



Frank Cecil Gardiner

200159 Corporal, 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment

He was killed in action on 28th March 1918 in France, aged 22

Frank is commemorated at the Pozieres Memorial, Pozieres, Picardie, France



The Gardiners were a fairly prolific and, within the region, by the standards of the times, slightly footloose family who made a bit of a pattern of marrying wives with slightly unusual surnames, helpful to track people down!

Our tale starts out in Dickleburgh where way back in 1841 we find Frank's great-grandfather, 40 years old John Gardiner, although to be fair he was born just a few miles down the road in Scole whilst John's wife, Maria Prime came from Shelton, not far by modern standards! The couple married in nearby Diss in 1827, neither John nor his wife able to sign their names. By 1841 the Gardiners already had 7 children aged a few months to 13, one born every other year for the duration of their marriage, a production rate they kept up for at least the next 7 years, having added four more children by the 1851 census, James Snr, grandfather of Frank, being the youngest but one!

We do have a brief description of the Gardiner's home in 1855 when the estate of Mrs Aldis, deceased was being sold up.

Lot 2. A substantial stone, brick, and tiled COTTAGE, in three tenements, with gardens, and the residue of the said piece of pasture land at the back thereof, pleasantly situate near the street and fronting the said public road to Harleston, now or late in the several occupations of William Barber, John Gardiner, the said John Garland, and —.

Grandfather James Gardiner Snr took up the trade of Milling; there was a well-established Mill in Dickleburgh. I am afraid to say that in 1866, he got into a spot of bother for poaching out in Billington, resulting in 14 days hard labour. He also had to find sureties for his good behaviour for the next 12 months. Mind you only 3 years previously his father, John, had been done for being drunk and riotous, I presume one stage up from drunk and disorderly!

was fined 1s., and costs 4s.—James Gardiner, of Dickleburgh, miller, charged by John Bartram, of Billington, farmer, with poaching by night upon his farm, on the 14th inst., was committed for 14 days' hard labour, and to find sureties for twelve months.

Norfolk Chronicle
1 Dec 1866

Three years later it was time to settle down and Frank's paternal grandfather James Gardiner Snr, married a Rosa(nna) nee Talbot from neighbouring Thelverton; Talbot is not a name you find often in this area. Actually, Rose may have been raised in Thelverton but in fact her father Elijah Talbot was actually born in Diss. And the truth be told his parents, William and Mary Talbot, both came from different parts of Norfolk and their other children had also been born in various parts of Norfolk too. In 1851, when Elijah Talbot and his wife Emily nee Rudd from Shimpling were happily ensconced in Thelverton, near to Thelverton Hall, his parents, and their three youngest children, again from various parts of Norfolk, were all living next door, to the young couple whilst a fifth sibling, Laura Talbot, was working at the big house. Thelverton was what was known as a closed Parish which meant that nearly all the land in the parish was owned by Thelverton Hall, who were doubtless the employers of the various Talbots in their various occupations. Descendants of the family continued working for Thelverton Hall for some years to come.

I think Rose's grandfather William Talbot must have been working on one of the home farms and doing reasonably well; in 1851 he was violently attacked and a silver watch and 18s stolen from him. The perpetrator, William Smith, a young man of 22, was transported for seven years for this crime. Talbot was 61 at the time and having treated Smith and his companion Robert Boulter to ale in a pub in Harleston (when presumably they saw he had more money) he set off home between eleven and twelve. Fair old trek I would have thought but maybe he was hoping to hitch a ride on a cart. The two younger men set off with him, part of the way home he was knocked down and robbed, Smith the taller of the two, kicking him as he lay on the ground. Boulter shouted to Smith not to kill the old man, Smith swore and said he would. Boulter nobly ran away at this point and I suspect Smith having got his prize and with no audience seems to have desisted, For his part Boulter (who admitted helping spend part of the money) was given 6 months; his colleague in this cowardly crime was sent to the colonies.

Rose's father Elijah Talbot worked hard, by 1881 he had become, not just a labourer but a Bailiff at Blackthorn Farm, just outside of Diss, a post he was to hold for at least another 10 years. His daughter Harriet operated a dress making business from his premises.

DRESSMAKING.—Ladies requiring DRESS-MAKING, waited upon at their own homes, either by the day or week.—Apply H. Talbot, Blackthorn Farm, Diss.

Diss Express
25 Nov 1887

So, Frank's grandmother Rose was born in Thelverton, to parents from Diss and Shimpling and was raised next door to grandparents, aunts and uncles, all born in various other parts of Norfolk.

1862. Marriage solemnized *at the Parish Church* in the *Parish* of *Dickleburgh* in the County of *Norfolk*.

| 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. |
|-----|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 194 | <i>October 1st</i> | <i>James Gardner Rosa Talbot</i> | <i>fulwage 19</i> | <i>Bachelor Spinster</i> | <i>Miller ---</i> | <i>Dickleburgh Dickleburgh</i> | <i>John Gardner Elijah Talbot</i> | <i>Labourer Labourer</i> |

Married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Evangelical Church after Banns* by me, *George South ing Esq*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *James Gardner* } in the Presence of us, *Estuar Barrett*
Rosa Talbot } *Maria Thonchen*

When comparing Rosa Talbot's marriage certificate with that of her parents it is interesting that in 1869, both bride and groom could clearly write their name, in 1847, Rosa's mother could, poorly write her name, her aunt, father Elijah's sister Louise, could do the same but neither her father nor her husband could write at all. In agricultural areas it was more difficult to promote schooling for lads who could be sent out to earn money. A situation that continued into the 20th Century.

1847. Marriage solemnized *at the Church* in the *Parish* of *Thelveton* in the County of *Norfolk*.

| 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. |
|-----|------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 11 | <i>Nov. 16th</i> | <i>Elijah Talbot Emily Rudd</i> | <i>22 20</i> | <i>Bachelor Spinster</i> | <i>Labourer.</i> | <i>Thelveton Thelveton</i> | <i>William Talbot William Rudd</i> | <i>Labourer Labourer</i> |

Married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Church of England* by me, *R C Maul Curate*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *Elijah Talbot - his mark* } in the Presence of us, *William Rudd + his mark*
Emily Talbot } *Louise Talbot*

James Gardiner, father and son, may have both been Dickleburgh born but, sometime between 1881 and 1891, the family had upped sticks from their home by the Ipswich Rd and moved to the Halfway cottages – halfway between Needham and Harleston. There, or more or less there, they stayed for at least the next 10 years. Due to a court case from 1891, we know that in 1891, at least, James Gardiner Snr was working for William Button at the Weybread mill. The Button family had a mill at Dickleburgh from at least the 1870's so I suspect that when they took over the Weybread Mill in 1887, they put in James Gardiner Snr, one of their tried and tested employees from Dickleburgh. James Snr and Rose Gardiner nee Talbot carried on quietly and steadily raising their family on the outskirts of Harleston, James Jnr chose not to follow his father in the milling trade but instead he trained as a carpenter.

When it was James Jnr's time to marry, he fell for a young lady by the name of Laura Thaine, born in Lowestoft but living in Beccles in 1881 with her mother a 36 years old widow Emma Thaine. Thaine is a very unusual name in this country, deriving from the Scandinavian rank of Thane and focussed largely in Norfolk (lots of Viking Activity!). In 1881 widowed Emma Thaine was working as a char woman to support her 6 children aged between 16 and 8, including Laura, then 11. There had been seven children, but the youngest daughter Catherine, had not survived. The oldest daughter was then working at the printers, 10 years later two of the children, including Laura, had flown the nest; with all four children left at home now working (three at the printers, one as a dressmaker) Emma was no longer having to work and could instead focus on caring for her working children. All the children, Laura included, gave their birthplaces as Lowestoft, but the mother was Starston born. Checking the baptism records it transpires that their father was Charles a coach painter. This in turn led to the marriage entry showing that Charles Thaine and Emma Keeley had married in 1864, when they were only 20, out in Lowestoft. Charles father, Samuel, was a shipwright and Emma's father (James Keeley) a labourer .

| 18 <u>64</u> Marriage solemnized at <u>the Parish Church</u> in the Parish of <u>Lowestoft</u> in the County of <u>Suffolk</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. |
| 272 | May 19th | Charles Thaine Emma Keeley | 20 20 | Bachelor Spinster | Coach Painter | Lowestoft Lowestoft | Samuel Thaine James Keeley | Shipwright Labourer |
| Married in the <u>Parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by <u>W. Hankman</u> or after <u>W. Hankman</u> by me | | | | | | | | |
| This Marriage was solemnized between us, | | <u>Charles Thaine</u> <u>Emma Keeley</u> | | in the Presence of us, | | <u>William Thaine</u> <u>Edna Thaine</u> | | |

And we do indeed find Emma Keeley, one of the middle of at least 8 children (in 1851) of James and Harriet Keeley out in Starston. I was interested to see that in 1847, when an Eliza Keeley was baptised in Starston, the cleric noted that 'Caley' was an alternative rendition of the name. By 1861, Emma Keeley was working in service in Lowestoft, housemaid to a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons no less, whilst the 1871 census reveals Charles to have also been Norfolk born, in Reedham. Tracking back, it transpires his parents came from Gorleston, whilst various of his siblings had been born in Reedham and Gorleston but also in Yarmouth. However, by 1851, boat builder Samuel and his family were up by the Old Market in Lowestoft.

One of Charles slightly older brothers, Robert, his senior by 6 years got himself into some trouble in the late 1850's. At this time, Sundays were the only full day off work and, once church attendance was got out of the way, young men in particular were determined to make the most of their time of freedom. Unfortunately, the landowners in and around Lowestoft were being so plagued by the depredations of lads hunting for bird eggs and causing damage to fences with general high spirits that they posted men to watch out for offenders on Sundays. One of three 'big boys' caught so doing was Robert Thaine. Despite his protestations he had caused no damage, just going through holes in the hedge that already existed, it did not help that one of the magistrates had been particularly prey to similar intrusion. Not able to pay the 10s fine he was sent to Beccles for 10 days with hard labour.

Charles Thaine, brother of Robert, husband of Emma and father of various little Thaines including Laura, died aged only 35 in 1878, by which time the family were already in the Beccles area and when Emma's youngest child would have been just 5, or less if young Catherine was still alive at that point.

So, Frank's mother (Laura Thain) was born in Lowestoft to a father from Reedham, with Gorleston roots and a mother from Starston, whilst she herself was largely raised in Beccles!

By 1901, Carpenter James Gardiner, born in Dickleburgh but largely raised at the Halfway cottages between Needham and Harleston, and his Lowestoft born but Beccles raised wife Laura nee Thaine were raising their young family on the Harleston Common: - Frank Cecil aged 3 and his 3 sisters, all of whom had been born in Harleston. Was this the James Gardiner who was suspended from the Harleston Oddfellows in 1890 for 3 months for working whilst in receipt of Sick pay? Tricky to say and probably unlikely; there were a lot of James Gardiners in and around the area at the time and a fairly fit young man like Frank's father would not be likely to try and swing the lead!



To the centre of this snap is the double cottage, demolished and replaced just after the Second World War in which Gardiners had been living.

Note the covered well in the foreground.¹

The young family were living in the left-hand side of a double cottage that was demolished and replaced by a more modern building just after the second world war. Miss Olive Puttock,

former mid-wife, who lived in her family home on the common for most of her very long life remembered Gardiners living in this house during the interwar period. Whilst they were unlikely to be James Jnr, the Gardiners then living there may well have been siblings of James Jnr or even his parents.

Presumably in search of work James Jnr and family moved away from Harleston, winding up in Wickam Hall, Bishop's Stortford – this ancient house and farm employed James Jnr for his carpentry skills. By 1911 Frank had followed in his father's footsteps, and they were both estate carpenters. Maybe it was in this house full of servants from all over the country that Frank met the Darlington lass, Mabel nee Jones, whom he married only 6 months before he died in the carnage of WW1.



The Jones sisters in 1960, from a family collection. Mabel Woodcock formerly Gardiner nee Jones is to the far left. All the ladies have lovely smiles.

17 years after the death of her young husband, Mabel Gardiner married John Woodcock in Darlington in 1935

The following piece is from a posting made by AA Midcalf, who married the

daughter of the son Frank never met but was named James (III) after his paternal grandfather and great grandfather.

<http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/thosewhoserved/g-gw.php?pagenum=3>

Frank Gardiner was my wife's grandfather who never got to see his son. He was the son of James and Laura Gardiner of Wickham Hall, Bishops Stortford, and Herts. husband of Mabel Gardiner, of 20, Holmwood Grove, Harrowgate Hill, Darlington.

He served with the 2nd Bn., Bedfordshire Regiment and was killed age 22 on 28 March 1918, remembered with honour on the Pozieres Memorial, Commemorated in perpetuity by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

My records show that Frank was born in Harleston, Norfolk but lived in Middleton St George in Durham when he enlisted, which he did from Bedford. He still had his Territorial Army number when he fell, which tells me he was not in the 2nd Btn for long. That seems to fit in with his marriage too; so Mabel was only married 6 months before becoming a widow.....

When he went abroad into the 2nd Btn he spent a week from 21st March 1918 until his death in a horrific battle. On the opening day of battle, they were in the 2nd lines behind a Btn of Manchesters who were wiped out ... but only retired when it transpired the Germans were behind them and on both open flanks ... They spent a week fighting hard, constantly retiring at the last .., then turning round again and stopping the attacking Germans in their tracks before repeating the retirement. Their battle started near St Quentin and after 4 days .., they found themselves many miles further back... with their lines straddling the Biverchy Bridge, as the remnants of the British Fifth Army passed through them.

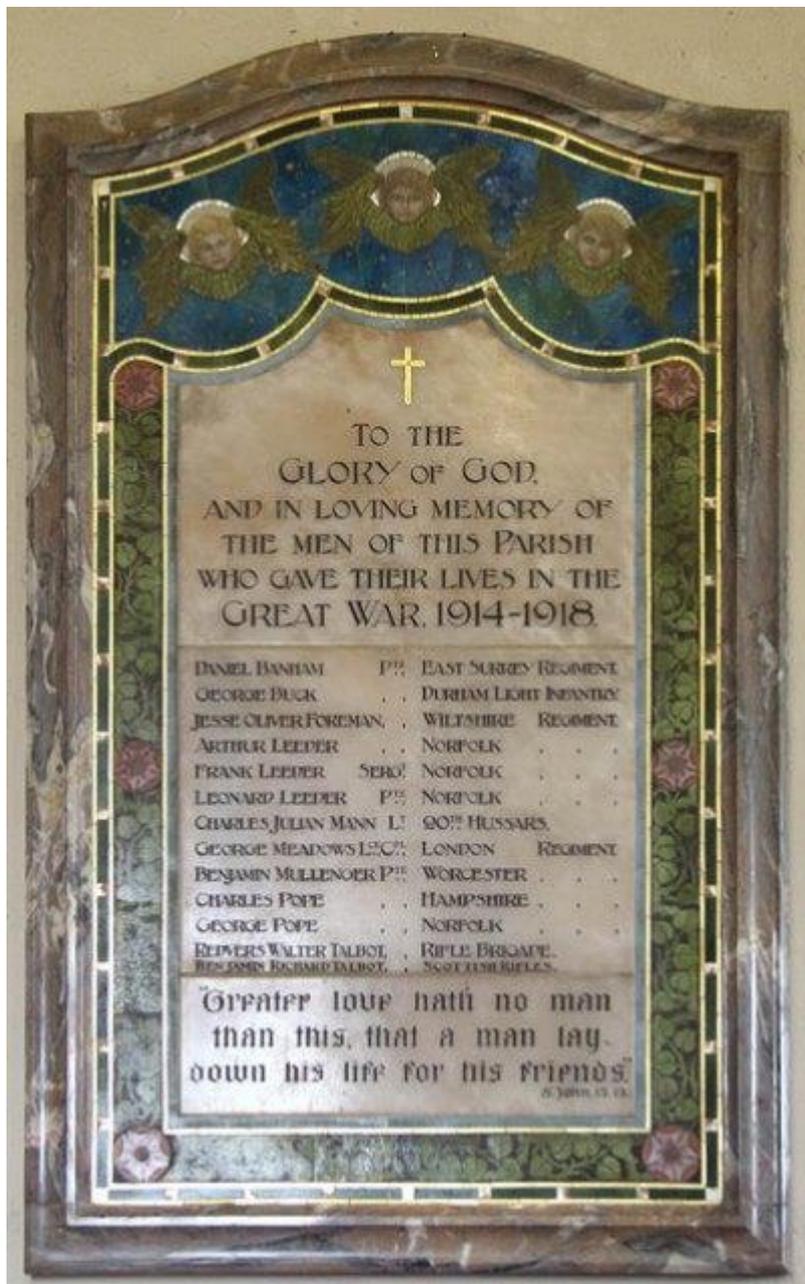
By the morning of the 25th March the Germans massed for another attack on the opposite side of the Canal du Nord.... Despite their best attempts... the Germans could not break... the British defenders, many... continuous fighting since the 21st. However,.. at 6pm, the Battalion were ordered to withdraw once again.

By route marches and bus rides, the Bedfords were transported some 25km due west to Arvillers, where they billeted for the night – the first night they had spent under cover since the 20th. Following Gough's famous order that the "Fifth Army must hold at all costs", they did just ... The Bedford's spent the 26th and 27th holding the enemy back around Le Quesnoy .., as the remnants of the Fifth Army stood fast. The Third Army to the north and French Army to the south fell back some six miles,.. The 26th was quiet... night patrols were sent towards the German lines.The front line listened to German artillery rolling into and through the village all night. The following morning saw the artillery open up along their frontage and several infantry assaults were brought to a bloody halt before they came close to the British lines. Noon on the 27th saw the Germans...forcing them to withdraw... and once they had dug into their new positions they laid low. .. heavy shelling which further reduced the size of the battalion, ..

.. French relief did not happen and no food or rations were brought up,.. settled down for what turned out to be a quiet night ... The following morning (the 28th) saw ... another determined attack that took the Germans to within 100 yards of their positions ... 2.30pm, they were ordered to withdraw under heavy Machine Gun and shell fire, 9km along the Amiens road to Mezieres, where they were finally fed. From this point, the 2nd Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment were moved into reserve.

Due to the efforts of the husband of Frank Gardiner's granddaughter, the daughter of Frank's son James III who was unborn at the time of his father's death, we now know much of Frank Gardiner's final months and how he and his family had left Harleston in the years before the first World War. One small query about the information above; Frank Gardiner enlisted in Bedford, but gave his home address as Durham. For a young wife, pregnant and far from home when her husband went off to war, it would be normal for her to return to her family and I think this is exactly what Mable Gardiner nee Jones did and where all correspondence would have been sent. Before the final fatal engagement, Frank Gardiner had previously been injured severely enough to be returned home for treatment and convalescence – we know this as he was awarded a wound stripe.

As a brief side note, Rose Talbot's younger brother Charles Talbot who went on to become the Parish Clerk at Thelverton and worked for the estate into the 20th Century, had a very late born son appropriately named Benjamin. Pte. Benjamin Richard Talbot, born 1883 was one of the older enlisted from the Mile End Rd where he appeared as a married brewer's drayman in 1911.



He married Dickleburgh born lass Susannah Saunders in 1908, in London. Having started in the Royal Scots Fusiliers I suspect his age told against him, 31 at the start of the war; by the time of his death he was in the Labour Corps. He died on 20th February 1918, also in Flanders and is one of 8 related Talbots from Thelverton who served in WW1, Redvers Walton Talbot, also on the Thelverton memorial, buried at Scole, died of pneumonia aged 18 on the 6th November 1918.