



Frederick Charles Osborne

40506 Private, 7th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment

Formerly 29084 Essex Regiment

He was killed in action on 16th November 1916 in France, aged 39

Frederick is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France

Frederick Charles Osborne who died in late 1916, was one of the older soldiers enlisting from Harleston. Aged 39 when he died, he listed his next of kin as his wife, Annie Eliza nee Elliot, of the Dairy Cottages in Starston. His is also memorialised at the Thieppe Memorial, Somme and was one of the many casualties of this war whose body was either never found or never identified. Although he lived in Starston he was born in Wortwell and enlisted, not surprisingly, at Harleston.

Most unusually, whilst Frederick was a farm labourer, as was his father Robert, the censuses reveal his grandfather, William, had been a Travelling Book Seller who had been born in

Yarmouth. William's wife, Mary Maylam came from Trim County Meath, Ireland. This initially gives an impression of a family on the move, however, much to my surprise I found William and Mary were already living in Wortwell in the 1841 census, with two children to their name. At this stage William was a grocer; interestingly in the light of William's later calling, living next door were William's parents, he was a school teacher!

*White's 1836 trade directory
featuring William Osborne, grocer*

WORTWELL.
Burgess Jas. vict. Bell
Burwood Thomas, baker
Buxton Rd. & Church S. blksmiths.
Harvey Rt. Blyth, corn mercht.
Hill Ed. miller; h. Homersfield
Jeffries Jph. wheelwright
Johnson Jonathan, joiner
Osborne Wm. grocer & draper
Whitear Mrs. Rebecca
Wise John, wheelwright

I suspect it was William's father, Robert Snr. who was the incomer from out Yarmouth way. In 1841 these were the only two Osborne households in Wortwell, indeed there were only 3 more households of Osbornes in the whole of Depwade! Frederick's great grandfather's house was

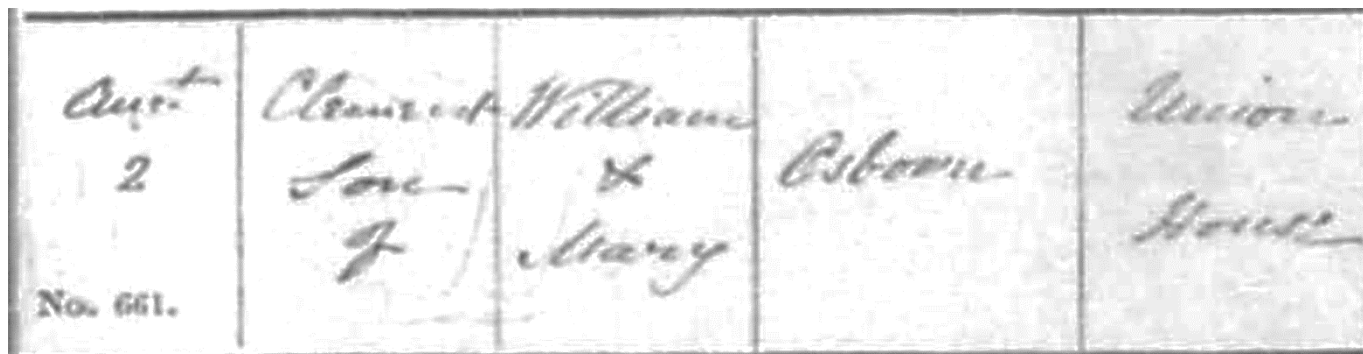
then described as 'standing pleasantly in Wortwell Street.

*Norfolk Chronicle
24 Jul 1841*

Lot 4. — A substantial Messuage, in three dwellings, to one of which a baking-office is attached, standing pleasantly in Wortwell Street, and lately occupied by the said Robert Burgess, and by Messrs. Osborne, Sen. and Burwood, with the yards and gardens thereto appertaining.

They may have been incomers but the family put their prolific roots firmly down in Wortwell. Only one of their nine children appearing in censuses over the years was not born in Wortwell; this one child, Clement, was born in Pulham about 1855. This must have been during a collapse of the family's fortunes – he was born in the Workhouse. Indeed, whilst William may have started off as a

grocer and draper, the baptisms of the older children give their father's trade as a book seller (travelling according to the censuses), by 1859 he was described as a 'dealer' and by 1867, when re baptising the two youngest children, as a hawker!



Clement Osborne's Baptism from the Pulham Workhouse.

In 1864 two of Robert's slightly older brothers, Mark and Charles, spent far too much time sniffing around Harriet Hunt who was working for George Rackham, a farmer of Wortwell. This we know as she brought a case against Rackham when he fired her after finding the two brothers, a chap called Rayner and her main squeeze, a young man named Hudson, all in the farmhouse kitchen when Harriet should have been working. This was too much for Rackham, especially as he had previously, late one night, found Charles Osborne in the house and chased him into a 'cheese room'. Whilst Rackham broke down the door with a hatchet, Charles decided discretion was the better part of valour and made his escape through the window grating – fit and lithe! About the same time, the other fellow in the kitchen party, Rayner thumped the oldest of the brothers, William, on the nose. Hey ho. Boys will be Boys and luckily they usually grow up reasonably well!

Both William and Charles went on to become Police Constable, William being stationed in Cambridgeshire in 1871 and Aylsham in 1881 whilst Charles appeared in Bedfordshire in 1881 and Cambridgeshire in 1891. Sadly, William's first wife, Esther, from Needham, died at the early age of 40 in Downham, 1879. William did not let the grass grow under his feet, he married his next wife, Ella Norburn, the daughter of a grocer, in Downham in February 1880. She was then a 36 years old, heavily pregnant spinster; their daughter, Ella Mary Osborne was born in the first quarter of 1880, her mother must have been almost ready to deliver at the Altar! Policemen were expected to maintain certain standards of decorum so if William was to keep his job he had to marry Ella. Since his wife, Esther, had died somewhere between April and June the previous year – this is very tight timings!

10 years later, one more child had been added to William Osborne's household but the family were in Colchester, 69 Magdalene St to be precise and one more child had been added to the family. No longer a policeman William was now a foundry worker. Oddly, 1901 had William as a jobbing gardener lodging up in Norwich, whilst his wife and 2 children remained down in Colchester. In 1911 he was in a common, probably rather grim and overcrowded, lodging house back in Magdalene Street, no 142 and was claiming 52 years of marriage – possibly true just not all to the same person! Of his 4 children, two were dead, these were the children of his first marriage as also in Colchester, were his wife and their two adult spinster daughters, a school teacher and a drapers assistant. This all female household were living comfortably in a 6 room house, only a few hundred yards as the crow flies from William's lodgings. I think this must have been a case of marry in haste and repent at leisure!



Above: Mrs Osborne's 1911 home, shared with her two daughters, To the right: Mr Osbornes 1911 home, shared with 16 other people, has been demolished



but terraces of this size bracket the site either side. Alleging 12 rooms, I suspect these so-called rooms would have been small wooden cubicles.

Another of Pte. Osbornes uncles, Matthew, also got a thump, but in 1869, – in his case from the frankly terrifying John Skinner, a total unit from one of two brawling families in Wortwell. On this occasion, Matthew was attempting to assist the landlord of the Bell in his efforts to eject Skinner from his premises. Skinner was a bit of an Atlas, and extremely free with his fists (as were other members of his family) – not a man to get on the wrong side of!

Although Pte. Osborne's grandparents had settled themselves in Wortwell, his aunts and uncle slowly started drifting away although most, except for the two policemen did not go far.

It was actually Pte Osborne's Uncle Matthew, the middle of the boys who led the drift out to Starston, appearing there in the 1881 census which also marks Frederick's first appearance. Aged 3 he was the middle of 3 siblings living in Wortwell with their parents Robert and Elizabeth. Next door but one, were Frederick's grandparents, William and Mary, who were sharing their home with a 27 years old unmarried son and a 1 years old grandson! I suspect the reason that young Herbert was in the house was due to him being the illegitimate son of the youngest of Frederick's aunts, Mary Osborne who would have been only about 20 when young Herbert was born. His

mother, Mary, was away in service for this census in 1881¹ but, come 1891, whilst Granny Mary was still in situ her grandson, Herbert was living next door but one with his mother Mary and his step father James (George) Calver who had married in 1884. Bright lad, he won a first place 'scholar's prize' that year.²

Whilst some of the Osbornes had left Starston, a number remained or returned to merrily win Allotment Produce and Drawing (Ploughing) Competitions in the late 1890's and interwar period respectively.

By 1891 Robert and Elizabeth had moved out to the fringes of Starston on the edges of the Gawdy estate, between Lodge Farm and the Brick Kilns, near Green Lane. I hope they now had a slightly larger house as there were then 6 children in total. The family had moved closer into Starston by 1901, by which time the older children had all left home but another 4 children had been added to the family. Making a slight break from the family tradition, 1901 finds the 23 years old Frederick Osborne lodging in one of the small cottages tucked back from Exchange Street, near the Corn Hall. At that time, he was a grocer's carter – essentially a horse drawn delivery man!

However, in 1911, Frederick and his wife Annie nee Elliot were living at Dairy Cottages, Starston. They had wed just across the border in Suffolk, presumably in Annie's home village of Mendham and were coming up to the start of their 6th year of marriage and the birth of their first child. At this point, Farm Labourer Frederick and Annie, were enjoying a surprisingly large 5 room house for just the pair of them. Whether their previous childlessness was choice or circumstance, their first child, Frederick William was born in early 1912.

Frederick's parents, Robert and Elizabeth were also living at the Dairy Cottages although in their case they were coming up to 36 years of marriage, living with 2 of their younger children and had done well to raise 8 of their 11 children to adult hood. One of these younger children, the then 17 years old Cecil Osborne, brother of Frederick, married Bessie Brown in 1920; the couple continued to live in the Dairy Cottage, at least up until the early death of Bessie in 1937.

STARSTON
RESIDENT'S DEATH.
Mrs. Cecil Osborne, aged 39, of Daisy Cottages, Starston, died on Thursday of last week. She had lived in Starston for many years and was well-known in the district. Her death occurred after a long illness. She leaves a widower. There are no children. The funeral was at the Parish Church on Monday.

Diss Express
28 May 1937

Frederick's other siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles were scattered around the area, as well as the further flung ones in Essex (which I suspect did not have much to do with their Norfolk relatives on their father's side) there were numbers of Osborne's in the area, mostly descended from William and Mary.

¹ Vanburgh Park Road, London – a comfortable middle-class road.

² Eastern Daily Press 28 Sep 1891

In many ways this is a typical rural Norfolk family of the time, a little bit of illegitimacy (10% of births in Norfolk were illegitimate at the time – not that unusual in rural areas), a little bit of fisticuffs, some large families, a few smaller, childhood deaths, multi-generational households, an occasional black sheep, most of the men following trades to do with farming or horses and the odd member leaving for farther afield, in this family sporting police uniforms but usually sporting

military uniforms. It did tend to be families with a history in the building trades who headed off for the big cities in this period, possibly explaining why the majority of the family stayed local.

I have no doubt that following Frederick's death, the neighbouring, bereaved, families helped support each other. I have not really looked into how many other members of the family were bereaved but I do know that Frederick's nephews, George and Harry, the only sons, of Frederick's older brother Albert, are remembered on the Alburgh war memorial. Like Frederick, neither had a grave. George Osborne's body was either not found or not identified, his brother Harry William, died on a hospital ship so, presumably, was buried at sea.

*Starston Roll of Honour,
St Margaret's Church, Starston,*



A Reginald Nobbs is marked as one of three names on the Starston WWII memorial, he was another nephew but one Frederick never knew. His mother, Mildred Dorothy Osborne, or 'Milly' was the other of Frederick's (much younger) siblings living next door to him in 1911. She married Ernest Nobbs in 1920,

Reginald was the son who followed in 1921. As with his Uncle Frederick Osborne and his cousins George and Harry Osborne, Reginald Ernest has no known grave. He met his death in the mayhem that ensued when the Japanese invaded Singapore in 1942. His date of death is given as the 17th of February, actually after the fall of Singapore, the island surrendered on the 15th of February. This indicates he may have died of his wounds or may have been one of the many prisoners that were killed in the aftermath and chaos of surrender.

Frederick's wife, Annie, eventually moved to Redenhall, his mother may have moved back to Wortwell and the strong roots of this family in these villages led to Frederick being commemorated on the Broad Street Memorial, as well as on the Starston Roll of Honour. Broad Street is of course a more public memorial and was halfway between the home of him and his wife, and Wortwell, the family's home since his great grandfather, the Schoolteacher, and his grandparents, the Yarmouth born Travelling Book Seller and his Irish wife, settled there sometime back before the 1840's.

According to the notice of Annie's parents' Diamond Wedding, she never re-married and might have expected a long life – I hope Frederick William was included in the 25 grandchildren.

HOMERSFIELD.

Mr. and Mrs. William Elliott, of No. 6, Bannfield Cottage, Homersfield, celebrated their diamond wedding on Monday, October 1st. Their whole surviving family was present, John (Mendlesham), Alfred and Robert (Pulham Market), Alice (Mrs. Butcher) William and Arthur (Homersfield), Rose (Mrs. Copping), and Lily (Mrs. Howlett, Hilgay), George (Wortwell), and Annie (Mrs. Osborne, Redenhall). Of eleven children ten are still alive. Mr. and Mrs. Elliott have twenty-five grandchildren and four great grandchildren living. Mrs. Elliott is a member of the Stone family of Southolt, noted for their longevity. Mr. Elliott is a native of Wickham Market, and was for some years steward for the late Mr. G. Durrant, of Redenhall Grange. The venerable couple were the recipients of numerous presents and congratulatory messages, including a handsome present from the Wortwell Chapel Bible Class.