



Herbert Waller Saunders

41953 Private, 1st Battalion Essex Regiment

He died in France on 2nd August 1917, aged just 19

Herbert was buried at Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France.

Albert Edward Saunders married Charlotte Waller Jnr in late 1891, very shortly before the birth of their first son, James Edward Saunders – pretty much par for the course in rural communities at the time and something that crops up time and again in the biographies of the other men commemorated on the Harleston and Wortwell war memorial! There is a 7-year gap between this first child and the second child, Herbert, who appears on the census, and the parents do claim in 1911 that they only had three children, all of whom were still living. If they had not so claimed, I would have suspected that their second child was the Charlotte Saunders born about 18 months after James. This child died in Infancy as did a possible third then fourth child, Florence then Wilfred in 1895 and 1898 respectively.

What we do know for certain is that Herbert Waller Saunders (bearing his mother's maiden name as his middle name) and little Lottie, also named after her mother, followed in rapid succession to each other in 1897 and 1890, after which there were no more children added to this family. Unlike his Redenhall born mother and siblings, Herbert Waller had been born across the river in Suffolk, Stradbroke to be precise.

Herbert Waller's arrival into this world was marked by a bit of a tragedy, Betsey Frost, wife of Ambrose and former neighbours from the Bungay Road, was acting as nurse to Lottie. In the inquest Ambrose gave evidence that his wife had died whilst he had been 'working away' for three weeks in Ipswich.¹ Ambrose's wife, Betsey Frost was nursing Albert's wife Lottie, who would have either been in labour with, or recovering from the delivery of baby Herbert. Although Betsey had a history of breathlessness due to a diseased heart, she arrived at the Saunders in apparent good health but four days later a scream from Lottie alerted her husband who rushed in to his bedroom to find Betsey had apparently fainted, landing on her knees by the bed. The Doctor was sent for from Fressingfeild (although these are Harleston families, the Saunders were in Stradbroke at this time) and at a quarter past three the Doctor arrived to find Betsey barely alive, her heart just fluttering. Betsey died shortly after, leaving Ambrose, a rambunctious drinker with six children to rear.

Herbert's mother, Charlotte Waller Jnr, named after her own mother, had been raised as part of a larg(ish) family living out on the Bungay Road, near the Factory. Her parents, James and Charlotte Waller Snr had started married life in this neck of the woods way back in 1851, an area also knee deep with Whiskins, a Waller having married into the Wiskens family back in the early 19th Century. Also along the Bungay Road in 1851, was Jacob Waller Snr, one of James' brothers, another, William Waller Snr, was in place by 1861! James named his second child, oldest son and big brother

¹ Norfolk News 9th June 1900

to Charlotte, after Jacob Snr and this Jacob Jnr stayed close by his parents producing a large family, including young William Waller Jnr who like his cousin, Herbert Waller also died in the war, but a few years earlier in 1915.

Jacob Waller Jnr was one of a group of men sent to court following the Harleston Riots, check out Horace Webb's biography for more detail, but in essence:- the town took a strenuous dislike to an incomer, made and burn effiiges of his family, 500 to 600 persons attacked his house, set fire to tar barrels in the street outside and bashed a desperately outnumbered policeman on the head – his headgear protected him. All got sentenced to several months hard labour, Jonathn Webb, Horace Webb's uncle, got extra time for being one of those who physically attacked P.C.Tuddenham. I rather suspect that Jacob Jnr, a young man at the time, got swept away the enthusiasm of his much more wayward neighbours, the Webbs, as the Wallers, like the Saunders, seem to have spent their time in Harleston quietly getting on with their lives, the men enjoyed the odd pint in the pub but stayed out of courts and at the other end of the spectrum avoided engagement in church, civic and organised social activities.

James Waller was a labourer and his children, siblings to Charlotte and Jacob jnr, followed the trades one might expect of such a man. Charlotte's husband Albert came from a very similar background although his family was slightly smaller, and they lived out on the Starston /Hardwick borders.

In 1901, Albert Saunders had the slightly more specialised role of 'horseman' and his widowed father had joined the household by the Factory Cottages where wife Charlotte Waller had been raised and where her parents were still living. There continued to be a small enclave of Wallers on the Bungay Road, including Jacob Waller's expansive family although they had moved to Lush Bush by 1911 by which time Albert and Charlotte had moved their home to Low Road Wortwell. Lottie Snr completed the census form, at the time of her childhood literacy rates amongst girls tended to be slightly higher than for their brothers, presumably less likely to be hauled off to earn extra money on the land!

I say that Jacob Jnr had an expansive family, in 1911 they were able to claim that they had not only managed to produce 14 children, but that every one of those children were still living – impressive but 4 years later one of their younger sons, William Alfred Waller, cousin to Herbert Waller Saunders, was to die out in Gallipoli. Another of Jacob's sons, Charles Richard Waller, 42766 was wounded in mid-1918 when enlisted in the Lincolnshire Regiment. Slightly less heroically yet another, of Jacob's sons, James, was done for poaching in 1928!

It was the size of Jacob Jnr's family that led to tragedy in 1907, one of his sons was due to return to the family home, space was tight and it was decided that it was time Grandpa (Jacob's wife's father) trot off to the workhouse to free up space. Such was the fear that the old boy had of this establishment that he chose, instead to hang himself in the loft of his son in law's house. He had been determined to finish the job off as he had carefully locked the access door from the inside before hanging himself from a cord attached to a spar.

THE LATE MR. J. WALLER.
The funeral took place at St. Mary's Church, Redenhall, on Tuesday, of the late Mr. Jacob Waller, aged 81 years, of Lush Bush, Redenhall Road, Harleston, who passed away after a short illness on Friday. He was born and had resided in the parish all his life, and for a large number of years he was employed on the Gawdy Hall estate. He was one of the oldest members of the Harleston Rational Society.
The service was conducted by the Rev. W. P. Tippen, and the family mourners were Mr. and Mrs. Bindley, Mr. James Waller, Mr. Fitt, Mrs. Barber, Mrs. S. Reeve, Miss Waller, Mrs. Sadd, Mr. and Mrs. Staff, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Waller, Mrs. A. Buckingham, Mrs. C. Jolly, Mr. and Mrs. A. Saunders, Mr. F. Leaper, Mr. W. Brown and Miss Buckingham.
There were several floral tributes.

Jacob himself lived to a ripe old age, dying in 1933, at the age of 81 when it was revealed he had worked for the Gawdy Hall estate for many years and was one of the oldest members of the Harleston rational Society – and with all those children I suspect he had got his money's worth!

The Saunders sole remaining child, Lottie Jnr, married Herbert J Hudson in 1924 and I am delighted to say that she looked after her father in his final years.

Mr. A. E. Saunders

The funeral took place at St. Mary's Church, Redenhall, on Saturday, of Mr. Albert Edward Saunders, who died at the home of his daughter at Homersfield at the age of 82 years. The Rector of Redenhall with Harleston, Canon B. M. Pickering, officiated.

The family mourners were: Mr. and Mrs. J. Hudson, Mr. B. Hudson, Miss Hammond, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Hudson and Mrs. Bryant, sen.

Others present included Mr. R. J. Smith, Mrs. W. Brown, jun., Mrs. H. Reeve, the Misses Palmer, Mrs. Reynolds, Mrs. G. Short and Mr. J. J. Davey.