

Able Seaman Leonard Gwynne Coslett

Leonard's grandfather was Isaac Coslett, born to George, a tin plate worker, and Rachel Coslett around 1819 in Panteague (now known as Panteg) a village one mile south-east of Pontypool.¹ There were extensive iron mines, collieries, and stone-quarries in the vicinity of the village. As a result, many of its inhabitants were employed at the iron furnaces and forges, and in the tin-plate mills that grew up there.

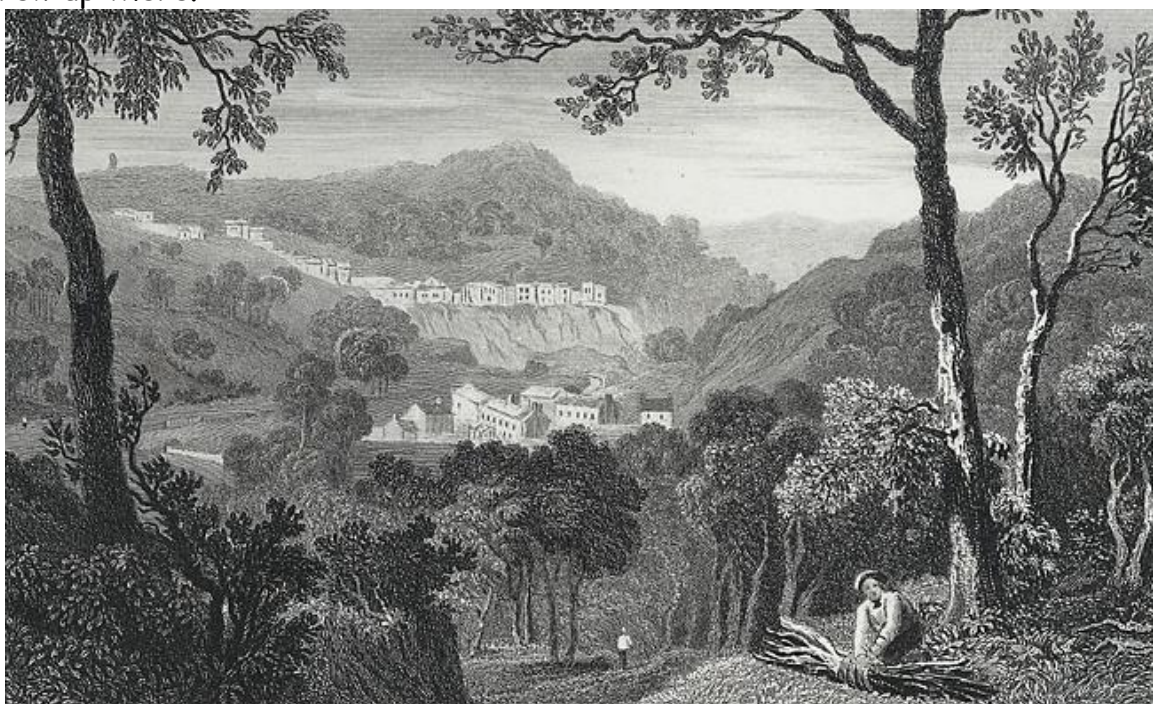


Figure 1: View near Pontypool, Monmouthshire, 1830



Figure 2: Painting by John H. 'Jock' Wilson 1774–1855 of St Nicholas Church, Newcastle upon Tyne, now a cathedral

Isaac followed his father into the plate industry but by 1851 had left home and found employment as a tin plate roller in Black Hill, situated on the outskirts of Consett, County Durham. Consett is approximately 12 miles from Newcastle upon Tyne and 14 miles from the City of Durham. He lodged with John Rees and his family, a fellow tin plate roller in Black Hill. Later in the year, on 15th November, Isaac married Rhoda Harris, at St Nicholas Church, Newcastle upon Tyne. While resident in Black Hill the first three of eight children, Clara, George and Edwin were born in 1853, 1854 and 1855 respectively. Soon after the birth of Edwin, Isaac returned to work at

Panteg, Pontypool, where a fourth child, William, was born in 1856. Isaac continued to work there for the next three years until he found work at the Tin Works in Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire (now an Industrial Museum), taken over by Jacob Chivers around 1858. Jacob's son Thomas also entered the business. Thomas' coming-of-age was celebrated in 1864, with a dinner, given by Jacob to 80 of his employees followed by sports in an adjoining field, an occasion which caused the reporter of the 'Llanely Guardian' to comment approvingly on the "great cordiality" which existed between Chivers and his men.ⁱⁱ

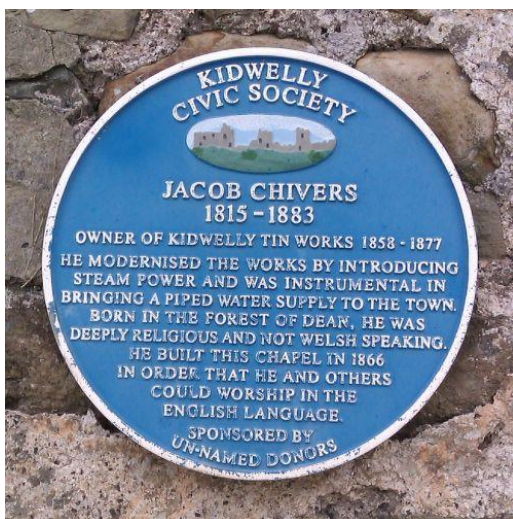
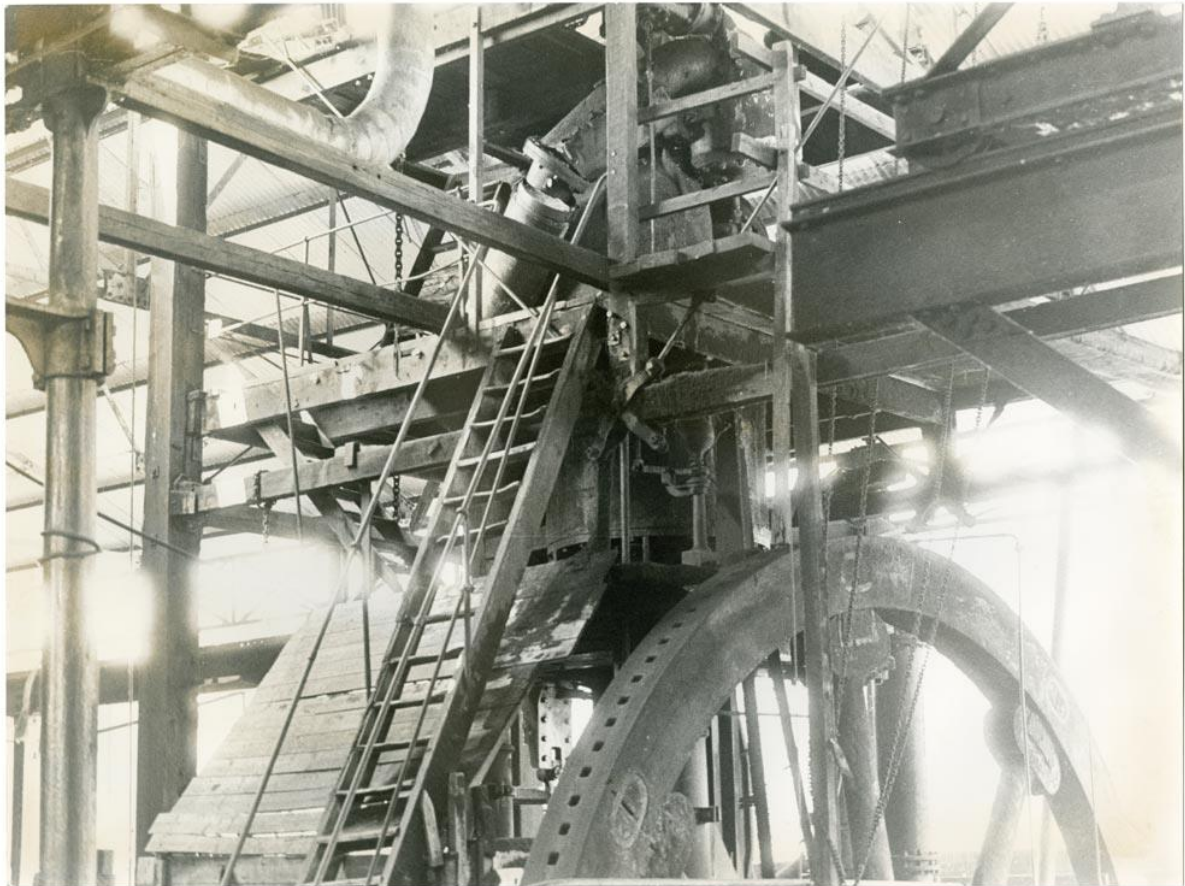


Figure 1: (Above) Kidwelly Tinplate Works, flywheel of the Foden Steam Engine which drove the hot roll machinery (Left) Blue plaque to Jacob Chivers

While resident at Kidwelly, two further children Rachel and Julia were born in 1859 and 1860 respectively.

Around 1861, Isaac left Kidwelly for Briton Ferry, Glamorganshire, most likely to take up work at the Ferry Tin Works located there.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Ferry Tin Works was established in 1860 as an independent works to Briton Ferry Iron works founded in 1846.^{iv} Isaac's experience as a tin plate roller would have been very welcomed at the new business.

The census for 1871 recorded Isaac as a roller of black plate (iron sheets before a coating was applied). Since the previous census the family had experienced several highs and lows with the birth of Maria in 1862 but the death of Julia in 1863, the birth of Allan in 1866 but his death and also Maria's the following year. Isaac and Catherine's final child, Lucius Allen Coslett was born in 1870. The family lived at 119 Neath Road, Briton Ferry.

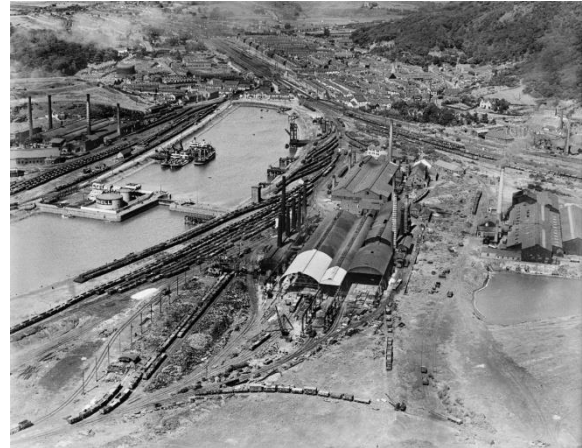


Figure 2: The docks, tin works and steel works at Briton ferry, Glamorganshire

In 1881, William, Isaac and Rhoda's fourth child, was recorded at Pontypool staying with his brother Edwin, at 41 Ritson Street, Briton Ferry. Edwin was a doubler and William, a sawyer at the local tin works. Two years later on 30th August 1883, William married Catherine Adeline Mabel Liddy at the small village of Dingestow, Monmouthshire.^v Catherine was the daughter of James Liddy. At the time of her birth on 16th August 1861 in Allahabad, Bengal, India, James was a Quarter Master Sergeant in Her Majesty's 90th Light Infantry.^{vi} While in India, James had married Annie Hayes on 26th February 1860 in Cawnpore, Bengal. James returned home with the Regiment in 1869.^{vii} By 1881, as a Chelsea Pensioner, James and Annie had settled a few doors down to William at 49 Ritson Street in Briton Ferry.

William and Catherine sailed to America after their marriage where their first child, Florence Myra (known as Myra), was born in Detroit in 1885. By 1888 they had returned to England where a second daughter, Lydia Mabel, was born in Pembroke Dock, Pembrokeshire that year. From there, the family moved to Worcester where William had secured work as an insurance agent. The 1891 census recorded their address as 4 Albert Terrace.

Work then took William to Nantwich, Cheshire, where, sadly in 1893, Lydia died, aged five. Happier times were to come with the birth of Leonard Gwynne Coslett on 10th August 1894 and Clifford Garfield Liddy Coslett on 13th October 1899.

The 1901 census recorded William and Catherine and family resident at 67 Trent Boulevard, Nottingham where their final child Cyril Vivian Coslett was born later that year, on 10th June.^{viii}



Figure 3 King Edward VI Camp Hill School, at its original site on the Stratford Road

Another move brought William and his family to Birmingham around 1907. Leonard was admitted to King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys in the Autumn term of that year as an elected scholar aged thirteen. The family address was 12 Church Road, Moseley. Leonard left school two years later on 22nd December 1909 and found employment initially as an office boy for a Loan Agent.^{ix}

C.H.B.		Name		COSLETT, LEONARD GWYNNE,		
Class	13 9 7. 5 ² 6 ²	Parent or Guardian	William Coslett,		Occupation	Insurance Agent
Address	12 Church Road, Moseley.					
Born	10 August 1894.		Admitted	July 1907.		
Elected Foundn. Scholar	.. K.E. ..					
Left	22 Dec ^r 1909 (Fin L.)		Date of Notice	—		
No of Agreement	2739.					

C.H.B.		53 57 56 60 66					
COSLETT, L. G.							
Year	Rct. No.	1st Term	Rct. No.	2nd Term	Rct. No.	3rd Term	Remarks, Remissions, &c.
1907					412	112.6	
1908	384	1 10.	399	1 10.	292	1 10.	
1909	384	1 10.	448	1 10.	1367	1 10.	

Figure 4: Leonard's School record for King Edward VI Camp Hill School

At the age of seventeen, Leonard signed up as Boy 2nd Class with the Royal Navy on 30th September 1911 and commenced training on HMS Ganges II (formerly HMS Minotaur).



Leonard's Naval Records noted that he was a cycle machinist, 5' 6" tall with blue eyes, auburn hair and a fresh complexion. In true naval tradition he sported a tattoo, a female in a sailor dress! On 13th December, Leonard was promoted to Boy 1st Class and transferred to *HMS Cressy*, an armoured cruiser. The following year, on 4th June 1912, he joined the ship's company on the pre-dreadnought battleship (London Class) *HMS Queen* where he completed his training.^x



On his eighteenth birthday on 10th August 1912, Leonard was promoted to Ordinary Seaman, No J 14039. He continued to serve on *HMS Queen* until 26th January 1913. After four days ashore at the naval base Pembroke I, Leonard joined the crew of *HMS Natal*, a Warrior-Class armoured cruiser, for a run at sea until 23rd September 1913.



When war was declared on 3rd August 1914, Leonard was based on shore. On 22nd November 1914 he was promoted to Able Seaman and joined the crew of *HMS Cornwallis*.



Figure 5
From top to bottom

HMS Ganges II
HMS Cressy
HMS Queen
HMS Natal

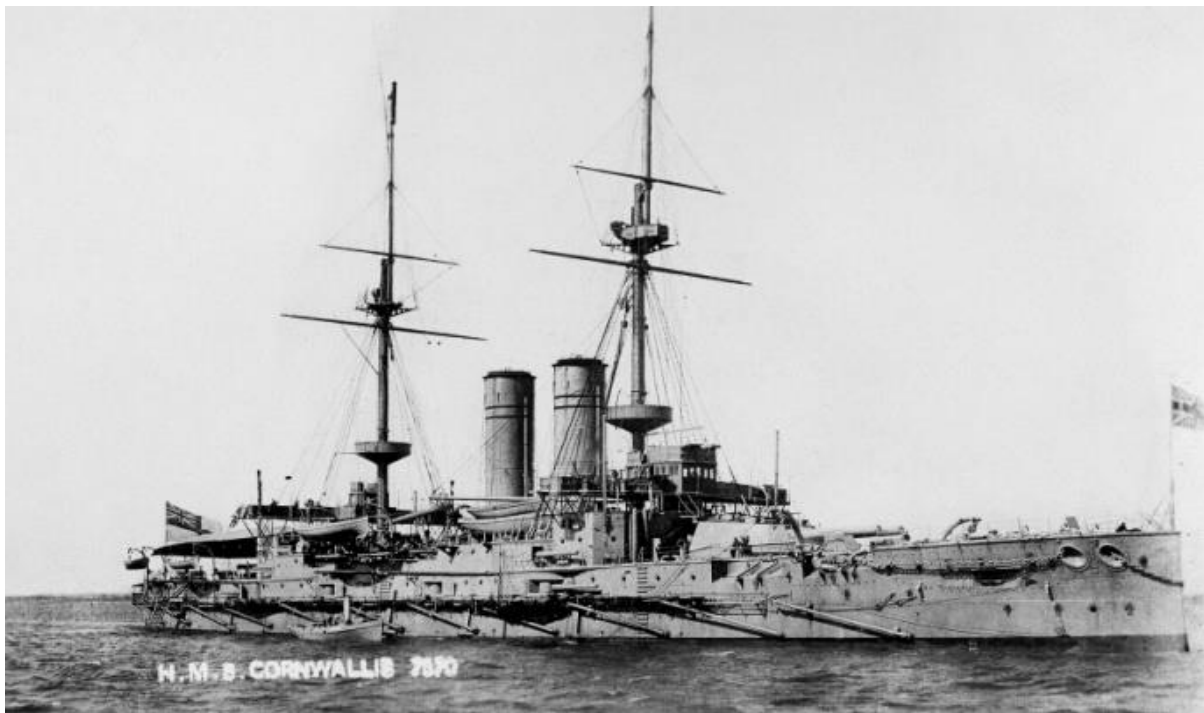


Figure 6: HMS Cornwallis

The Ottoman Empire declared war on Britain and France on 28th October 1914. The main support for action in the Dardanelles came from the British Admiralty under the First Lord, Winston Churchill, and various elements of the British and French governments. The campaign during 1915 used British, French and Australian warships and British, French, Australian, New Zealand and Indian troops. The aim was to take the Gallipoli Peninsula, penetrate the Dardanelles waterway and capture Constantinople, in an attempt to knock the Ottoman Turkish Empire out of the First World War and maintain a maritime route to Russia.

HMS Cornwallis, a Duncan-class pre-dreadnought battleship, was sent to the Mediterranean to take part in the campaign in January 1915. She fired the first shots of the attack towards Fort Orkanie, the first of the Ottoman coastal defences in the Dardanelles Straits at 9.15 am on 19th February 1915. Over the following two months, she participated in numerous attacks on the forts but failed to destroy them, leading to the decision that a major ground attack would be necessary to neutralise the defences.^{xi}

The landings were planned for 25th April. *HMS Cornwallis* steamed slowly from Tenedos, an island off the coast of Turkey, towards the Gallipoli Peninsula. There were ships on every side from battleships, destroyers, transports, store-ships, trawlers, mine sweepers, picket-boats, steam launches and the collier *River Clyde*. The *Cornwallis* anchored three quarters of a mile off the fort of Sedd-el-Bahr at Cape Helles.

The men from the *Cornwallis* were to cover the landing parties of three companies of 2nd South Wales Borderers (2 SWB) including a detachment of marines. The three companies transferred to three trawlers from the *Cornwallis*. Inside the Straits, they embarked in boats towed by the trawlers in lines of six each. When the trawlers could not go any closer in, the boats were cast off to pull themselves ashore and make for 'S' beach. Two sailors were allotted to each boat and acted as coxswains and bowmen for the soldier oarsmen. A few yards from the shore the soldiers were to jump into the water and wade ashore.

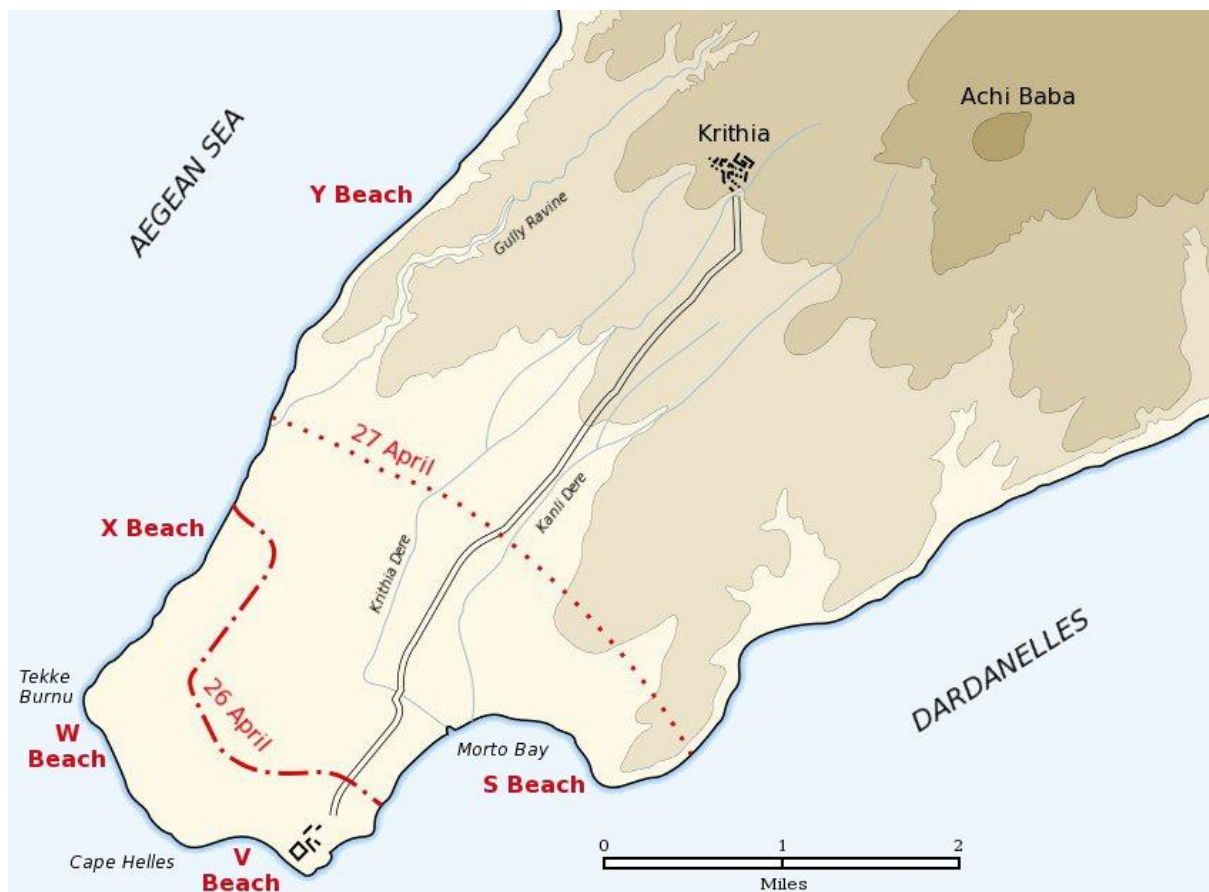


Figure 7
(Top) Map of Gallipoli
(Above) Map showing the landing beaches at Cape Helles on 25th April 1915

Captain Alexander Davidson on HMS *Cornwallis* was concerned about the small size of the landing force at 'S' Beach. As a result he augmented it with marines and sailors from his ship and also landed himself. The beach was taken with fourteen killed and 57 wounded from the 2nd South Wales Borderers. During the course of the action, sixteen men from HMS *Cornwallis* were also killed and forty-four wounded. Captain Davidson was supposed to move *Cornwallis* to 'V' Beach once 'S' was captured, but stayed longer in order to evacuate wounded and provide fire support.

One of those killed from the *Cornwallis* was Leonard. He was just twenty years old. He was buried at 'V' Beach Cemetery, Gallipoli. The exact location of his grave has been lost in the fog of war but he is commemorated at the cemetery on a memorial stone. Leonard is also commemorated on the WW1 memorial at Calvary Church of God in Christ, Oxford Road, Moseley (originally the Baptist Church) and is on the Roll of Honour at Birmingham's Hall of Memory and that of King Edward VI Camp Hill School.



Figure 8

(Top left) WW1 memorial at Calvary Church of God in Christ, Oxford Road

(Top right) WW1 memorial at St Mary's Church, Moseley

(Above) Leonard's name commemorated on the WW1 memorial at King Edward VI Camp Hill School

Leonard's younger brother, Clifford, also served. Seven months before his sixteenth birthday on 3rd March 1915, he joined the 16th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment where he served in France from 21st November 1915 before transferring to the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve (RNAS) as a Rating, No Z/10727 on 12th July 1917. Clifford's Naval Records noted him having a gunshot wound to his right shoulder and back. He was sent to *Victory VI*, a training establishment at Crystal Palace, London to train as a wireless telegraphist and from there to *President II* another RNAS base at Crystal Palace to await deployment. Clifford did not remain there long as on 31st March 1918 he transferred to the No 5 Cadet Wing RAF as a Flight Cadet, No 319288 and was posted to No 6 Squadron on 26th May 1918 where he remained until demobilisation on 25th July 1919 at Uxbridge. On leaving he was granted an Honorary Commission as a second Lieutenant.^{xii} He received the 1915 Star, Victory and British War medals.

In the spring of 1924 Clifford married Dorothy Muriel Arculus in Moseley. In the 1939 Register he was recorded as a 'Senior Tax Officer on the Board of Inland Revenue'. He lived at 141 Rykneld Road, Repton R.D., Derbyshire, with Dorothy. Later he lived at 32 Derby Road, Ashbourne He died on 15th September 1958, age fifty-eight at the local Cottage Hospital in Ashbourne.

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Endnotes

- i 1841 census
- ii Kidwelly Tin Works
<http://www.kidwellyhistory.co.uk/Industry/TinWorks.htm>
- iii Graces Guide
https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Briton_Ferry_Steel_Co
- iv Graces Guide
https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Briton_Ferry_Steel_Co
- v Monmouthshire Marriages And Banns
- vi British Armed Forces And Overseas Births And Baptisms
British India Office Births & Baptisms
- vii 90th Regiment of Foot
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/90th_Regiment_of_Foot_\(Perthshire_Volunteers\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/90th_Regiment_of_Foot_(Perthshire_Volunteers))
- viii 1939 Register records exact DOB
- ix King Edward's School , Edgbaston Road, Birmingham archives, archivist Alison Wheatley
- x The *Birmingham Daily Post* on 3rd May 1915 reported that Leonard had served on *HMS Cressy* after his training at *Ganges II* before joining the crew of *HMS Queen*. His Naval record does not record his service on *HMS Cressy*
- xi Stewart A. T. and Peshall, C. J. E. , 1917. *The Immortal Gamble and the Part Played in it by H.M.S. "Cornwallis"*. A & C Black, London. Republished by the Naval and Military Press Ltd. Uxfield. Pp 71 – 96, 265
- xii UK, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Service Records Index 1903-1922
UK, WWI Pension Ledgers and Index Cards, 1914-1923
UK, Royal Air Force Airmen Records, 1918-1940
British Army Medal Roll Index

Illustrations

- Figure 1 View of Pontypool, 1830
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontypool>
- Figure 2 St Nicholas Church, Newcastle upon Tyne by John H. 'Jock' Wilson 1774–1855
bequeathed by Miss M. J. Dobson, 1905, on loan to Northern Rock

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/st-nicholas-church-newcastle-upon-tyne-36954>

- Figure 3 Kidwelly Tin Works
<https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/33275>
Blue plaque to Jacob Chivers
<http://www.blueplaqueplaces.co.uk/blue-plaque-12587-in-kidwelly-12587#.XN108lJKjcs>
- Figure 4 Crown Copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. Aerofilms collection, Catalogue No C879348, File No45721
- Figure 5 From the King Edward School, Edgbaston Road, Birmingham archives. Archivist Alison Wheatley
- Figure 6 See Figure 5
- Figure 7 *HMS Ganges II*,
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Ganges_\(shore_establishment\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Ganges_(shore_establishment))
HMS Cressy
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Cressy_\(1899\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Cressy_(1899))
HMS Queen
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Queen_\(1902\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Queen_(1902))
HMS Natal
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Natal
- Figure 8 *HMS Cornwallis*
<https://www.pinterest.de/pin/496733033888085456/?lp=true>
- Figure 9 Gallipoli Map
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallipoli_campaign#/media/File:Cape_Helles_landing_map.jpg
<http://theconversation.com/a-century-on-gallipoli-campaign-should-be-more-than-just-a-symbol-of-futility-53084>
- Figure 10 WW1 memorial at Calvary Church of God in Christ, Oxford Road, photograph by Edwina Rees
King Edward VI Camp Hill WW1
memorial<https://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/223944/>