



## Edward Jack Warden

5772422 Private, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Norfolk Regiment

He died on D Day 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 in France, aged 30

Edward is buried at Ranville War Cemetery, Calvados, France

Edward Jack Warden was born in Harleston in 1914 and baptised the following spring. All the evidence points to him being the illegitimate son of Hannah Edith Warden. Hannah Edith would have been 21 at the time of Edward Jack's birth, she appeared in the 1901 census living with her parents Henry and Eliza I Warden in one of the slightly ramshackle buildings that stood roughly in the area now occupied by the petrol station and the Clearance Warehouse on London Road. Her father, Henry, was a Bill Poster (a poorly paid and unskilled job) whilst his oldest son, James William, was a blacksmith presumably in one of the workshops neighbouring their house. In 1911, Edith was described as being a 'day girl' indicating she was acting as a cross between housemaid and kitchen maid for one of the wealthier families in town.

Henry, aged 59, had taken a good stab at completing the 1911 census form but with compulsory education not having been introduced until he was thirty years old, his literacy levels were quite low. This should not be taken as an indication of lack of intelligence, even in later years many children in rural areas would miss large lumps of school as they were put to work supplementing the family income. Henry had spelt all the family's names correctly but his son the 11 years old Charles Henry was described as a 'scoller' and whilst Henry had got his and his wife's home villages, Mendham and Starston respectively, spelt properly, the children were described as having been born in 'Rendhall' (Redenhall). The job of 'Bill Poster' was not a well paid one and this may have been reflected in the fact that of the 9 children born throughout his and his wife Eliza's 30 year marriage, 3 had not survived.

Henry may have been a 'bill poster' but both his grandfather and father, James Wardens I and II were master bricklayers. Henry's Grandfather James I, like his great-grandson, was an illegitimate child his mother being an Ann Warden and he was not the only child of unwed Ann, about 2 ½ years after his own baptism in 1784, his equally illegitimate brother John Christmas followed, John was rebaptised aged 13 in 1798 along with an 8 years old sister named Mary! Whilst we cannot say for certain all of these children belonged to the same Ann Warden, I can't imagine there were too many ladies of that name having illegitimate children in Harleston in the 1780s.

By 1851, James I was widowed and had moved in with his son, James II, his wife and their 5 children aged between 10 months (little Harry) and 8 years old.



The three-generation family were living in a house near the Magpie and next the Old Harness Makers; a part of Harleston that was then known as Mendham in Norfolk but rather confusingly meant the family appeared in the Suffolk census!

*The Warden's family home throughout the 1850's on the corner of James' Yard.*

James Warden II was born in Essex, Mersea Island, but was already living in Harleston in 1841 when he appeared with his parents on Bunker's Hill (Candlers Lane). In fact, checking through the parish registers I found that James I and his wife Hannah nee Everett, baptised a son, John, at Redenhall in 1823, although he had been born in August 1822! I suspect his being born away from Harleston was due to an accident of timings and work commitments!

**AT HARLESTON.**  
**Lot 8. A substantial and convenient DWELLING-HOUSE,** used as the Post-office, situate in Mendham, Norfolk, comprising three sitting rooms, five sleeping rooms, stable, gig house, offices, warehouse, and small yard and garden.  
**Lot 9. A brick and tiled COTTAGE** at the rear of Lot 8, in the occupation of the widow Wright.  
**Lot 10. A Plot of BUILDING GROUND,** with the Building and Materials thereon, with an entrance from the street, late in the occupation of James Warden.  
 Possession of all the above Property, except Lot 6, may be had at Michaelmas next.  
 Further particulars may be had of the respective tenants; of Mr. W. M. Hazard, Solicitor; and of the Auctioneer, Harleston, Norfolk. [1867]

*Norfolk News 9 Jun 1860*

At this time, with the repeal in 1850 of the brick tax, a lot of bricklaying was going on in Harleston – not only were numbers of new buildings being put up, but old buildings were being given new brick frontages. In June 1860, it seems that James Warden moved out of his building yard, close to the Post Office; the post office on the London Road next door but one to their home and near the Magpie! In 1861, James II was employing 5 men and through the late 1850's

and early 1860's he placed several adverts to recruit more men. Bricklaying was thirsty work and the Harleston brickies tended to be a rambunctious lot – James less so than many but he too was involved in at least one brawl.

He may have believed himself to be the injured party, but the magistrates seemed to take the view of 6 to one and half a dozen to the other!

**THREE BRICKLAYERS can have work by applying to Mr. James Warden, Bricklayer, &c., Harleston.**

**William Doughton, ostler, was charged with an assault upon James Warden, bricklayer, Mendham, on the 10th ultimo, but the case was dismissed, the bench obviously thinking that for any injury the complainant had received, Warden had at least done something to bring it on himself.**

*Norfolk News  
11 Jun 1864*

As was the way of the time, although James II's father had died by the 1861 census, his brother William had moved in – bit crowded with three adults, two teenagers and four children in the house! The Wardens were very much a working-class family, with trades such as chimney sweep, blacksmith and shoemaker also being followed by various of James II's sons.

James II himself died, in 1869 aged 53; at this point there seems to have been a bit of a down turn in the family's fortunes. his widow and 5 of her children including Henry, moved from the London Road to one of the Yards in town, Henry still working as a chimney sweep.

10 years on, in 1881, Harry (the grandfather of our Harleston Hero) was freshly married and, living in Broad Street described himself as a sweep's assistant and, going back to his roots, a bricklayer. Harry does seem to be very much scratching a hand to mouth living – a marked contrast between him and his father who had teams of bricklayers working for him.

By 1891, the family had 5 children in the house, by 1901 three more children had been added including Hannah who went on to give birth to her son, Edward Jack Warden on the eve of the first world war.



When Edward Jack was baptised, in 1914, his mother's name was still Hannah Edith Warden – perfectly feasible if she had married a chap of the same name. However, in spite of searching several websites, I have found no trace of a Hannah Edith Warden getting married and it seems fairly likely she is the unmarried lady of that name and age working as a hotel waitress in Yarmouth just after the outbreak of the war. The hotel, at 21, Euston Road, was in a building originally constructed for a wealthy local tradesman and is now a collection of 9 or more flats – quite the pile! Hannah Edith Warden finally wound up in greater London, dying in Croydon in 1973.

The Warden family's fortunes continued to teeter on the borderline of poverty – the 1921 census showed that out of the whole family of 5 adults and one child, (Henry, his wife, two sons, 'Teddy' and his mother Hannah) only Henry was working and that still in his lowly paid role of Bill Poster.

One wonders if Edward's father was one of the men who never came back from WW1, and there is a hint that this may have happened since in the 1921 census it was stated that his father was dead – alternatively this may have been a white lie for the sake of respectability. Also, in the 1921 census, Edward was given the lovely diminutive of 'Teddy' and his place of birth was given as Pulham, indicating that he may well have been born in the Depwade Union Workhouse which still stands on the Norwich Rd but is now converted to rather nice flats.

The evidence certainly points to Edward Jack having been illegitimate – not that unusual a circumstance at the time and a conclusion backed up by no father's name appearing in the Grave Registration report. It is rather touching that his epitaph read 'A loving husband and son, who will be remembered by all who knew him'.

Although his mother appears to have never married, Edward Jack did marry, to an Annie E Smylie in 1942, she was a little older than him and was born in Islington in 1911. Her parents, George Edward Smylie, Cycle Maker, and Louisa Emily Bowles had married in Westminster in London in 1902 and appeared in the 1911 census living at 123 Fonthill Road, Finsbury. The Smylie family of 2 adults, 3 children with a 4<sup>th</sup> (Annie) on the way were crammed into 2 rooms, one of which would have been a multipurpose kitchen, living room dining room, the other room would have been for sleeping in. Looking at the building as it stands today, I suspect that what was, originally, a pleasant Georgian building had been subdivided into 2 dwellings per floor, one either side of the central entrance with shops on the ground floor below. Now the unsympathetic window treatment and obtrusive signage leaves only the roof pediment and the arched doorway as hints to its former glory before subdivision into housing for the poor and later into commercial premises.

*123 Fonthill Road,  
Finsbury*



Another resident of 123 Fonthill Road in 1911 listed himself, wife and 5-year-old son in a single room, 'top back room' whilst Mr Rose, his wife and four children were, like the Smylies, squeezed into 2 rooms.

Whilst Edward Jack might have been born illegitimate, his great-grand father illegitimate and his grandfather may have been only semi-literate with an unskilled job, I doubt the degree of poverty and overcrowding his wife had been born into would have been within his experience.

Anyway, the not so young couple, 31 and 28 got married in Depwade; I suspect that they had bumped into each other during the war when men

and unmarried women were posted all over the country as well as to various theatres of conflict. I hope they were able to enjoy some of their 2 year marriage between the demands of the army and whatever work Annie was doing – there seem to have been no children from the Union and by the time the CWGC was compiling their records, Annie had moved back to London, Hackney to be precise although when Edward wrote his will in 1943, the year after the marriage, Annie was living at 75 Marlborough Road, Holloway. Nowadays it is rather a nice looking 3 storey house but I expect that during Annie and Edward's time it was another house of multi occupancy with the bonus of having a small shop incorporated!



*75 Marlborough Road Holloway*

**SOLDIER'S WILL FORM**

*(Use either this Form or the Form overleaf, but not both.)*

**FORM OF WILL** to be used by a soldier desirous of leaving the whole of his property and effects to one person.

*(See overleaf for Form of Will leaving legacies to more than one person.)*

(a) (Signature of soldier in full) I (a) E. J. Warden

(b) (Rank and Army Number) (b) Private 5772422

(c) (Regiment) (c) 1st Royal Norfolk

hereby revoke all Wills heretofore made by me at any time and declare this to be my last Will and Testament.

(d) (Name and address of Executor) I appoint (d) my wife Annie  
Ward  
Flat 10, 56 Gifford St London N14

to be the Executor of this my Will. After payment of my just debts and funeral expenses I give all my estate and effects and everything that I can give or dispose of to my

(e) (Insert "friend" or if a relative, in what degree) (e) self

(f) (Full name and address of person) (f) my wife Annie  
Ward  
Flat 10, 56 Gifford St London N14

(g) (Date) Signed this (g) 27th day of June 1947

(h) (Signature of soldier) (h) E. J. Warden

(i) (Insert full name of soldier making the Will) Signed and acknowledged by the said (i) Edward Jack Warden the same having been previously read over to him as and for his last Will, in the presence of us, present at the same time, who, in his presence, at this request, and in the presence of each other, have hereunto subscribed our Names as Witnesses:—

(j) (Witnesses to sign here) (j) Sto Smith Capt

(k) (Add address in full) (k) Ed Case Sgt

(l) (Witnesses to sign here) (l) "Fruit Lane", Wrenley Rd, London  
Ed Case Sgt

N.B.—The witnesses must NOT be persons intended to benefit under the Will, or husbands or wives of such persons.

NOTES.—If any alteration or amendment is necessary in the writing of a Will another form should be obtained and a fresh Will executed.

Under English law the provisions of the Inheritance (Family Provision) Act, 1938, may be invoked to alter the dispositions of a Will by a wife or, in certain circumstances, by a son or daughter who have not been provided for under the dispositions of a Will.

By the Law of Scotland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man, the rights of the widow or children to some portion of the estate cannot be defeated by a Will.

The Testator, if of English domicile, must be of the age of 21 years, unless he is on active service or under orders for active service. A Soldier may dispose by Will of personal property (as distinguished from real property) when over the age of 14 years.

When on active service or under orders for active service the signature of the witnesses may be omitted.

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An Annie E Warden went on to marry a Daniel J Hickmott in Hackney in early 1947. Daniel was then 40ish and had come from a similar background to Annie. He appeared as a 3-year-old with his parents and four of his siblings (of the 8 that had survived) in Islington in 1911 crammed into 2 'kitchens' – a multi-purpose room with a range in it. In this case 4 families were living at their dwelling in 56, Gifford St. One can only hope that this Annie Warden was Edward's widow, and she went on to enjoy a long and happy life after her all too short previous marriage but what a shame she and Edward were robbed of the chance to raise a family in the healthy town of Harleston!