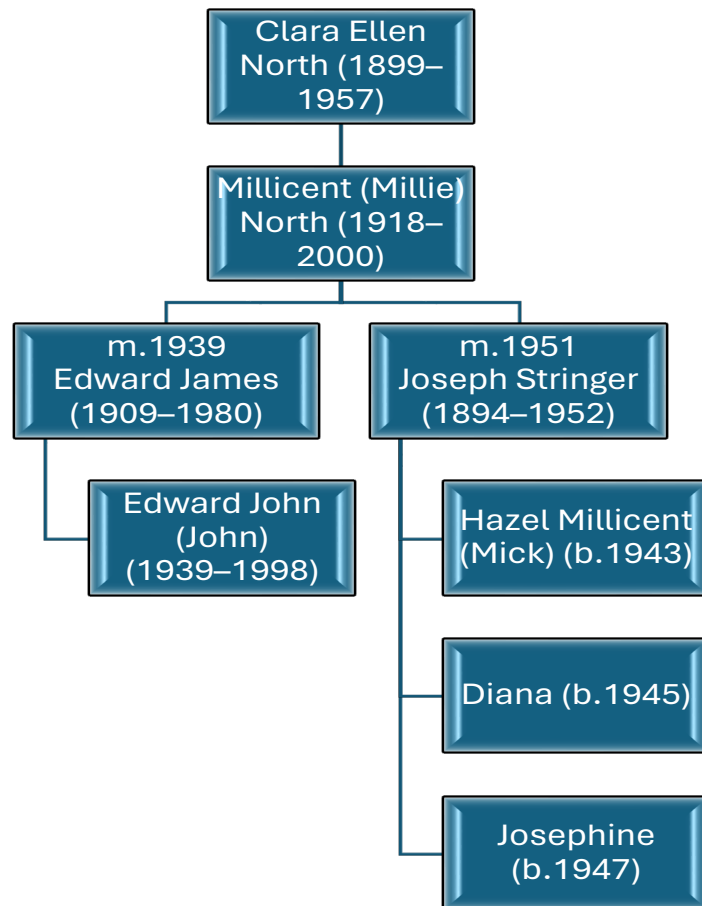




### **My father's siblings, and their families**

Clara Ellen had her first child in summer 1918, more than a year before she married Leonard Howard – hence, below, I give her family tree separate from the children and grandchildren of Clara Ellen and Leonard. The child was a girl and was registered as Millicent North (Millie; 1918–2000) in Chertsey, northeast of Woking. Clara Ellen would have been 18, and most likely had spent her teenage years as a domestic servant, which likely explains why Millie was born away from home. With a young baby, though, she would have been encouraged to leave service. Millie's father remains unknown, although family lore is that he died serving in the military during the last year of the Great War. Clara Ellen was, however, soon married, to Leonard Howard. They married on 20 December 1919. Leonard had been de-mobbed and had returned to Pirbright, but he moved for work so that, at the time of the 1921 census, he was working in Chiswick – Millie is recorded as living with Leonard and Clara Ellen and is given the surname 'Howard'. She was not, however, adopted by Leonard, even though he is remembered to have treated her as his child. When she in turn married, on 27 December 1937 in St Michaels and All Angels, her family name was recorded as North (Leonard was not listed as a witness, although Clara Ellen, Millie's mother, was). Shortly after the 1921 census was taken, Clara Ellen gave birth to her first child with Leonard, and Millie was sent to live on the farm in Puttenham where Clara Ellen's brother, Sydney Leonard, was working. His wife Ada, though, soon found herself competing for Sydney's attention with Millie, and so, possibly before the couple had a child, Millie was sent back to Pirbright. When Millie took her own daughter Mick to visit Sydney's wife Ada, in her last years in the Woking retirement home, Ada could not remember Millie, but simply told them, 'I had a daughter once, but I lost her' – was this Millie, or a child with Sydney?



In 1937, Millie married Edward James (Jimmy), who, like his father William, was a blacksmith. He had been born in Elsich Barn, Craven Arms, Shropshire, on 28 July 1909 and was baptised on 3 October. The new couple rented Diana Cottage on the Hogs Back near Runfold, just outside Farnham. However, by the time Edward John James (John), Millie and Edward's son, was born on 30 September 1939 – a day after the 1939 Register was taken – Edward James was serving as a gunner in the Royal Horse Artillery and Millie had moved into at 2 Vicarage Lane, Farnham – up towards Farnham Castle. Once men went to war the government encouraged wives with young children to move to safety – if appropriate, to move back to their husband's families. Hence, Millie and her young son joined Edward's father, Richard William James (1874–1949), and Edward's sister, Evellyn (1899–1955), in Craven Arms (Edward's mother, Ellen (née Morgan, 1869–1931), and another sister, Ellen Olive (1902–1915), had already died). The arrangement did not go well. Interference from the family attacked Millie's mothering skills, and before long Millie packed her bags and walked out, leaving her young son behind. Edward and Millie divorced, and when Edward returned from war, he married Ellen Mary Pugh (1909–2002) in Ludlow – the town to the south of Craven Arms. Subsequently, Edward and Ellen had two daughters, Eileen and Valerie, and settled in Stokesay, to the south of Craven Arms. Edward died there, on 28 May 1980.

Jumping ahead, in autumn 1960 Edward John married Florence Jean Bowen (Jean), who he had known since childhood. The couple settled in the place they grew up, Craven Arms. Initially, John worked for the railway, but he ended his working life in a food processing plant. Athletic in his youth – he played football for Ludlow Town – he developed renal problems. Two kidney transplants were unsuccessful, and after some years travelling to

Birmingham for dialysis, friends from the pigeon club he was part of built a glorified shed containing a dialysis facility in his garden. He died in March 1998, although Jean remained on the electoral role at their home (38 Brooklands Park, Craven Arms) to at least 2010. For many years, Millie had no contact with her son. Once, her daughter Hazel Millicent (Mick) recalls going with Millie to a horse show in Craven Arms. Millie suddenly announced she wanted to leave, because she had seen somebody she knew – could this have been John? Mick knew she had a half-brother, but Millie was reluctant to speak about her previous life. Contact was eventually re-established, but in a totally unexpected way. The reunion began when Mick was driving home one Sunday listening to Charlie Chester's *Sunday Soapbox*, a radio programme broadcast from 1972 to 1996 which encouraged people to send in letters – 'With a box full of records and a bag full of post, it's radio soapbox and Charlie is your host!' As Mick listened, a letter was announced from an Edward John James. He was looking for his sister, Hazel Millicent (his sister rather than his mother, since he didn't know whether his mother was still alive). Hazel Millicent was Mick's name but was known by very few (Mick had been the name she was known by from the age of two – as a small child she had thrown a tantrum and one of her parents commented that she was 'throwing a little Mick'). Once the letter sank in, Mick stopped the car, and worked through the implications. She went to quiz her mother, only to find that her sister had also heard the programme and was talking on the telephone to her mother about it. Feeling no harm could come from making contact, Mick used directory enquiries to find Edward John's number. She phoned him. He visited Mick and Millie in Kidderminster. They subsequently visited him several times before he died.

Below are copies of three marriage registrations: Millicent (Millie) to Edward James (Jimmy); Joseph Stringer's first marriage to Agnes Petty; and Millie to Joseph Stringer. And below these, I include a copy of the birth registration of Edward John (John) James:

1915. Marriage solemnized at <u>S. John's Church</u> in the Parish <u>of Perry Barr</u> in the County of <u>Stafford</u>								
Columns	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
221	27 <sup>th</sup> February 1915	Joseph Stringer	20	Bachelor	Sign plate worker.	10 Seale Road	John William Stringer	Sign plate worker
		Agnes Petty	19	Spinster	—	24 Victoria Road	William Petty	Iron dresser.
Married in the <u>Parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Church of England</u> by <u>—</u> or after <u>Banns</u> by me, <u>Joseph Stringer</u> in the Presence of us, <u>Samuel Smiley</u> <u>Paul Watts Head</u> <u>Edith Lyle Jones</u> <u>Vicar</u>								

1937. Marriage solemnized at <u>the Parish Church</u> in the Parish <u>of Pibright</u> in the County of <u>Warwick</u>								
Columns	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
78	Dec 27 1937	Edward James	26	Bachelor	Blacksmith	15 Council Cottages Pibright	William James	Blacksmith
		Milliecent North	17	Spinster	—	15 Council Cottages Pibright	—	—
Married in the <u>Parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Established Church</u> by <u>—</u> or after <u>Banns</u> by me, <u>Edward James</u> in the Presence of us, <u>Clara Ellen Howard</u> <u>Herbert S. Nibbs</u> <u>W. C. Ford</u> <u>Vicar</u>								



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 14744270-1

1951 Marriage solemnized at <u>The Register Office</u> in the <u>District of Kidderminster</u> in the <u>County of Worcester</u>								
No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
106	Second November 1951	Joseph Stringer	54 years	Bachelor	Tim Smith	The Dugdale Inn, 100, Broadgate Road, Rock (near Kidderminster)	John Williams	Tim Smith
		Millie James	33 years	The divorced wife of Edward James	—	The Dugdale Inn, 100, Broadgate Road, Rock (near Kidderminster)	Edward James	John James
Married in the <u>Register Office</u> according to the rites and ceremonies of the <u>Church of England</u> by <u>George Robert</u> Registrar								
This marriage was solemnized between us, <u>Joseph Stringer</u> and <u>Millie James</u> in the presence of us, <u>Tim Smith</u> and <u>John James</u> Subscribing myself Registrar								

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 14807176/1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT										
Surrey South-Western										
1939 BIRTH in the Sub-district of <u>Farnham</u> in the <u>County of Surrey</u>										
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
60	20th September 1939 Farnham, N.D.	Edward Coy James	Boy	Edward James	Millie James	Motor cycle component inspector	Mr. James, 100, Broadgate Road, Rock (near Kidderminster)	1939	Registrar	Edward Coy James

Shortly after leaving her son with her father-in-law, Millie met Joseph Stringer. He was a metal worker who had been seconded to the area to build machinery for the war. He was 24 years older than Millie, and had been born in 1894 in Lye, Stourbridge, to John and Phoebe Ann (née Williams). He had married Agnes Petty on 27 February 1915 in Perry Barr north of Birmingham and by the end of the 1920s was on the electoral role in Stoke Prior near Bromsgrove. From his first marriage, Joseph had four or possibly five children, the eldest, Norman, being a year older than Millie. Norman was born on 5 March 1917 and baptised on 25 March. Vera, the first daughter, was born on 8 October 1918 and baptised on 27 October. A third child, Joyce, was born in autumn 1923 but was buried on 24 November, while a fourth, Freda, was born on 26 January 1929. In the 1939 Register, Norman, Vera, and Freda were living with their parents; Norman was a 'motor-cycle component inspector' and Vera was selling 'fancy goods'; one person has now been deleted from the Register—a further child? After he took up with Millie, Joseph would send his first wife 'half a crown' a month.

Joseph and Millie settled in Fairview Bungalow on the Blissgate Road in Rock, southwest of Bewdley, where their three children were born: Mick (b.1943), Diana (b.1945, named after Diana Cottage, where Millie had lived with Edward James), and Josephine (b.1947). The three were registered with the family name Stringer, although Millie and Joseph only married in the autumn of 1951. It is likely that Agnes refused to divorce Joseph, since it was only after she died in spring 1951 that Millie and Joseph felt they were able to marry.



Millie supplied a somewhat fictitious entry for her father on the marriage registration, giving his name as Wilfred Howard North and his occupation as a rifle range warden – this was Leonard’s occupation (as the marriage registration of her half-sister Dorothy to John Day confirms), so she, in effect, conflated my father’s first name with Leonard’s family name and her mother’s family name. Millie remained in contact with her parents in Pirbright – travelling there reasonably frequently with her children by train. Joseph continued to work as a sheet metal worker and Millie initially worked as a housekeeper. From Rock, and around the time Joseph and Millie married, they moved to Wolverley, northeast of Kidderminster, and took a mortgage on a house – the picture of the family above is taken outside the front door, with a crocheted curtain made by Millie draped inside the door. All three children were now baptised, at St John the Baptist Church, high on a hill overlooking the village, although the children may well have felt they were suffering the indignity of having water sprinkled over them when they were no longer babies. Mick sang in the church choir, alongside Millie, and played the bells. Sadly, barely a year after Millie had married Joseph, on 13 December 1952, he died. As a widow with a young family, Millie was offered council housing, but she was determined to keep the house they were buying, and to pay the mortgage she continued working in retail in Kidderminster full time.



Above: Millie in 1924, and in the 1950s

Next page: Edward James; Edward, Millie, and Edward John outside Leonard and Clara Ellen’s house in Pirbright; Edward John as a baby, and with his wife Jean; Joseph Stringer; Joseph with Millie and their daughters (L to R) Mick, Josephine, and Diana (with cat and dog; both parents with cigarettes)



There were other possible suitors for Millie. With one, the family moved into his well-known centuries-old timber framed house back in Rock (about the most famous person to live in Rock at the time, and until she moved to Essex in 1975, was the campaigner Mary



Whitehouse). He, along with Millie and Mick, were by then all working in Kidderminster, and the children remember being driven around in style in his luxurious Armstrong Siddeley. My father used to remark that this was when Millie hit the jackpot and found her rich suitor, although the reality remains somewhat opaque. And the relationship soured: an argument in the kitchen as Millie prepared to bake a cake ended when – as Mick remembers it – Millie threw first the cake mixture, then the spoon, then the bowl at him. In 1980 Millie and Mick moved to 162 Marlpool Lane, Kidderminster, where Millie lived until her death in July 2000; Mick, at the time of writing, still lives in the house. Her two siblings had moved away: Diana migrated to Canada and eventually settled on Vancouver Island; her three children were Richard, Matthew, and Derinda. Josephine settled in Wrexham and had three children, Shona, Nicola, and David.



The house at Rock; Mick, Josephine, and Diana (L to R) outside the front door to their house at Wolverley;  
Diana, Josephine, and Mick (L to R) at their christening at St John the Baptist, Wolverley

Clara Ellen and Leonard, my grandparents, married in 1919. Images of the couple are reproduced below: first is Clara Ellen, my grandmother, in later life and second is Leonard, my grandfather, in earlier life; third is Clara Ellen and Leonard with her first three children (Millie,



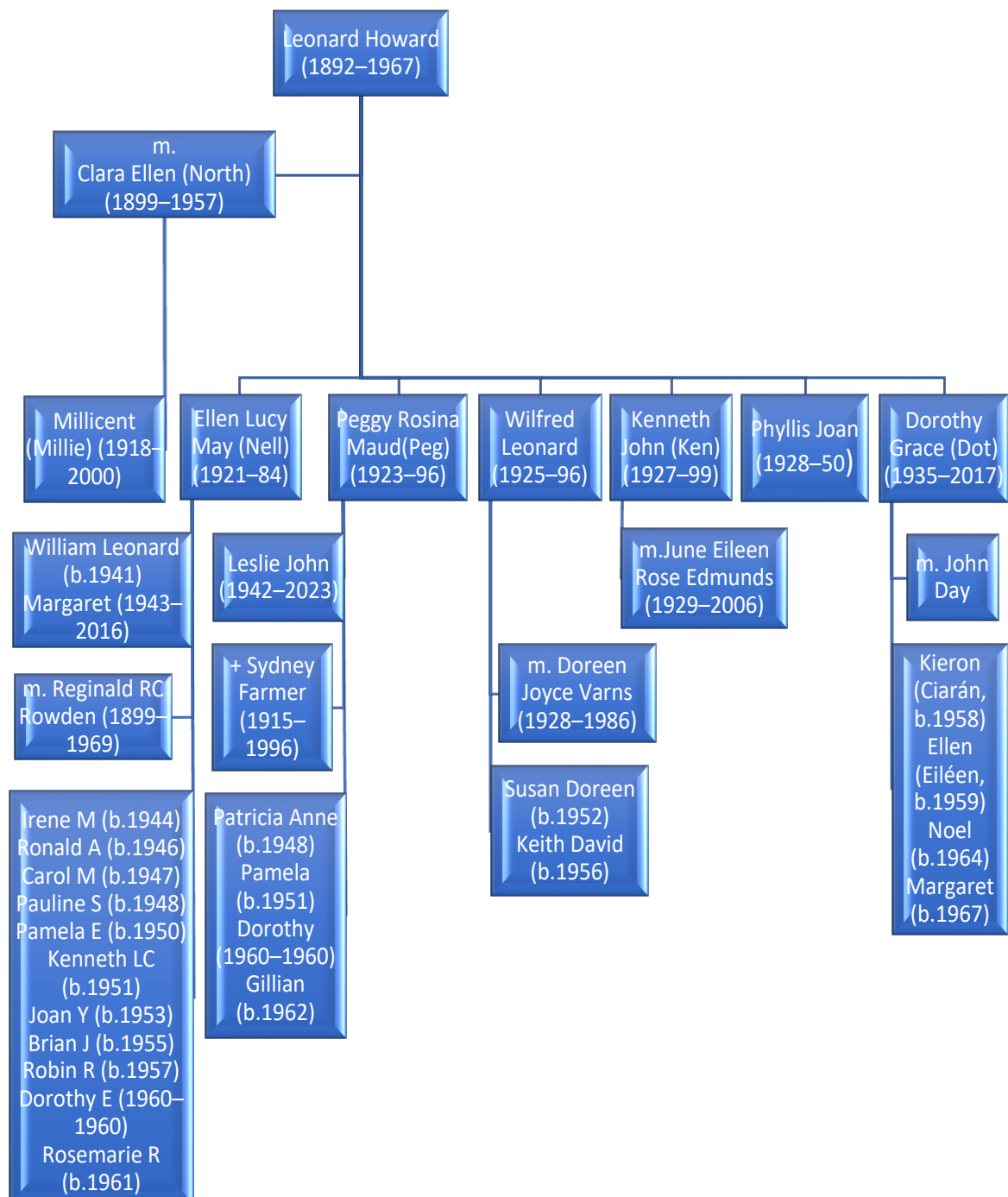
Nell, Peg); fourth is Leonard in later life, with a pipe at Brighton; fifth Clara Ellen and Leonard in later life on deckchairs at Brighton; sixth and seventh, and demonstrating that Leonard was active in local fetes, two photographs show him running the hoopla/quoits stands at fetes (in the first, his customary cigarette dangles from his lips, while in the second with Clara Ellen to his right). By way of explanation of the last two images, a newspaper cutting survives of a British Legion fete in Pirbright in 1921 (the year that the legion was founded, memorialising the end of the Great War), in which Leonard is reported to have supervised the 'darts and hidden treasure' amusements. The final image is of Leonard at the beach near Portsmouth, sulking and looking out to sea away from the camera, after being bitten by a dog.







Leonard and Clara Ellen had six children together after their marriage (the family tree below does not show the husbands or children of Millie, for which, see the previous pages; a compilation of their birth registrations is also below). They settled at 15 Council Houses, Pirbright (also pictured below, but as renovated and lived in today), one of a set of houses built in Rapleys Field in West Heath, known now as Thompsons Close after the original owner of the land (and, presumably, in deference to the 1980s government policy of selling off the council house stock, since when I visited recently outside the first house in the Close were two Porsches).





1892 May 20 Born March 28 1892 No. 1032.	Leonard & Mary	Henry & Howard	Pirbright	Labourer	J. W. Dunn
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Aug. 22 1921. No. 1873.	October 16 <sup>th</sup> May.	Ellen Leonard & Clara Ellen	Howard Pirbright	Labourer	Arthur Smith Vicar.
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11 <sup>th</sup> Apr. 1925 No. 1900.	June 1925 May	Peggy Leonard & Clara Ellen	Howard Pirbright	Labourer	W. H. Smith Vicar.
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1925 June 28. No. 1932.	Wilfred & Leonard	Leonard & Clara Ellen	Howard Pirbright	5 The Terrace Gardener	H. S. Kelsoy Vicar.
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1927 Mar. 27 No. 1971.	Kenneth & John	Leonard & Clara Ellen	Howard Pirbright	5 The Terrace Nursery Man	H. S. Kelsoy
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1928 Oct. 21 No. 1999.	Phyllis & Joan	Leonard & Clara Ellen	Howard Pirbright	5 Terrace Nursery- Man	H. S. Kelsoy
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1935 April 28 No. 2145.	Dorothy & Grace	Leonard & Clara Ellen	Howard Pirbright	15 Council Houses Nursery Man	H. S. Kelsoy Vicar.
----------------------------------	-----------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------	---	------------------------



15 Council Houses, Pirbright, today

The eldest two children moved away from Pirbright and went on to spend most of their lives in East London. The eldest was Ellen Lucy May (Nell; 1921–1984), born on 22 August 1921 and baptised at St Michael and All Angels on 16 October. She was admitted to Pirbright school on and stayed at school until she was 14, leaving on 30 July 1935. By the time of the 1939 Register, she was working as a domestic servant for a solicitor, Thomas Yale, and his wife, at Quietways, Park Road, East Woking. Nell had two children before she married, registered using Leonard and Clara Ellen's address at 15 Council Terraces, Pirbright with the family name Howard: William Leonard (Billie) in spring 1941 and Margaret, born on 4 May 1943. By the time Billie was born, Nell had changed work, and was at Gloucester Road, Old Woking, still a domestic servant, although – and perhaps sent away to give birth – the entry of birth gives Nell's address as Richmond Park Road, Kingston. Billie was a twin. His twin was stillborn, and the two were born prematurely. He was so weak that as a baby he had to be carried around on a pillow. In early 1963, Margaret married Terrence W. Waller in Ilford (their son, Andrew, has filled in some of the family tree before me), while Billie married Sandra Roberts in Crosby, Lancashire, in July 1972. Margaret died in 2016.



Ellen Lucy May (left), Peggy Rosina Maud (right)

Nell married Reginald Richard Charles Rowden in July 1943. She married at the Registry Office in St Albans, since at some point between Billie's birth and her marriage she had again changed her employer, and was working as a domestic servant in Leverstock Green, Hemel Hemstead (the neighbouring town to St Albans). Since she chose not to marry in Pirbright, relations with her parents may have soured. Reginald was 21 years older than Nell. He had been born on 8 September 1899, although he was baptised only later, in December 1910 (at St John's Methodist Church, Battersea), and was living in Walthamstow working as a porter for a printing company when he married Nell. Their marriage was just two months after Margaret had been born, and with Reginald Nell had 11 more children: Irene May (b.1944), Ronald A. (b.1946) Carol M. (b.1947), Pauline S. (b.1948), Pamela E. (b.1950), Kenneth L. C. (b.1951), Joan Y. (1953–2001), Brian J (b.1955), Robin R. (b.1957), Dorothy E. (1960–1960) and Rosemarie R. (b.1961). Dorothy, sadly, lived only a few months; born on 3 April 1960, she died in early autumn. Reginald, at the funeral for Leonard in 1967, looked at







Women's Auxiliary Air Force, where she worked as a cook. She was discharged on compassionate grounds on 4 July 1944 – she was required to leave the WAAF because she was pregnant with her first child, Leslie John (Les; 1944–2023), and below I reproduce her discharge document. Leslie, sharing his name with one of his father's brothers, was born in Guildford in November 1944 and was baptised as a Howard in Pirbright. The photos below show Leslie in a local production of 'The Gondoliers', with Peg, in the early 1970s, and in later life, with his partner Doug.

R.A.F. FORM 1394.

**ROYAL AIR FORCE.**

**BRIEF STATEMENT OF SERVICE AND CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE OF**

SURNAME HOWARD OFFICIAL No. 2024109

CHRISTIAN NAMES Peggy Rosina Maud

Date of enlistment 21st. August, 1941 Terms of enlistment D of FFE.

(a) Date reported for regular service 29th. September, 1941

(b) Branch of Air Force in which enlisted W.A.A.F. R.A.F. trade Cook

Date of discharge 4th. July, 1944 Rank LAOW

(c) Cause of discharge Compassionate

(Para. 652 Clause 11 King's Regulations and Air Council Instructions.)

(d) General character (i) during service Very Good (ii) on discharge Very Good

(e) Degree of trade proficiency:— A Sat B B

Special qualifications None

(f) Medals, Clasps, Decorations, Mentions in Despatches, Special Commendations, etc. None

**DESCRIPTION OF ABOVE-NAMED AIRMAN/AIRWOMAN ON DISCHARGE.**

Date of birth 16th. April, 1923 Marks or scars None

Height 5 ft. 2½ ins.

Complexion Fresh

Colour of eyes Green Colour of hair Brown

Airman's or airwoman's signature P. Howard

(g) Brief statement of Trade Qualifications and General Conduct:—

This airwoman performed her duties as a cook in a very satisfactory manner and her general conduct was excellent.

Unit STATION UPPER HAYFORD Date 28 JUN 1944 Stamp ORDERLY ROOM

(Signed) [Signature] Group Captain,  
Commanding R.A.F. Station, Upper Hayford  
Royal Air Force.

Attention is directed to Notes (a) to (g) on reverse.



Peg was soon staying with her sister Nell in the Boundary Estate council flat in London. She applied for council housing and settled with Leslie a stone's throw away from the Boundary Estate in Cobden House on Bethnal Green Road. By then, she was with Sydney Charles Farmer (1915–1996), but he was already married, to Ethel Marjorie Brammer (b.1917)

– his marriage registration spelt his name as ‘Sidney’, but his identity card and other documents give it as ‘Sydney’. He had been born in Fulham to Arthur Henry (1881–1961) and Edith Farmer (née Musto, 1884–1968), and had married his wife on 10 May 1941 in St Neots, Huntingdon, shortly before the birth of their first son, Michael (b.1941). A second son, Gerald, had arrived in 1943. Both sons had been born in Surrey, where Sydney was a lance corporal in the military police serving in the Royal Artillery, and it is possible that he met Peg there. He had been in the military since March 1934, when he had joined the East Surrey Regiment (roll number 14643943); in May 1941 he moved to the Royal Artillery, where he served until his discharge in March 1946. Photos indicate that Sydney saw active service in Italy and North Africa. No divorce took place, and so, although in later life Peg always wore a wedding ring, she never married Sydney. Despite this, the birth registrations and documentation of the children she had with Sydney give Peg’s surname as Farmer – as if the parents were married. Sydney’s marriage certificate to Ethel Brammer is reproduced below, together with two photos of him in uniform, at the Colosseum in Rome (Sydney to the left) and in desert garb:

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON

Application Number 3774

1941. Marriage solemnized at *St Neots* in the *County of Huntingdon*

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
175	10 May 1941	<i>Michael Sydney Farmer</i>	25	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Lance Corporal</i>	<i>Libertons Road, St Neots</i>	<i>Arthur Henry Farmer</i>	<i>Postman</i>
	1941	<i>Ethel Margaret Brammer</i>	23	<i>Spinster</i>		<i>101 Huntingdon Road, St Neots</i>	<i>Arthur Brammer</i>	<i>Public Works</i>

Married in the *Register Office* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Anglican* by *Reverend* *John Lantieri*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *Mrs Farmer* and *Ethel Margaret Brammer* in the Presence of us, *James Lantieri*, *Charles Lantieri*, *Marjorie*, *Reverend*, *David Williams*, *Reverend*, *John Williams*

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of *St Neots* Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON, under the Seal of the said Office, the *6th* day of *May* 19 *43*

MX 779798

CAUTION:—Any person who (1) falsifies any of the particulars on this certificate, or (2) uses a falsified certificate as true, knowing it to be false, is liable to prosecution.





The children of Peg and Sydney were never told about Sydney's first marriage. Nor did they know there were children from that marriage, still alive and just a few years older than them. Sydney proved to be a tyrant. Peg was expected to work, and Sydney was abusive to her children, particularly to Leslie and their eldest daughter, Patricia Anne (Pat). Pat was born on 7 April 1948. Peg had reasonable success keeping him away from the younger children. Not surprisingly, Peg's father, Leonard Howard, disliked Sydney, and told Peg off when she became pregnant by him again. Sydney actively prevented the children from going into the careers they wanted to follow. Hence, when Leslie, the eldest of the brood, applied to work for Customs and Excise, Sydney intercepted the letter accepting him and tore it up. Leslie stayed at home until he was 22. Then, when a couple of his friends were staying with the family for Christmas – one was Douglas, who became his partner for the rest of his life – and seeing how Sydney treated Leslie, Douglas asked him if he really wanted to live with his stepfather. Leslie quietly helped Douglas pack his bag to leave, placing his own clothes under Douglas's, and the two walked out. It was only when Peg went to Leslie's room that she discovered his clothes had gone. Curiously, Leslie would later change his surname by deed poll from Howard to Farmer. By then he was a hotelier, and in later life he ran the Black Lion Hotel in Llangurig on the A44 to the east of Aberystwyth, Wales.

Sydney named his first daughter with Peg before she was born: he would nag the pregnant Peg to mind what she did in case 'my Patsy Anne' was injured. Pat left school at 15 and applied to join the Royal Air Force. She passed the initial interview, medical and exam, but never got further, because Sydney intercepted the letter inviting her to a final interview and destroyed it. So, she got a job with the stationery and printing department of P&O at their headquarters in Aldgate. Peg immediately demanded almost half Pat's salary for rent, but still Pat lived at home until Sydney forced her to leave – 'This dog has got to go, then you will pack your bags!' Pat married John Vincent Godfrey in 1992, and such were the family relations that her father was not invited to the wedding. In his stead, Johnny, the husband of her aunt Dorothy, gave her away. John was 10 years older than Pat and had already been married twice – Pat recalls that his first wife went off with his best friend, and the second had no interest in John once she had given birth to his child. John was a publican, and he met Pat at a darts match. They moved from London to look after his ailing mother, settling in her flat in Allestree, Derby.

There were three additional children. Pamela Edith May (b.1951; Sydney chose 'Edith' because it was his mother's name) in 1975 married Alan Hubbard. Gillian Elizabeth (b.1962) divorced her first husband, Adrian Reeves, who she had married in 1984 for his adultery, but her second marriage, to a Johnson, survived. The other child was Dorothy, born on 23 August 1960. Peg was expecting twins, but when the family was on holiday at Jaywick Sands, Essex, she fell and began to bleed. She lost one of the twins and was told she must rest in bed – a doctor later diagnosed rheumatic heart disease, caused by rheumatic fever in her childhood, which would tend to make pregnancy dangerous for both mother and unborn child. Two weeks later, Sydney took her to hospital, where she gave birth to Dorothy. Because Dorothy was premature, she was placed in an incubator, but a nurse decided to move the incubator and to do so unplugged it, thereby depriving the baby of oxygen. Dorothy died within 48 hours of birth.

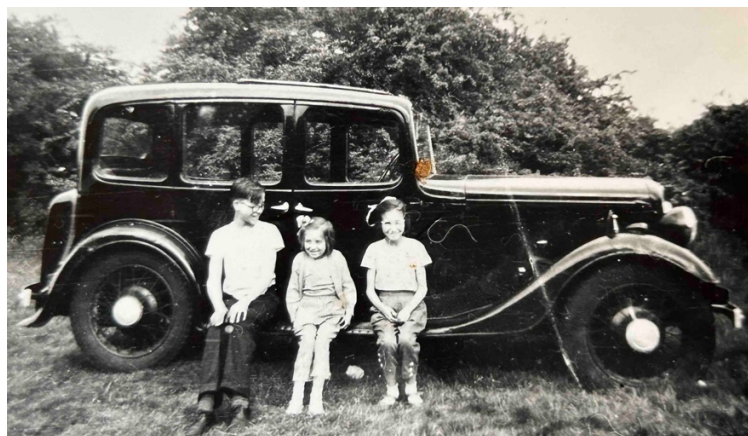
Peg and Sydney moved several times, always in the area around Bethnal Green. After 10 years in Cobden House, they moved to Hector House then, when the children reached



adulthood, they took a house with a small garden in Virginia Road. Peg continued to live in the area until her death from heart failure in 1996.



Above: Pat, as a young child, and at her wedding. Below: Les, Pam and Pat as children sitting on the running board of Sydney's car; decades later, Pam, her mother Peg, and sister Gillian



It is interesting to note that Peggy didn't reveal she had not married Sydney; this is illustrated on the birth certificate of their daughter, Pamela:

REGISTRATION DISTRICT										Bethnal Green
1951 BIRTH in the Sub-district of Bethnal Green North East										in the Metropolitan Borough of Bethnal Green
Columns:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
103	Eighth August 1951 16 Hector House	Pamela Edith May	Girl	Sydney Charles FARMER	Peggy Rosina Maud FARMER formerly HOWARD	C.P.O. Postman (Higher-Grade)	S.C. Farmer Father 6 Hector House, E.C.2.	Thirteenth August 1951	J. Russell	Registrar

For most of their adult lives, Nell and Peg lived close to each other. Indeed, when Peg landed in London she initially stayed with Nell and Nell's husband, Reginald. Initially, their respective children knew each other, and the families would come together at Nell's on Sunday evenings, where the parents would play cards while the children were left to play or doze. Late weekend nights began to disrupt Peg's children's school attendance, and so regular weekend meetings were curtailed. Nell and Peg, and their respective families, drifted apart. They would meet only occasionally, mainly at funerals and weddings. Still, at Nell's daughter Margaret's wedding in 1963, Pat and Pam were bridesmaids (Pat in blue and Pam in pink). Her father Leonard's funeral proved a turning point in the relationship. Sydney drove Peg and the three eldest children down to Pirbright in his rather ancient car – an Austin 6 or 12/6 from the 1930s. Driving through London, a hubcap fell off, and Les was told to retrieve it. Then the exhaust fell off, and the car had to be towed to a garage for repair. Once they got on their way again, the car suffered a puncture, and Les had to go to a nearby garage and ask for tools so he and Sydney could repair it. They arrived in Pirbright after Peg's father's funeral had ended. Nell immediately accused Peg of having no respect or concern for her parents. Tears flowed. Perhaps there were many reasons why Peg and Nell drifted apart, but a story seems to recur: Nell always asked for money. Indeed, one story has it that when Nell and Peg returned from the marriage of Ellen (the eldest daughter of their sister Dorothy (Dot) in Farnham), they were met at Waterloo station by Sydney. He drove them to Virginia Road; Nell then announced she had no money to get back to Dagenham, and asked Peg to pay. 'Dorothy', incidentally, is a Howard family name, and fate dealt a double blow when both Peg and Nell in 1960 gave birth to daughters who they named Dorothy, both of whom died. They both chose 'Dorothy', but entirely coincidentally, since relations between the sisters had ebbed away to nothing. Indeed, Nell dispatched her daughter Irene May to tell Peg when her Dorothy's funeral was, but Peg, having just lost her own Dorothy but not having had any sympathy from Nell, refused to attend.

I never knew Nell or Peg. My father, Wilfred Leonard ('Son', Bill, or Wilf; 1925–1996), the fourth child of Leonard and Clara Ellen, had long distanced himself from them. He would frequently tell my sister and me that his own father wasn't Leonard but the same father who had sired Millie (which would have been difficult, assuming Millie's father died in 1918, in the First World War). He would also tell us, scornfully, that Nell and Peg both had huge families, with 12 or more children each, although this was true only in respect to Nell. And yet, one of Nell's children, Billie, who had been born before she married Reginald, served as pageboy at



my father's wedding. My sister recalls that Nell once visited our home trailing two of her older children, but I have no memory of ever meeting her.

Leonard and Clara Ellen had three further children. These were Wilfred's, my father's, younger siblings, and he remained friendly with them, at least, most of the time: Kenneth John (Ken, Kenny; 1927–1999), Phyllis Joan (Joan; 1928–1950) and Dorothy Grace (Dot; 1935–2018). Ken, born on 14 January 1927, was the closest to my father. The two enlisted together at Euston on the same day in May 1943 – Wilfred had just turned 18, but Kenneth was underage, so did he pretend to be older than he was? Ken followed my father in taking work at the Vickers aircraft factory in Weybridge (later, Vickers-Armstrong and British Aerospace), and the two briefly went into business together as painters and decorators. Ken continued to work in that trade when my father moved to Guildford in 1951 to marry my mother, and by the time of his own marriage described himself as an engineer. Ken settled with June Eileen Rose Edmunds (1929–2006), a hair stylist, living in her parent's house at 113 Connaught Road, Brookwood, for many years before they married – indeed, June was a maid of honour for Ken's younger sister Dot's wedding in 1958, but Ken and June only married a full 10 years later, on 30 March 1968 at St John the Baptist, Woking. Paddy Dowling, husband of Clara Ellen's youngest sister (Sis) was one of the witnesses. Connaught Road was a stone's throw from the family home in Pirbright, and that was where Ken and June lived for the remainder of their lives. Ken is remembered for his love of soccer, although chronic asthma limited his playing ability, and a photograph survives of him with my father, playing for Pirbright Football Club in Frimley Green in Spring 1948.



Pirbright Football Club, Spring 1948. Ken is front right, crouching, Wilfred is in the back row, centre

Phyllis Joan, the next child, was born on 16 August 1928 and died when she was barely 21, from peritonitis. She was still living at home, and after leaving school had worked for the Guildford Co-Op, and then Brookwood Stores. She was engaged to be married when she died

to Robert H. H. Elwick, who lived next to Mary Bessie Oxford (née Howard) in Elm Cottage, Gibbs Acre. Her fiancé remained close to Phyllis's family after she was buried at St Michaels and All Angels on 22 March 1950. Although he would later marry someone else, he always kept her photo, giving it to his niece, Shirley Forster (née Elwick), before he died – this is the photo of her reproduced below. Since Phyllis died six years before I was born, I have only my father's take on how close he had been to her, but she was a member of dance and amateur dramatic teams around the village, and was clearly liked, as the notices of her death in the Surrey Advertiser, printed on 25 March and 1 April 1950, illustrate:

*Sy Ad 25 Mar 1950*

**HOWARD.**—Mr. and Mrs. L. Howard and Family and Mr. B. Ellwick wish to thank all friends and neighbours for letters of condolence and flowers sent in their sad bereavement.

*1st April 1950.*

**PIRBRIGHT**

**FUNERAL OF MISS PHYLLIS HOWARD**

A large number of people attended the funeral at Pirbright Church on Wednesday last week of Miss Phyllis Joan Howard, of 15, Council Cottages, West Heath, Pirbright, whose death was announced last week. The Rev. B. A. Whitehead, vicar, conducted the service. The mourners included Mr. and Mrs. L. Howard (parents), Mr. R. Ellwick (fiance), Messrs. Son, Ken and Billy Howard (brothers), Miss D. Howard, Mr. and Mrs. S. Farmer, Mrs. J. Stringer (sisters and brother-in-law), Mr. and Mrs. S. Howard, Miss L. North, Mrs. K. Doyle, Mr. and Mrs. P. Dowling, Mrs. W. Little, Mrs. A. North, Mr. and Mrs. A. Jackson, Messrs. F. and B. Howard, Mrs. A. North (Hazelmere), aunts and uncles; Miss N. Hedgecock (cousin), Mrs. C. C. Smith (god-mother), Mr. S. Faggetter, Mrs. H. N. Boylett and Miss N. Giles. Members of the staff of the Guildford Co-operative Society present were Miss Edna Pound, Mr. Keeble, Miss W. Norton, Miss J. Groves, Mrs. A. Davidson, Mrs. K. Stemp and Mrs. I. Still. Representatives from the ladies' section of the Pirbright Social Club, and many neighbours and friends also attended.

*Sy Ad 25 Mar 1950*

**PIRBRIGHT**

**DANCERS' SYMPATHY**

A message of sympathy was sent from those attending an old-time dance at Pirbright Village Hall on Saturday to Mr. W. Howard, a local member of the Federation of Old-Time Dance Clubs, on his recent bereavement. Mr. T. Gallagher was M.C. Local Cubs and Brownies benefited from the dance.

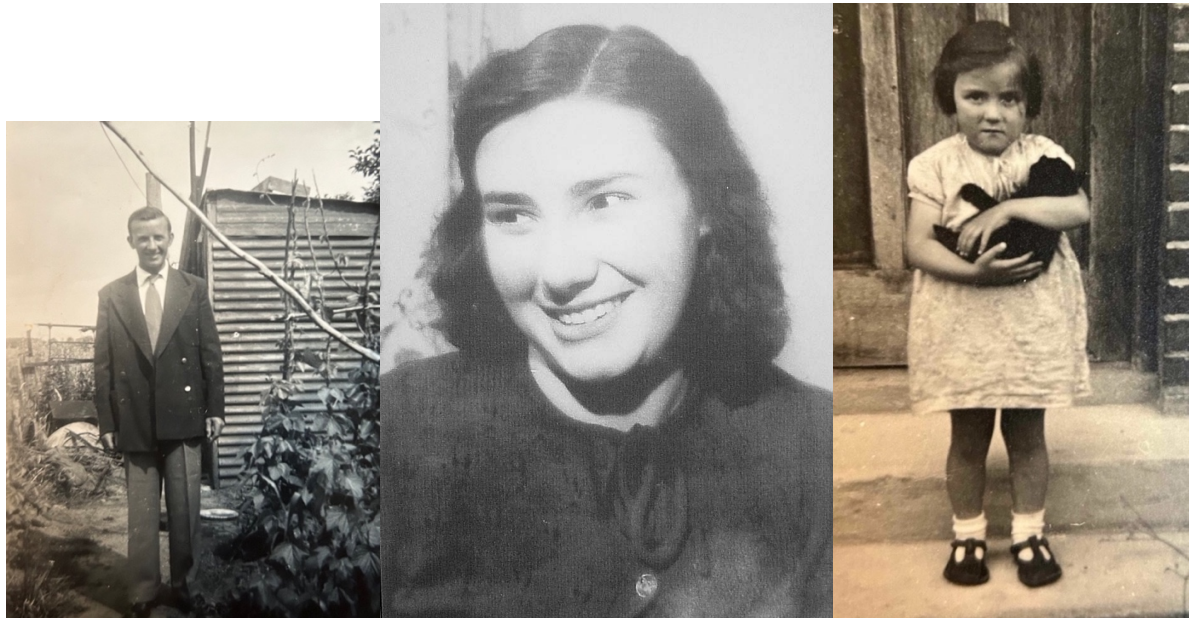
**DIED AGED 21**

At the age of 21 the death occurred in St. Luke's Hospital, Guildford, on Thursday last week of Miss Phyllis Joan Howard, of 15, Council Cottages, West Heath, Pirbright. She was ill for only ten days. Educated at Pirbright and Knaphill schools, she worked for some years in the grocery department of the Co-operative Society, Guildford, and more recently at the Brookwood General Stores. Miss Howard was a member of Pirbright Social Club and was engaged to be married to Mr. R. Ellwick, of Pirbright. The funeral took place on Wednesday at Pirbright.

The youngest sibling, Dot, moved out of the family house after Phyllis died, living in Farnham initially with her aunt, Isabel Kate. She married John Joseph Day (Johnny) in Farnham in early 1958. He was a labourer for a civil engineer, and on the registration they both gave their address as Dot's mother's sister Isobel Kate Doyle's (née North) – that is, 10 Factory Yard, Farnham – but moved into a flat near the St Joan of Arc Catholic Church (where they had married; to do so Dot became a Catholic) in Tilford Road. They then they settled at 54 Stoke



Hills, Farnham, where they brought up four children: Kieron (Ciarán; b.1958) who in 1985 married Linda Moon, Ellen (Eiléen; b.1959) who in 1979 married Steven Ashbolt, Noel (b.1964) also married, and Margaret Dorothy (b.1967) in 1988 married David Moon. After the children left home, Dot and Johnny moved back to his hometown – Athy, County Kildare, Eire – where they settled in 44 Dooley's Terrace. Long before then, back in 1962, the family hit the news when Kieron, four, and his sister Ellen, three, ate poisonous laburnum seeds and had to be rushed to hospital – the report in the local Farnham Herald, is reproduced below.



Kenneth (left), Phyllis Joan (centre), and Dorothy Grace (right)





Dot was the sibling who tried to keep close to all the others, and it is perhaps fitting that all six surviving siblings came together at the wedding of Dot and Johnny's eldest daughter, Ellen, held at the St Joan of Arch Catholic Church in 1979 – as shown in the first photograph below (L to R: Ken, Nell, Peg (Ellen and Steven), Dot, Millie, Wilfred). The photographs that follow show: (a) Ken at his wedding to June – the Howards are on the left of the picture; (b) the wedding of Dot and Johnny (Leonard, Dot's father, and my father Wilfred Leonard are to the right, and I am in my mother's arms); (c) Dot (right) with her sister Peg (left) and Peg's daughter Pat; (d) Kieron, at his wedding to Linda Moon, held in the same church where his parents married.







At this point, it is time to reiterate that when I started this research journey, I knew virtually none of what I have discovered in the previous pages. I knew little about two of my father's siblings, and nothing about the families of his parents – his aunts and uncles, my great aunts and great uncles – nor where his parents had grown up. Further back in time, his family was a total mystery, although he was proud to recall the link between Pirbright, where he had grown up, and Stanley. I guess if I had been more inquisitive, I might have talked more with his siblings that I did know – Millie, Ken, and Dot – and I might have discovered my other two aunts, Nell and Peg, and found out about how they had spent their lives. In 1979, when the six surviving siblings came together for the wedding of Dot's eldest daughter, I was living and working in Durham, far from Surrey, and could not be there. Perhaps, too, I have now discovered too much to interest others in the extended family: children born out of wedlock, aunts living with the father's of their children without marrying them. Then again, aren't such goings on much as one would expect among working class families, among labourers and domestic servants who struggled, like my great great great grandmother Elizabeth, to put food on the table?