



Leonard Bond

40048 Private, 9th Battalion Norfolk Regiment

He was killed in action on 18th October 1916 in France, aged 19

Leonard is buried at Bancourt British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France

Leonard Bond enlisted in his hometown of Harleston; he was one of the many whose death is clouded in confusion. He was first reported as 'missing' in the daily lists of 30th November 1916, it was not until the 12th of July the next year he was confirmed as 'Previously Reported Missing, Now Reported Killed'. One can only imagine the initial desperate hope within Pte. Bond's family that he might be discovered wounded, possibly even to be invalided out. Other soldiers had disappeared, been reported missing and then emerged from a prison of war camp, Thomas Bentham had lost one of his three sons due to infection and had another reported missing, that missing son did survive the war. The Bond family must have gradually replaced the slim hope of Leonard's survival with the increasing certainty he was indeed dead. Doubtless a flicker of hope remained until his death was finally confirmed. His body was eventually recovered, although that is probably not a topic to dwell on too long bearing in mind the confirmation of his death was not made until 9 months after his disappearance, at least his parents would have had the comfort of knowing he had a proper burial.

It was a large family that would have been awaiting the news; the 1911 census reveals that in 21 years of marriage his parents had produced 15 children, of whom all but two were still alive and of those all but 2 were still living at home, a 6 room house, just up the road from Keeley's Yard. Hard as it is to believe, John's wife Emma nee Neave, came from an even larger family. Emma was the daughter of Walter Neave, a carpenter (from a family of Carpenters) and Parish Clerk, most respectable! In 1911, when he was unable to attend a presentation due to ill health, it was revealed that the 71-year-old had been the Honingham Estate Carpenter for 'about 50 years'; actually, I think 46 would have been the exact figure! With this length of service, Walter was the nominated spokesman for the estate workmen.

Walter would have seen the estate pass from the hands of the Townsend family, by inheritance, to the Fellowes family, or the Baron Ailwyns as they were to become. At the start of the 20thC money was being invested in the estate, the cottages were being improved and the Fellowes were hugely appreciated by their tenants. The 2nd Baron Ailwyn did not have the same commitment to the estate and sold it on to Sir Eric Teichman. This gentleman allowed Dr Barnardo's to use it as a children's home from 1940 but, with fatal consequences, kept a close interest in the property. In 1944, 2 G.I. s went poaching on the estate, each one armed with an M1 Carbine; Teichman disturbed them, they shot Teichman, Teichman died.

In spite of this tragic event, Barnardo's continued to use the house until 1966, although I am not sure how suitable as a children's home a 460 years old minor stately home would have been for the purpose – I wonder if they ever lost children in the corridors? Like so many houses at the time, it was subsequently demolished. A terrible shame.

In spite of the 1st Baron Ailwyn having four sons, they all died without issue and the title, like the house 22 years earlier, became extinct in 1988.

Emma's parents' family was marginally more enormous than her own! Emma had 15 siblings; by 1911, 5 had died, but bearing in mind that of those children, the oldest would have been in their 50's and this was a time of lower life expectancy and high death in child birth, this is not an extreme number. What is even more mind boggling is that there was only 20 years difference in age between the youngest and the oldest of these 16 children, averaging 15 months between the birth of each child.

Whilst I am sure that Walter Neave was a splendid father, he had his wrist severely slapped by the Magistrates in 1893; he had absentmindedly taken his youngest son (Stephen) Robert, then aged

Walter Neave of East Tuddenham, parish clerk, was summoned for neglecting to send his son, Robert Neave, to school upon the examination day. Mr. W. E. Clarke, Attendance-officer, stated that the boy had been sent regularly to school, but was absent on the examination day, and consequently the school lost the grant he would have earned. The managers were very much grieved at this, and the Inspector desired that defendant should be summoned. Defendant pleaded he went out for a short time and took the boy with him, and did not think anything about the examination. He was sorry it occurred. The Chairman told defendant that the grant was now lost for the whole year. He had reaped the benefit of the school, but the school had not gained any advantage from him. He would be fined 5s., and in addition to that he ought to pay something to the school to make up what had been lost.

12, out for a jolly. Normally a regular school attendee, he absolutely should have been in school on the day of this jaunt as this was 'examination' day. Not being there meant an entire years finance was not granted for (Stephen) Robert. Father Walter was fined 5s and told he should, morally, make a contribution to the school to make up for his irresponsibility.

Norfolk News
12 Aug 1893

Leonard's father, John Bond, was raised out in Dickleburgh, the son and grandson of agricultural labourers, however his family was of modest size with only 5 children (or thereabouts) meaning less pressure on the family finances. This in turn meant that, rather than being pushed out to work as young as possible all the lads could be apprenticed to good jobs; oldest son Harry became an Agricultural Engine Driver (transferring his mechanical skills to a flour mill in later years), George became a Blacksmith and youngest of the lads, John, a shoemaker.

John moved in to Harleston in time to appear in the 'King's Arm's' Yard in 1891, I suspect that either the census taker was having a bit of a moment or someone was playing a prank on him; no such place as the King's Arms, but there was Queens Arms, just off Broad Street. He had married Emma Neave from Tuddenham in late 1889, but as yet, no children! Instead he was trying to recruit a semi trained shoemaker so it would seem he had plenty of business.

BOOT AND SHOEMAKERS.—Wanted at once an IMPROVER. Apply to J. Bond, Harleston, Norfolk. (6882)

Norwich Mercury
13 Jun 1891

By 1901, John and Emma had made up for their slow start; having moved to Chapel Yard they now had 8 children; like her mother, Emma Bond nee Neeve was averaging a baby every 15 months. John had become a Postman although I suspect, like many of his colleagues he continued to repair and make shoes on the side – after all with all those children to shod, this would have saved him a fortune.

Leonard's father being a postman provided a steady job which, if the postie resisted the temptation of the almost always open pubs, would have allowed him a good foundation on which to raise such a large family although of course having a stalwart and efficient wife plus genetically good constitutions were another major factor in this! He was more specifically a rural postman which would have involved long rounds over extended areas; Mr Riches describes the job of a postman in the early 20th C thus...

'It was said by many of the locals of fifty or sixty years ago that you could set your watch or clock the right time when you saw a postman or post woman, so regular on time were they. Many of the post rounds were done on foot, immense distances being walked. Many of the rounds were known to the postman as walking rounds, one of these used to be to Alburgh and Denton, quite a distance from Harleston where they operated from. The clothing used to be of very heavy cloth material and the postmen were usually issued with an oilskin cape. The standard dress for the legs was cloth putties. A few of them had old fashioned cycles and during darkness they were lit up by an oil lamp'¹

The Bonds were a family who steadily got on with life, kept out of trouble and kept together in a tightly knit unit. As well as Harleston's Granite Memorial, Leonard's name was kept alive in a most tangible form. His older brother, Bertie, Leonard's senior by only two years (although in this prolific family there was another brother between the two) named his first-born child, a son born in 1919, after his brother. Two more sons and two more daughters were to follow including twins Gordon and Joan.

There are many Bonds in and around Harleston today, doubtless many are not related but with all those siblings that Harleston Hero Leonard was blessed with, there must be a few around who can claim kinship with Uncle / Great Uncle/ Great-Great Uncle Leonard.

¹ Roy Riches Oddments