



## Arthur Louis Buck

14447 Sergeant, 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Norfolk Regiment

He died of wounds on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1917 in France, aged 25

Arthur is buried at Longuenesse (St.Omer) Souvenir Cemetery, France

Arthur Louis Buck was the oldest son of a Hoxne born lad, Arthur Buck Snr who had gone to seek his fortune in London where he instead found a wife, Mary Anne nee Rodwell. Born in London she was actually a daughter of the sort of reverse diaspora whereby hordes of East Anglians poured into London in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. Mary was raised in Clerkenwell whilst her father William came from Hoxne and her mother from Brockdish. Clerkenwell is where Arthur Buck Snr and Mary Anne set up home; one of three households sharing a single dwelling in 1891 in Lever Street, Clerkenwell, the very young couple (aged 22 and 23) had married in early 1891 and had their first son, Arthur Louis, baptised in Islington in late 1892; his enlistment records give his place of birth as Hoxton in Middlesex. This little lad bore both his father's name, Arthur, and his paternal grandfather's name, Louis.

Louis/Lewis was to be honest a fairly unusual name for an agricultural labourer on the Suffolk Norfolk Borders in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. Louis was the son of Joseph and Lydia, all of them Hoxne born and both father and son were agricultural labourers; had Arthur Snr not headed for London, I suspect he too would have followed this time-honoured path. Whilst Louis was living with his parents in 1851, by 1861 this 17-year-old former agricultural labourer was one of 31, mostly teenaged, lads in the Thorndon All Saints Reformation School.

*The Suffolk Chronicle;*  
26 Mar 1859

**COMMITMENTS.—To the County Gaol and House of Correction, at Ipswich.—Convictions: John White, for non-payment of bastardy, at Stutton: 2 months' hard labour. Mary Ann Stevens, for stealing one gown, at Great Bealings; 3 months. Lewis Buck, for stealing a tobacco box, at Hoxne; 21 days' hard labour, and two years in the Reformatory School.**

In brief, Lewis stole a tobacco box and was given 21 days hard labour, most likely in the county jail,



and two years in the relatively new and progressive reformatory at Thorndon; judging by the dates of the sentence and the date of the trial he should have been just about coming to the end of his time when he appeared at the Reformatory in the census. Thorndon was more formally known as the Kerrison Reformatory School and had been founded in 1856.

There is a very good local history website describing the school in greater detail:

<https://thorndon.suffolk.cloud/history-of-thorndon-suffolk/kerrison-reformatory-school/> but in brief, Sir Edward Kerrison of Brome Hall, bought a dilapidated farmhouse and proceeded to set it up for a reformatory school, being cleared by the Prison Service to do so in March 1856, the first inmate crossing the threshold on March 31<sup>st</sup>. The inmates got up at 5.30, and then with a combination of instruction and working on the farm their feet did not touch the ground until they retired to bed – church twice on Sundays. A 1931 leaflet describing the restoration of Thorndon All Saints Church describes how

The box pews of unpainted deal were re-made and the gallery which was painted black and bore in gold lettering an inscription containing an account of Sir Edward Kerrison's connection with the Reformatory School, was taken down. In this gallery the Reformatory boys used to sit on Sunday muffled up in huge red comforters.



As well as the general mass of boys there was a renowned drum and fife band with a uniform of blue with red trim. This band evolved into a military style band and featured in the unveiling of Thornham's War Memorial; an event which led to a bit of a fracas as rival groups argued about their priority in the parade. The band was abandoned in the 1930s on the retirement of the bandmaster. Bizarre as it seems now, in WW1 some of the

boys were involved in munitions work whilst others were sent out as work gangs to neighbouring farms. In the 1920's uniforms were abandoned for the boys and they were issued with a suit to wear on Sundays. In 1933 the school's title was changed from Reformatory to Approved School, in 1973 Kerrison's became a Community Home and only finally closed in 1992.

A number of Lewis' peer group were sent abroad, some to Canada but perhaps also to America by the school to set up new lives, in Lewis' case this seems to have happened some little time after he

## SUFFOLK.

At the last BURY PETTY SESSIONS, *Lewis Buck*, of Hoxne, was charged with being a deserter from the West Suffolk Militia.—Isaac Barnard, a Militia sergeant, proved that the defendant was duly enlisted, but failed to appear at the training in 1863, 1864, and 1865; the usual notice was posted to him, and no certificate of incapacity was received from him.—Defendant admitted the charge, but said that the magistrates in the district where he resided had sent him away to America.—Adjutant Oakes stated that when defendant returned from America he went to the clergyman of his parish to ask for advice, as he wished to do what was right, and the clergyman wrote to him. Defendant had been in the Reformatory, and after he came out he could get no employ, and the magistrates sent him away, and told him they would get his discharge, but when he returned he found they had taken no notice of it. There would have been no difficulty in getting his discharge if it had been applied for. The Bench considered it a case in which the punishment might be reduced to a minimum, and therefore fined him 1s. only and 24s. 6d. expenses, or seven days' imprisonment. Time was allowed, in order that the defendant might pay it out of his bounty, as he was about to attend the present training.—*William Brooks*, butcher, of Ixworth, was sum-

'graduated' when he was in more trouble and it was the magistrates who sent him away although, like the proverbial bad penny he turned up back in Suffolk. We know this as when he was back in trouble again in 1866, for taking bounty money and not attending Militia training for the last three years, he gave the reasonable excuse that he had been sent to America by the magistrates!

*Norwich Mercury*  
12 May 1866

The slightly wayward lad was growing up and in 1867 he married Jane Aldous, also from Hoxne; their first son, Arthur Buck Snr was 2 in the 1871 census, and was to be followed by at least 7 more siblings.

*The Ipswich Journal*  
25 Oct 1884

I am afraid that Arthur Snr may have been a slight chip of the old block and, when he was 16, was done for stealing 3 tame rabbits from the hutches of a 14-year-old neighbour. He quickly got rid of the evidence, but not quickly enough as the rabbits' bodies were still warm when the policeman came visiting. I would imagine that these were fancy rabbits that Arthur had stolen with a mind to breed from them, rather than intending they went to the pot. His mother Jane pitched up in court to plead for leniency; as she rightly pointed out she had a large family. Arthur was the oldest and only one of the children earning money. On his third and final appearance in the magistrates court, for this one crime, a friend paid the 10s fine required to prevent him from going to prison for a month.

YOUNG FELONS.  
Arthur Buck (16), Hoxne, labourer, was charged by Albert F. Steward with stealing three tame rabbits, at Hoxne, on the 27th ult., value 1s. 6d.—The prosecutor said he was 14 years old, and lived with his mother at Hoxne. He had three young rabbits, all safe on the 27th September last, in the locker which was in a meadow adjoining the orchard. On the following Sunday morning they were gone, and he gave information to the police officer. On the following Tuesday he brought him three dead rabbits. They were the rabbits he lost, and the value of them was 1s. 6d.—P.C. George Westrope, Hoxne, said from information received he examined the locker on the prosecutor's mother's premises. On the 30th ult. he went to the defendant at his mother's house and found three rabbits there. Before going on to the premises he saw the defendant go into a shed, and followed him, and just before he (witness) got to the shed door he saw defendant put something behind some sacks and asked him if he had got any rabbits, and he replied, "I have only that one outside there." He asked defendant to let him look behind the sacks. He there found three rabbits—two dead, but quite warm, and one not quite dead. He asked him if he wished to account for having the rabbits in his possession, but he made no reply. He took the rabbits, and now produced the skins. He showed the rabbits to the prosecutor, and he identified them.—The defendant pleaded guilty.—The mother of the boy, who was present, pleaded hard for the Justices to deal leniently with the boy, saying she had a large family and he was the only one who could earn anything, and added that she and the boy had attended the Court twice before about the case.—The Bench let the boy off with a fine of 10s. and a severe caution, or a month's imprisonment.—The boy having no money a friend in Court paid it for him and he was discharged.

It may well be that it was not so much a case of Arthur being the oldest son and the only one capable of earning money as him literally being the only person in the house earning money; 7 years earlier when Jane had 5 children, the oldest of whom was 10 years old Arthur, Lewis Buck abandoned the family.

**STRADBROKE.**  
**PETTY SESSIONS.—THURSDAY.**

**HEAVY PUNISHMENT FOR DESERTING A WIFE.** — *Lewis Buck*, late labourer in the parish of Hoxne, appeared in custody, charged by Charles Webster, governor of Hoxne Union, with running away from Hoxne on May 17th last, and leaving Jane, his wife, and five children, chargeable to the common fund of Hoxne Union. Prisoner had managed to keep away from the police till Monday, the 24th inst., when he was found by Inspector Rumsby at Walkington County Asylum, in Yorkshire. He had passed as a single man under the name of Lewis Botwright, and was elected as attendant in the Walkington County Asylum established on the 11th July last. A sovereign which was found on the prisoner was taken to help to defray expenses.—He pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to three month's imprisonment with hard labour.

This was not a half-hearted effort, Lewis disappeared for 5 months, wound up in Yorkshire and, going under the name of Botwright, landed up with a job at the Walkington County Asylum. Lord knows how they caught up with him but he was hauled back, given three months hard labour and the sovereign found in his possession was confiscated to help defray expenses.

This seems to have been a final kicking up of the heels as I found no further wayward reports of this gentleman and in all the census returns, he was ensconced with his wife and quite the brood of children.

There was another Arthur Buck almost contemporary with the father of our hero, poddling around Hoxne in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, this other Arthur was 10 years older than Arthur Buck Snr and was the son of Benjamin Buck who in 1843 was awarded a sum of £1 for raising without parochial relief 7 children under the age of 12 - a slight contrast to Lewis!



Back to our Arthur Snr, sometime in the late 1880s he made his way to London, possibly inspired by tales from his sister Louisa who also appeared in London in the 1891 census. She was a general servant in a terrace of houses occupied by the aspiring lower middle classes in Willesden – all of whom had one general servant!

*21 Streatley Rd, Willesden. Doubtless there would originally have been cast iron railings at the front to match in with those over the bow window.*

10 years later and younger sister, Florence Buck was also in service in London, a rather grander house in Gloucester Place although as a kitchen maid she was well at the bottom of the pecking order!

*100 Gloucester Place, 4 stories plus the basement where Florence would have spent most of her time!*

Arthur Buck Snr and his wife Mary Ann nee Rodwell did not stay in London long, between Arthur Louis' baptism in London in 1892 and that of their second daughter and third child in Harleston in 1894, they had a short stint home in Suffolk, in time for the baptism of their second child – fast moving! In 1901, when Arthur Buck Snr was the foreman at Harleston Railway coal-yard (a responsible job in the days of steam-engines) the family were living in Duke William Lane with the three children aged 8, 7 and 6.



Bearing in mind the earlier exploits of his father and more particularly his grandfather, I hope

Arthur Louis did not get too much of a walloping when he was convicted of stealing 3 eggs as a young man. He was, at age 15, already out working as a bricklayers labourer; he must have been a fairly decent fellow as he was, essentially, let off with a warning.

Norfolk Chronicle  
11 Jul 1908

**HARLESTON.**  
On Friday, before Mr. J. Sarcroft Holmes (chairman) and Mr. Thomas Keppel, Arthur Louis Buck, of Harleston, bricklayer's labourer, a youth of 15, charged with stealing three hens eggs, value 3d., the property of James Patrick, of Harleston, on June 16th, pleaded guilty, and was bound over to be of good behaviour for six months—Charles Johnson, of Alburgh, maltster,

By the 1911 census the Buck family had moved slightly upmarket from Duke William Lane (Candlers Lane now) to a 7-room house on Station Road, with a final 'oops' child, 9 years old Gladys, added to the family. Arthur Jnr was then apprenticed to a bricklayer; his two younger sisters were learning the dressmaking trade. The family were still living on Station Road when their son, still just a Corporal made his will, leaving all to his parents.

13  
**WILL.**  
In the event of my death  
I give the whole of my  
property and effects to  
my Father & Mother  
Mr & Mrs A Buck  
Station Rd  
Harleston  
Norfolk  
England  
No 14447 Signed  
Capt A L Buck. A Coy  
9th Bn Norfolk Regt

As the only son and oldest child, I suspect Arthur, may have lorded it slightly over his three younger sisters. It may have been this confidence that led to Arthur Louis achieving the rank of Sgt. – one of the few of the Harleston recruits that managed this! Even more remarkable when one realises, he was only 24 when he Died of Wounds in 1917 at the 7<sup>th</sup> General Hospital St Omer. By the time the Cemeteries were being formally reconciled and laid out, the Bucks had moved to No 1 the Red Terrace, on the Needham side of the junction of Wilderness Lane and London Road. Rather touchingly they requested the lines 'Rest in Peace till we meet at Heaven's Gate.'

In later years Arthur Snr seems to have returned to his rural roots, running a few cows on land near the Common where he was living in 1932, complaining bitterly about the damage 'youths' were doing to his wall adjacent to the Common Close Footpath. Arthur Snr died in 1936 at the age of 68, hopefully to meet his only son at Heaven's Gate.