



John Alfred Flegg

20491 Private, 1st Battalion Essex Regiment, formerly 16639 Norfolk Regiment

He was killed in action on 6th August 1915 at Gallipoli, aged 27

John is buried at Twelve Tree Copse Cemetery, Canakkale, Turkey



First things first, John Alfred Flegg was known by friends and family as 'Alfred'! It was almost de rigueur to name your oldest son after his father, it was then almost as common to then call him by his middle name to avoid confusion – avoiding confusion for the family perhaps, adding to it for the researcher! John Flegg Snr was born down in Suffolk, in his father's home town of Theberton, I first found him as a 17-year-old in 1881 when he appeared at the Cherry Tree in Debenham where his father (James) was the land lord. It was bizarrely difficult to track him down before this so, choosing instead to pursue his parents, it transpired he had been mis-entered into the 1871 census as 'Edward'. The 1871 census reveals two things, an older brother and the fact that John

HARLESTON.

PETTY SESSION—FRIDAY.

(Present—J. Sancroft Holmes, Esq., and A. Taylor, Esq.)

Charles Seaman, of Needham, dealer, and George Oakley, of the same place, fishmonger, were charged by Emma Flegg, wife of James Flegg, Bell Inn, Wortwell, with using obscene language on the Highway at Wortwell on the 1st inst. Complainant gave evidence that on the day named the defendants called at the Bell Inn, and in consequence of their condition she refused to serve them with drink. When outside the house they used the bad language. The defendants were each fined 5s. and costs.

Snr's father, James Flegg, had been a gamekeeper before he had been a pub landlord! James stayed in the pub trade, taking over the Bell at Wortwell in 1883, combining the job of publican with that of being a grocer, until he finally retired in 1908, dying two years later in 1910 aged 70.

Norwich Mercury 30 Sep 1891

STRANGE GAME TRESPASS CASE, DENTON FARMER FINED.

At the Harleston Petty Sessions on Friday, before Mr. J. Sancroft Holmes (chairman), the Rev. S. Fellows, and Mr. John Pipe,

William Crickmore, Bungay, drover; James Flegg, Wortwell, innkeeper; David Draper, Beck Row, Mil-denhall, grocer and draper; Samuel Nursey, Bungay, leather cutter; and William Whitland, Bungay, tailor, were charged with a trespass on 19th October on land occupied by John Draper, at Denton, in pursuit of conies, and the said John Draper was charged with aiding and abetting the offence. Mr. Reeve (Mills & Reeve, Norwich) appeared for the prosecution; and Mr. Chittock (Norwich) for the defence.

Mr. Reeve, in his opening statement, said that the defendant, John Draper, was the agricultural tenant of land at Denton, over which Colonel Kerrieh of Denton Lodge had the sporting rights. Under the Ground Game Act the defendant Draper could only kill ground game on his farm by himself and other persons authorised in writing, and he could only

James was, slightly surprisingly, fined 12s 6d for poaching in 1898. I say surprisingly as he was in the company of a bunch of other respectable men of mature years! As it transpired, the men had been invited by a tenant farmer to shoot rabbits on his land, unfortunately the rabbit shooting rights belonged to the landlord, Colonel Kerrich, the estate gamekeeper challenged the men, they objected – all wound up in court!

Meanwhile John Flegg Snr, father of the John Alfred Flegg who was to die in the dirt and heat of Gallipoli in 1915 was carving out his own life. Doubtless when his father moved from the Cherry Tree in Debenham to the Wortwell Bell, John came along with his father as he appeared, in 1891, a fair way down the High Road in Wortwell with his wife

of 5 years, Augusta nee Scotchmer. Augusta had brought an illegitimate 2-year-old son, William, into the marriage.

Once again, I would like to emphasise how rife illegitimacy was in the Victorian rural working classes, it was only in the interwar period, up to the late 1960's, that the rural community became prudishly judgemental.

Augusta's own father John Scotchmer had a slightly irregular private life. In 1861 this widower was living in Mendham with 2 of his children, a 'housekeeper', Lydia Page and 5 of her children including a 10-month-old baby. Beware of confusing this John Scotchmer, shoemaker, with the John Scotchmer busily breeding his own family at the Red Lion in Mendham!

Lydia Page had married Charles Page in 1844, unfortunately a chap of that name died in 1848, another in 1849. Let us be charitable and assume that her husband was the one that died in 1849 which, going back 10 years from the census above, would have rendered the 10 month old baby that appeared with Lydia in 1851, within the bounds of being legitimate. Lydia nee Hazel was then living in her parent's house as a Pauper. Definitely the same person, but this does rather beg the question as to where the four children, all under the age of 10, named Page and appearing in John Scotchmer's household in 1861, had come from!

The 'housekeeper' status reflects a fairly standard situation at the time whereby a widower would take in a widow with both children of her own, and a keenness for a protector, to look after himself and his children. One thing often led to another and guess what – John Scotchmer, rather belatedly as it transpired, married his housekeeper, Lydia Page in 1862.

This was not the first Scotchmer/Page liason in Mendham, way back in 1804, Joseph Scotchmer had married Eliza Page, they appear in 1851 with their Mendham born grandson John Jnr, aged 3 months. This John Jnr re-appeared in John Scotchmer and Lydia Page's 1861 household; he was John Snr's son. It appears John Snr had set up home with some sort of a relative of his mother's. A tangled web indeed!

All the evidence points to John Scotchmer and Lydia Page having become widowed at more or less the same time, although Lydia was about a decade younger than John. Their marriage in 1862 added a retrospective seal of respectability, one can only wonder why it took the two so long to get around to tying the knot! In 1871 two of Lydia's younger 'Page' children from 1861 had become Scotchmers whilst an older son of Lydia and Charles Page, who popped up in the 1871 household, remained a 'Page' but seemed happily mixed in with the rest of the family which

included the legitimate Augusta and Arthur. Lydia died in 1878 leaving shoemaker John yet again widowed; by 1881 he had just his two youngest children, Augusta and Arthur living with him in Wortwell, Arthur learning the shoemaking trade from his father.

In 1884, young Arthur along with two other Wortwell lads, wound up in the Bungay Petty Sessions due to having damaged the Rifle Butts at Homersfield – the Local Volunteer Sgt withdraw the case so long as the boys paid the costs. Arthur came to a tragic and premature end in 1900, during the winter floods which had covered large amounts of the low-lying meadows around the Waveney. One Sunday afternoon, about 3pm, he decided to retrieve his boat from Homersfield Mill, by rowing it up to Wortwell. Rowing strongly upstream, he hit a submerged obstacle, holed his boat and in desperation struck out strongly for the banks. Although a good swimmer his heavy clothing overwhelmed him and in full view of two lads he was swept away and drowned, leaving a widow and young family. Rather unpleasantly, it took some time for the body to be found in spite of the river having been dragged repeatedly since the accident without any result. Two local men, James Skinner and William Strutt, possibly using their local knowledge

Made another effort and the body was found in a deep hole in the river nearly embedded in the mud. The body, although having been in the water for nearly three weeks was not in an advanced stage of decomposition.¹

After Augusta and John Flegg Snr married in 1886, they fairly rapidly added Arthur, Alfred and Albert into the family, 3 children in four years! It is this lad, known as Alfred, who was the John Alfred Flegg who we are remembering in this piece. By 1901 John Flegg Snr was working for the Gawdy Hall estate as a gamekeeper, following the trade his father had pursued back before he became a publican. Living in a tied cottage, North Lodge, John Snr and Lydia now had 5 more children, and Augusta's son William was still in the household, working as a gardener, possibly also for the Gawdy Estate. The 1911 census reveals that John and Lydia were claiming 26 years of marriage and that all 9 of their children were still living, they had finally, in 1904, produced a daughter – the only one amongst 8 brothers! In 1911, John Alfred, appearing for the first time

under the name 'John' was a bricklayer's labourer whilst younger brother, Harry, had become an under gamekeeper, working with his father. Ironic bearing in mind his grandfather's court appearance for shooting bunnies a few years previously.

Diss Express

11 Feb 1949

In 1937 a J. Flegg, (probably James) employee of the Gawdy Estate, was one of 6 men chosen to carry the coffin of Edith Sancroft Holmes into Redenhall Church. She was carried on a bier she had previously donated to the church on the proviso she be the first to be carried on it. A marked contrast to Alfred Flegg's military grave out in Turkey, following his death at Gallipoli. Flegg's grave bears the sentiment 'Their Glory shall not be blotted out.'

LATE MRS. A. FLEGG.

A marriage partnership of over sixty-two years has been broken by the death of Mrs. Flegg who was 84, was native of Mendham, and during her long married life had resided at Redenhall, where her husband was for many years employed on the Gawdy Hall Estate, and later at Wortwell.

The funeral service at St. Mary's Church, Kedenhall, on Saturday was conducted by the Rector (Canon B. M. Pickering) and Mrs. Bryant was the organist for the hymns "Abide with me" and "Jesu lover of my soul."

The family mourners were, the widow, Mr. and Mrs. E. Flegg, Mr. and Mrs. S. Flegg, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Flegg, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Flegg, Mr. and Mrs. Jas. Flegg, Mr. and Mrs. Thos. Flegg, Mr. Malcolm Scotchmer, Mr. John Scotchmer, Miss Maud Flegg, Mr. and Mrs. J. Woodrow, Mr. H. Woodrow, and Mrs. F. Hanner.

Owing to illness Miss M. Flegg, daughter; and Mr. W. Scotchmer were unable to attend.

Others present included Mrs. Elliott, Flixton; Mrs. Stocks, Mrs. J. Flatt, Mr. D. Lawes, Mr. J. Alexander, Mr. J. J. Davey, Mrs. C. Barrett, Mr. P. Gower, and Mrs. J. Murton.

¹ Eastern Daily Press 10 Mar 1900