

Frederick John Poole



Lieutenant 55th Regt., Reconnaissance Corps, R.A.C.

Service Number 229263

Died on 25 February 1944 Age 25

Memorial in the Durnbach War Cemetery

Inscription Dearly beloved husband of Nora A E Poole 'We will remember them'

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2102836/FREDERICK%20JOHN%20POOLE/>

Frederick John Poole was the younger son of Frank and Clara Poole.

Frank Poole married Clara (nee Woodward) in 1906, registered in Nottingham in the December quarter of that year. On the 1911 census they are living at 8, Austin Street, Bulwell, Frank Poole aged 27 was a self-employed Master Butcher and Clara was assisting in the business. Presumably, they lived over the shop.

They had two children,

- Kathleen Mary aged 3, born 1908 registered in Nottingham RD in the March quarter
- Frank aged 1. Born 1909 registered in Nottingham RD in the September quarter

Frederick John was born in Bulwell on 30th December 1918, birth registered in Nottingham R.D.

Frank and Clara Poole moved to Gedling in 1923 being listed on Arnold Road (now Lane) on the Electoral Register They purchased Manor Farm, having earned the money from their butcher shop in Bulwell.



Manor Farm
Arnold Lane
Gedling.



Frederick is likely to have attended All Hallows School and later won a scholarship to and attended Henry Mellish School. (1929-1937) Whilst there he obtained the London School Certificate in 1935 and London Matriculation in 1935



Frederick then went to University attending the College of St Mark and St John (London) (London University) 1937 – 39, where in 1937 he obtained a pass in History in the London Higher Certificate and in 1939 the Teachers Certificate London University. Whilst there he also obtained a Diploma of Physical Education, from the Sydsvenska Institut, Lund, Sweden

On the 1939 register the Poole family are listed as living and farming at Manor Farm, Arnold Lane, Gedling

Frank Poole born 21/6/1883, Occupation Farmer General (heavy work)

Clara born 27/4/1882 Occupation Unpaid Domestic Duties (Housewife)

Kathleen M born 24/1/1908 Occupation Dressmaker

Their elder son Frank occupation General farmer, and his wife Christabel were living nearby in Manor Cottage, on Arnold Lane.

Frederick was working as a teacher in the London Borough of East Ham.

He joined the Territorial Army in 1939 enlisting on 26 April. He was described as height 5 ft 7¾ inches, weight 118 lbs girth 37 inches with a range of expansion 5

inches, fair complexion fair, green eyes dark hair and A1 fitness. He could also speak and write French and had a traveller's knowledge of Sweden and Denmark. Whilst in the Territorial army he attended an annual camp for 15 days during 1939.



Frederick 2nd
from the right
possibly at the
annual camp.

Courtesy
F Poole.

Following the outbreak of war he was called up for the regular army and enlisted at the London District Reception Depot of the 2nd Battalion London Irish Rifles, Royal Ulster Rifles on 26 December 1939.

On 10th June 1941 he was interviewed by the London District Interview Board and accepted as suitable for training at the Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU), and posted to this unit on 2nd October 1941 This was based in Lanark and trained men to become officers. It also trained officers for the Reconnaissance Corps (formed in January 1941), to provide a mobile spearhead for infantry divisions, unofficial motto 'Only the enemy in front'

Frederick had met Norah Alice Elizabeth Hobbs, also a teacher. In 1939 she was living with her parents at Gillingham in Kent, her occupation listed as a "certificated elementary school teacher". Frederick and Norah were married at Gillingham parish Church on 16th August 1941.

Frederick was awarded his commission as a Lieutenant on 20/3/1942 and was posted to the 55th Regt. Reconnaissance Corps.

Frederick's first posting was to Iraq on 22nd October 1942 but on 15 July 1943 his records say that he had 'embarked for an unknown destination' This was Sicily where he was to be captured behind enemy lines on 7th August 1943

Advancing up the east side of Sicily they ran into German defensive positions on the Catania Plain where the 5th and 51st Division were brought to a standstill (some documents from <https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/search> have Fred Poole in

the 5th Division At the beginning of August, 5th Recce were deployed holding part of the British Front Line. Reinforcements arrived and 5th. Recce was ready to follow the Germans, who were in retreat.

Thomas Heald Mitchell, who was in 56 Reconnaissance Corps. recalled that *"In the campaigns of North Africa, Sicily and Italy, the soldiers were always on the move and did not sleep in a bed or under shelter for months."*

It was probably during this part of the campaign that Frederick was injured and captured. He became a prisoner of the Germans who gave him medical attention and subsequently took him, by train, to a Prisoner of War Camp in Bavaria Germany

He was a POW in Oflag VIIB (Eichstatt, Germany)



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P01 308.002

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C206980>

EICHSTATT, GERMANY. VIEW OF GERMAN PRISONER OF WAR (POW) CAMP OFLAG VIIB, FROM THE COMMANDANT'S BUILDING AT THE WEST END OF THE CAMP, SHOWING PRISONERS PLAYING HOCKEY. IN THE FOREGROUND PRISONERS CUT AND CART WOOD NEAR CATTLE IN A FIELD. (DONOR K.T. JOHNSON)

The following appears on Frederick's military records and in the Army Casualty Lists '25/2/1944 'Previously reported wounded and Prisoner of War in German hands now reported Died'

At this time, there were air raids in the area including daytime raids. When the air raid warning siren sounded the POW's were ordered to run to their huts.

On 25th February there was a day time air raid, the siren sounded and the POW's were running to their huts. There was one guard, who had a habit of firing at random into the running men, he fired and one man was hit falling down screaming in pain.

Frederick turned back to help him and was shot, dying instantly. The man who was injured also died.

At the end of the war Frederick's remains were re-interred in the Durnbach War Cemetery. He is buried next to Alfred Harpur Duncan, the man he turned back to try to help.

For photographs and details of the this cemetery please see the website <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2171778/durnbach-war-cemetery>

This incident was the subject of a war crimes trial and I understand that the guard was sentenced to 6 years imprisonment. There is an enquiry report into the incident which is in the Imperial War Museum Archive. At the moment, probably due to the Covid emergency, there is a minimum of 25 weeks wait for copies.

After the war a Nottingham man A. C. G. Rothera, who had been in the same POW Camp visited Frederick's parents to tell them about Fred and what had happened and also to give them Fred's personal belongings.

Frederick's wife Nora was living in Gillingham, at the time of their marriage she was living on Shottenham Road, later she joined the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) and in 1950 was at the Queen's Camp Guildford.

Frederick was awarded the

- 1939-45 star
- Italy Star
- Defence medal
- War Medal 1939 - 45

The medals were sent to his wife Nora.

Nora made a career in the WRAC and also in Education, She remained in Contact with Fred's family and later married his cousin Wilfred Poole in 1976 registered in Newark RD in the March quarter. She died in 1983 registered in Nottingham RD in the March quarter.

Nora had written a book based on her early life, and marriage. Sadly, I have been unable to identify this or find a copy.

My thanks go to the Poole family especially Frederick Poole for supplying much of this information and the photograph of Frederick Poole.