



Robert Sadler

30093 Private, 1st/7th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Formerly 2906, 1st/4th Battalion Norfolk Regiment

He was killed in action on 27th August 1917 in Flanders, aged 21

Robert is commemorated at Tyne Cot Memorial, West Flanders, Belgium

Robert Sadler was the oldest of the 9 children his parents, Daniel and Alice Elizabeth nee Royal, had produced in the first 15 years of their marriage. They had married in Daniels' home village of Hardley and spent the first 7 years of their marriage there until drifting their way to Alburgh via Somerleyton and Redenhall. Daniel was essentially a farm worker, his wife, the daughter of a farm worker had before her marriage, slightly unfeasibly, landed the job of cook and general servant in a

THE HARDLEY SUICIDE.

The man, George Sadler, who attempted suicide by cutting his throat with a razor at Hardley, near Loddon, on Wednesday week, as previously reported in our columns, died on the following evening from the effects of the wounds which he had inflicted. The deceased man was attended by both Mr. Rodwell and Mr. Prior, surgeons, of Loddon, who, from the first, were of opinion that his case was hopeless. An inquest was held upon the body on Saturday by Mr. W. Marriott, Deputy-Coroner. Superintendent Eagling was present on behalf of the police. Mr. James Crisp was chosen foreman of the jury. After the jury had viewed the body, Julia Sadler, a daughter of the deceased, was called. She stated that her father was 64 years of age. On Wednesday last shortly after twelve o'clock at noon he came indoors and went upstairs to change his clothes. As he was gone an unusually long time she told her mother to go to the stairs and call. She did so, but got no answer. Witness was afraid that something was wrong, and went upstairs directly. She there found her father lying on the floor by the bedside; she at once saw that he had cut his throat, and the razor which he used was lying by his side. She called her brother, and together they got him on to the bed. They tied a handkerchief round the wounds in his throat and sent for a doctor. She asked him what he had done it for, and the only reply he made was "Let me alone, I am dying." Dr. Rodwell arrived in about an hour and dressed the wounds, and next morning both he and Dr. Prior came together. Deceased gradually sank, and expired at seven o'clock on Thursday evening. In reply to the Coroner, witness said her father had been in failing health for the past two or three years. Dr. Prior attended him last about a month since. He was then suffering from nervous debility. He was greatly depressed at times chiefly on account of his ill-health, and losses which he had sustained in business had also preyed upon his mind. They had no suspicion that he had any intention of taking his life. Daniel Sadler, a son of the deceased, gave corroborative evidence. He had noticed that his father had been in a very desponding frame of mind for the past two or three years. The Coroner, addressing the jury, remarked that from the evidence they had heard it was clear that deceased, in consequence of ill-health and business losses, had been in a very despondent frame of mind. There was no doubt that he had died from wounds self inflicted, and he thought they would say that when he committed the act he was in an unsound state of mind. The jury at once concurred, and a verdict was returned

girl's boarding school in Yarmouth. She was only 21 at the time, extremely young for such a job, the sting in the tail was that her role of cook was combined with that of general servant. Essentially, her employers wanted someone strong, energetic and cheap – if the food was sometimes terrible then such was the expectation of a child at boarding school at the time. Way back in 1871, baby Daniel Sadler's father, George, was, slightly oddly, claiming to be a fisherman, Hardley is a few miles from the coast but not so many this was unfeasible. Twenty years later and George had taken up farming, assisted by his 20-year-old son.

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This was possibly not a vocation that came naturally to the former fisherman as, by 1897, with failing health and business losses preying on his mind, 64 years old George Sadler slashed his throat with a razor.

On Wednesday noon, George Sadler came home and went upstairs on the pretext of changing his clothes; his women folk became concerned by how long this was taking. Having failed to get a response to their calls, his daughter Julia ran upstairs and found him on the floor with the razor lying beside him. Calling her brother Daniel, they managed to bind the wounds with a handkerchief and Dr

Rodwell was on the scene within an hour to do the job properly. In spite of the best efforts of both Dr Rodwell and Dr Prior, George 'gradually sank and expired at 7 o'clock on Thursday evening.'

At the inquest his 'nervous debility' due to two or three years of deteriorating health and financial struggles were mentioned, his son Daniel confirmed George 'been in a very despondent frame of mind for the past two or three years.' The firmly directed jury concurred that he had committed suicide whilst in an unsound state of mind.

There has long been an attitude that suicide was one of the ultimate crimes; barely 80 years previously a Harleston suicide was buried in the crossroads at Lush Bush with a wooden stake in her heart. This attitude of suicide, successful or failed, being a terrible mortal sin lingered on until late in the 20th century but the get-out clause of 'whilst of unsound mind' softened the shame of such an action, which could then be viewed as a terrible but passing aberration rather than an absolute moral failing of the protagonist.

Daniel and Alice had been married less than a year when George took his life, their first child (Robert) was barely a month or two old, a terrible start to what became a long and productive marriage.

Four years later, in 1901, Daniel had added cow keeper to his farm labourer role, probably on the nearby marshes and most likely taking over his dead father's herd. As well as himself, his wife and three young sons, his widowed mother Rachel, and his sister Julia, who had also both witnessed his father's terrible death, were in the household. Rachel died three years later, a natural death, aged 69.

It seems Rachel's death may have freed up her children to remove and escape the comments and sideways looks from their neighbours. Julia made a late marriage in 1906 to a stockman out near Lowestoft. This gentleman made a complete Horlicks of the 1911 census form but to be fair he did have very confident and fluent handwriting. Julia's brother Daniel had also upped sticks and moved on, the family had settled at the Pied Bridge Cottages on the outskirts of Alburgh and, whilst his sister had one child, Daniel and Alice had 5 more added to their 3 surviving children.

After the war, the family threw themselves wholeheartedly into village life, whatever shame may have been felt out in the marshes near Oulton Broads was put far behind them. I suspect it was Mrs Sadler who was the driving force in the relationship – it was she who filled out the 1911 census, many working-class women of the time had better literacy levels than their men folk. Mrs Sadler was fully involved in the local Flower Shows, W.I., Jumble Sales, sponge baking etc and was also active in the Congregational Church. In fact, this family who had fled the shame of suicide were extremely involved in the Church.

In 1934, a day of great celebration took place in Denton Congregational Church, an institution that had been established way back in 1655. The Church in Denton was to send abroad it's first missionary in the person of Mildred Kate Sadler, the 7th child of Daniel and Alice. 31 years old Mildred had equipped herself to provide practical as well as spiritual guidance; having completed her nursing training at St Giles, she was now a qualified SRN. Her primary responsibilities were to help educate and care for girls, young mothers and their children amongst the Bembe people of Mberishi, Central Africa. A bonus was finding a husband – she became Mrs K Francie in January 1938. With modern eyes we may have some reservations about the cultural imperialism associated with missionary work but regardless of such changing mores, I have no doubt she did much good work and improved the lot of many people.

Three years after Denton celebrated launching Mildred towards Africa, her youngest sister, Alice Rachel, married at the Denton Church, the first wedding in 12 years. Whether that is an indictment of the size of the congregation, the age of the congregation or the flightiness of the congregation remains unspoken!

Mind you in 1931, when George married, he did so, not at the Congregational Church but, presumably in deference to his future in-laws, at Redenhall Church. On the occasion of this wedding, George, the junior of Robert by three years, was described not as the oldest surviving son, but as the oldest son of Mr and Mrs D Sadler. On this happy occasion, I am sure the family paused to consider Robert who never had the chance to marry; it was unfortunate that the reporter made this error, writing Robert out of existence.