^[5] He was also chairman of the [Westinghouse Air Brake Company](#) and Deputy Chairman of the [Great Eastern Railway](#) Company.^[6]

Political life[[edit](#)]

At the [1880 general election](#), Tyler was elected as Conservative [Member of Parliament](#) (MP) for [Harwich](#) in [Essex](#).^[7] In 1882 he objected to a [Theosophist](#) article against which he raised a charge of blasphemy and became embroiled in a conflict with [Annie Besant](#).^[8] In [1885](#) he was elected at [Great Yarmouth](#), but lost the seat at the [1892 election](#).^[9] In 1893 he gave up the presidency of the Grand Trunk Railway Company.

Personal life[[edit](#)]

Tyler married Margaret Pasley, daughter of [General Sir Charles Pasley](#), K.C.B. in 1852. He was interested in [homeopathy](#) and contributed large sums of money for the expansion of the London Homeopathic Hospital. His daughter Margaret Lucy Tyler (1875–1943) was a student of [James Tyler Kent](#) and became one of the most influential homeopaths of all time^[10]