



Leonard George Howard

5769861 Private, 5th Battalion Royal Norfolk Regiment

He died in a Prisoner of War Camp in the Far East on 31st August 1943, aged 34

Leonard was buried at Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, Thailand.

Leonard George Howard was buried at Takanoon Cemetery in Thailand following his death on the 31st of August 1943 at the Malai 2 prisoner of war camp in Thailand. Sometime after the war had finished, the CWGC had the task of rationalising and combining many small impromptu grave sites into larger more managed and organised grave sites. Leonard, along with many of his former companions, was reburied at Kanchanaburi (in some records abbreviated to Kanaburi) on the 7th of February 1946 to finally rest in peace amongst the many of his comrades who died in the terrible conditions of the Far Eastern Prisoner of War Camps.

At age 34, Leonard would have been one of the older of the troops. At the time he enlisted, he was



a labourer, probably down in London although he may have returned to Norwich to enlist, presumably in the hope, fulfilled, that he would be enrolled in the Norfolk Regiment. However, he had left Norfolk some years back having married his bride, Ruth Emily Potheary in her parent's local church, St Mary's, Upper Froyle on the 24th of April 1937.

*St Mary's Church
Upper Froyle*

Born in Harleston on the last day of 1908, Leonard was the oldest child of George and Louisa Howard nee Amies who had married earlier that year

Back in 1861, Louisa's father, Robert Amies was, aged 15, working as a groom, a stage up from his father, Robert Amies Snr's, occupation as an Agricultural Labourer. Robert Jnr had started off married life in South Ruston where he appeared in 1871 with his first wife, C(S)elina nee Howard, and their first two children 3 years old Brittanica E and 3-month-old Frederick. He was then described as a Groom and Gardener, indicating he was working for a middling comfortable domestic establishment. Wealthy enough to run a horse and trap or but not busy or grand enough for a coach,

such establishments would often combine the role of groom with that of a basic gardener, we are not talking formal gardens and prize-winning blooms here.

In 1881, their oldest child, 12 years old Brittania was living with her grandparents, Robert Amies Snr and wife Sarah, along with the 20 years old Aunt Brittania after whom she had been named! This was a little surprising as the rest of the family had hoofed it off to Harleston sometime between 1871 and 1875. It may be, she was just visiting her grandparents, but this seems unlikely as when Brittania married in 1887, Frettenham was given as her home parish.

The rest of the family settled in Harleston; living in Queen Anne's Yard, it may well have been that Robert was working at Caltofts. By 1891, the family had moved to Exchange St, close enough for Robert to have been working at the Old House. By then their three oldest children, all boys, were working in various manual jobs. In the 1891 census return, along with the parents and their 7 children, a sick Nurse, Mary Jex, from Pulham was also in residence. Mary would not have been a medically trained nurse as we would know it, in fact this 66-years-old lady had previously been a cook. Whatever her skills may have been they were not sufficient as, shortly after the census, Selina Amies died, leaving Robert with 3 teenaged lads and 4 school age (just in the case of the youngest) girls to care for.

In time honoured fashion, Robert promptly got himself another wife, Eliza from Weybread, by the time the 1901 census rolled around only his youngest daughter Mary, and her older sister Louisa, mother to be of our Harleston Hero were at home. Also, in the household was a grand-daughter, baby Kate Amies, who turns out to be Louisa's child. Robert died in 1905, the women of the house would have kept things going in this little house set back from Exchange Street until, 3 years later with another baby on the way, Louisa married George Howard. Eliza, the stepmother stayed on, Kate Amies was absorbed into the household although she kept her birth name and young Leonard George, in 1908, was the couple's first (official?) child together. At the time of Leonard's birth, George described himself as a carman, essentially a delivery driver, although on all other census entries he had described himself as a gardener, maybe like his deceased father in law, he was combining horse work with gardening.

More children followed, Winifred in 1911, William in 1913 and Irene in 1917.

Although Louise was born and raised in Harleston, she was a second-generation migrant to the town, as indeed was her husband George Howard. He first appears in 1881, the third son of Thomas and Mary Ann Howard. Thomas came from Cambridgeshire, Mary Ann from Old Buckenham/Wilby. There was a brick-works out on the Redenhall Road on the low-lying land between Harleston and Lush Bush, Thomas Howard was one of several men living on the Redenhall Road who were employed there. The Gas Works were also close by and between at least 1891 and 1911 that was where Thomas was working, hard work stoking the coal into the fires. By 1891, as the older children moved out, two lodgers had moved in. In 1911, the Howards had a grandson living with them, the offspring of one of the 8 children they had brought into the world, 6 of whom were still living.

And this is where things get complicated. Thomas may have been born in Cambridgeshire, Sandbach to be precise, but his parents, Thomas Howard Snr and his wife Ann, were living in Banham by 1851. Ann Howard and her three older children were born in Cambridgeshire, but the three younger children were born in Banham.

The youngest of those three children, aged only 3 was Selina Howard, yup that is right, the wife to be of Robert Amies. So:- just to get this clear, Robert Amies married Selina Howard, Selina's daughter Louise Amies married George Howard, son of Thomas Howard, Selina's brother – first cousins in fact! And I must admit with our Harleston Hero's grandparents having been born in all those various places, when families were just not that mobile – I did not see that one coming!

So, having established that the Howards / Amies were quite a mobile clan it is not too surprising that Leonard, and at least one of his sisters, Winnifred, spread their wings and set off elsewhere, London to be precise. In 1937, Leonard married Ruth E Pothecary in Upper Froyle, near Alton, north-east Hampshire – a splendid name indeed. Emily Ruth was the 10th child of Emmanuel and Emily Pothecary, 10 children in 21 years of marriage! Ruth was from a much more footloose family than the Howards, or indeed the Amies; her father was a carter who did not know where he was born and all of the 6 children who appeared in the 1911 census had been born in different parts of Hampshire although it seems that in later years the family settled in Lower Froyle. By the time Emmanuel appeared in the 39 Register he was described as a retired Roadman, a steadier job than an itinerant carter. Emmanuel actually survived to the age of 90, dying in 1950!

Although the couple married in Froyle, I believe they had met up home in London and set up home there as their first child, John, was born in Westminster in 1938. Leonard's younger sister, Winifred, also married in London, William Keywood in Lambeth in the mid 30's. Winifred had four children in all, June, Margaret, William G(eorge?) Jnr and Jimmy. Jimmy is the Chairman of the Harleston Branch of the British Legion who are driving this series of biographies of the Harleston Heroes. By 1942, Winifred had wisely taken herself back home to Norfolk, escaping from the London Blitz for the birth of June.



*Workhouse Cottages
Lower Froyle*

Winifred's sister in law, Ruth, had followed the same strategy slightly earlier in the war. By the time their second child was born, in early 1940, the war was in full swing and London was a dangerous place to be. Ruth had already moved back to

Froyle in the early months of the war, appearing in the 1939 register at the 'Workhouse Cottages' with her widowed father, her married sister and husband. The cottages (which 150 years previously had been used to house Napoleonic troops) were requisitioned for the RAF based in nearby Odiham during the war necessitating a move by the Pothecary family.

This move took them to 'Mount Pleasant' in Lower Froyle, where second child, David A. Howard, was born in 1940. Mount Pleasant was a row of workers cottages near a beer house, the Travellers Rest.

Mount Pleasant, Travellers Rest and Oak Cottage, Lower Froyle.



Although Leonard had been reported missing, it was not until several months after the war ended that his death was confirmed. Having been taken prisoner in early 1941, Leonard would have suffered two and a half years of deprivation and maltreatment before finally succumbing to Beri Beri (a disease of vitamin deficiency), or possibly Cholera

depending on which source you use. His family would have suffered four and a half years of alternating hope and despair before finally receiving the confirmation of his death. By the time this confirmation arrived, his widow Ruth had returned from the safety of rural Hampshire to London. I was surprised to see that she was described as only having one child; tragically Ruth and Leonard's first-born son, John, died on the 12th of November 1944, aged only 6, and was buried in the graveyard of the church where his parents had married, 7 years previously. Unless Ruth remarried, and I can find no record of her doing so, she died aged only 50, in 1959 in Battersea, having returned to London. However, judging by the fact a David A Howard married Annie Larkins, also in Battersea,

in late 1963, it seems she may have had her son nearby when she died.

DIED IN FAR EAST

News has just been received from the War Office that Pte. Leonard Howard, 5th Bn. Royal Norfolk Regiment, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. George Howard, of Exchange Street, Harleston, died in a Japanese P.O.W. Camp in 1943. Pte. Howard, who had previously been reported as missing, leaves a widow and one child, at present residing in London.

*Diss Express Norfolk, England
12 Oct 1945*

