



## Sydney John Hewitt

29264 Private, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment

He was killed in action in Flanders on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1917, aged 23

Sydney is buried at the Bedford House Cemetery, West Vlaanderen, Belgium

Ernest and Frederick were two of the five sons of John James and Amelia Hewitt, there was a solitary daughter in the family too. The father, John James had been born into a farming family, only medium scale but back in 1871, when John James was 9 months old, his father had 116 acres in Gissing and was employing 3 men and 2 boys along with a live in dairy maid to process the milk from his cows. They were doing well enough to also employ a nursemaid, whilst a third employee, a Farm Servant, was also living-in. Hewitt Snr continued to thrive, 10 years later he had added another 80 or so acres to his holdings and 10 years after that John James had struck out on his own and was working as a Farm Steward out in Winfarthing. He must have paid close attention to his father as this was a responsible job for a 20 years old lad who would have been expected to supervise men two or three times his age!

A young man in a hurry, in early 1894 John James married Amelia Frances Legrys, born in Tivetshall but living in Dickleburgh in 1881. Amelia was from a similar background to John James, whilst in 1881 her father only had 19 acres, 10 years earlier at the relatively young age of 54, he was farming 138 acres. The old boy kept going though; in 1891, when 74, he still claimed to be a farmer, but I suspect mostly in tandem with his oldest son, also a farmer, living next door to him!

They family appear in the 1901 census out in Flixton, not far from The Buck, next door to one of the Flixton Park Lodges. John James Hewitt was a Farm Bailiff, to the Flixton Estate and it seems Amelia may have had a side business going, or alternatively 'The Tea House' may just have been the name of the house they were living in? While the oldest of their four lads, Sydney, had been born in his father's home village of Gissing, the other three lads, Lister, Ernest and Ralph, claimed Homersfield birth, which at that time seems to have included the Flixton Estate!

Hewitt, although described as a steady fellow who had never been seen drunk, was a bit of speed merchant and at twilight one evening in 1905, this bailiff to Sir Frederick Adair, even though he had put his lamps on, managed to drive into another pony and trap just by the Magpie, Harleston. Although the other driver was distracted by the fact he was, essentially, giving a test drive to a prospect purchaser of his pony and had not got his own lamps on, the fact that Hewitt was belting along at 10 to 12 miles per hour meant he was required to pay half of the damages to the other chap's trap!

In 1909 Hewitt had the honour of being one of the 8 bearers of old Lady Harriet Adair's coffin when she was buried at Flixton Church.

In 1911, John James Hewitt again gives his profession as Farm Bailiff, on this occasion confirming that he was indeed employed on the estate and being based on the Home Farm one of the most

important on the estate. Ida and Allen had been added to the family, a second daughter Kathleen Agnes had died in infancy in 1905 and their mother, Amelia, had died only the previous year, aged 44. The estate was looking after the family well, the second son, Ernest, (Gardener, Improver) was boarding with the head gardener on the Flixton Estate, whilst oldest son, Sidney was still at home but employed by the estate as a junior clerk. A widow (probably a rather ancient 68, not the 60 she was claiming) had been imported from Amelia's home village of Tivetshall (where she had been married to the blacksmith) to look after the children.

So, other than the death of Amelia, the family was set up for a comfortable future but then the father, John James himself died in early 1914, before war had been declared. The family, even though the youngest child was only 10, would have become homeless since their home was tied to their father's job. George Godbold took over the Stewardship of Flixton Home Farm, one of his sons, Sapper Horace George died in March 1917. Unusually he was buried

at Flixton, on enquiry this proved to be due to his dying of pneumonia, presumably he had either contracted the illness whilst at home or had been sent back to England to recover.

It was most likely after this that the family moved to Harleston, or at least those old enough to support themselves. Their removal from Flixton is reflected in the fact that although their father was one of those who carried Lady Adair's coffin to its final resting place, neither of the boys is recorded on Flixton Church's roll of honour.

This thought is re-inforced by the fact that just before Christmas in 1916, Pte Ernest Frank Hewitt made a will out in favour of his older brother Sidney who whose then home address was Station Road, Harleston.

Ernest died out in Palestine, 4 months after he wrote his will, 3 months after that Sidney was also dead but in Flanders.

At the eve of the war, the family was doing well, maybe even prospering in a small way with the two older boys in employment, the father with the prime agricultural job on the Flixton Estate, running the home farm, and the mother possibly supplementing their income with a small enterprise of a Tea Room.

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**INFORMAL WILL.**

W.O. No. 1 E/418696/1

DOMICILE, *English*

Record No. ~~227/515-927~~ 17/8

" " 296/515-927 17/8

The enclosed document dated 21-12-16.

Name *Ernest Frank Hewitt*

and signed *Ernest F. Hewitt*

Regtl. No. and Rank *200596 Private (3033)*

appears to have been written or executed by the person

Regt. *1/4<sup>th</sup> Bn Norfolk Regiment*

named in the margin while he was "in actual military service" within the meaning

Died at *2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Stationary Hospital Tel Aviv, Egypt wounds received in action*

of the Wills Act, 1837, and has been recognised by the

Date of Death *24<sup>th</sup> April 1917*

War Department as constituting a valid will.

**WAR OFFICE.**

*J. E. Godson*

for the Assistant Financial Secretary.

Date *25.3.17*

H. 101006.

By the time the war was over, both parents had long been dead, neither surviving to see the outbreak of war. Two of the three oldest boys were dead with Lister, the one between, having moved to Bungay by the time the memorial was put up. He eventually died in Norwich

Young Ralph Gordon Hewitt wound up a long way from home, dying in Durham in 1974, most likely after marrying in Tynemouth in 1922 whilst the only daughter of the family, Ida Kathleen, seems to have married a Mr Marlow in Loughborough, and lived on to the grand old age of 90, dying in Luton

The baby of the family, Allen Percy, who was only 6 when his mother died and 10 when his father died, stayed local, dying in Norwich at the age of 60.