



## Sidney Joseph Rayner

33623 Private, B Company, 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion East Surrey Regiment

He was killed in action on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1918 in France, aged 34

Sidney is commemorated at the Pozieres Memorial, Pozieres, Picardie, France

There have been a lot of Rayners in and around Harleston over the years, many of them builders but Sidney Rayner's branch had their roots deep in the farming communities on the outskirts of Harleston.

James Rayner of this Parish  
Bachelor  
and Mary Baker of this Parish  
Spinster  
were married in this Church by James with Consent of  
this Antecath Day of  
October in the Year One thousand eight hundred and Thirty two.  
By me Thomas Sewell Curate -  
This Marriage was solemnized between us { James Rayner  
Mary Baker  
In the Presence of { Charles Parish  
Maria Plum's mark X  
No. 297.

Alburgh born James Rayner started his life as a farmer in Wortwell appearing there with his wife, Mary nee Baker in 1841. Having married in 1832, they already had 6 children, oldest one 8 years of age, youngest only 1 by this 1841 census!

James moved from growing meat to selling it and 10 years on in 1851 was described as a kiddier butcher – essentially a butcher with a market stall rather than a shop. With three more children to support, although the oldest were out working, the two lodgers James Rayner had in the house may have added to the overcrowding but would also have added to the family income. One of these two lodgers was a certain Benjamin Leggatt – more of him later. By 1861 this local butcher had moved on from a market stall and was working out of a shop in Wortwell with his wife assisting – the house would have been no less crowded with 4 lodgers and a 6 years grand-daughter from London in addition to the 6 members of the immediate family in residence. Roll on 1871 and little Lucy from London was still in residence at the shop, there were only two lodgers and James and Mary's youngest son (Samuel) had followed in his father's trade as a butcher.

You have to respect the toughness of these Victorian folks, in 1881, James was 75, his wife was 74, they were both still working in their shop and one of the lodgers, remaining from 1871, a mere 68, was registered as 'disabled' being lame. The fourth inhabitant of the household, 65 years old was a gardener. Widower James had finally retired by 1891 and moved in with his widowed daughter Maria Gower nee Rayner.

Maria must have thought she was firmly on the shelf, still living with her parents at the age of 27 in 1861, she married painter Robert Gower in late summer 1861 and proceeded to have a number of children in the following years. Not that she was to enjoy a very long married life, widowed in 1880 she was reduced to sewing work to support her family. When her mother died, I suspect Maria

Gower then stepped in to help run the shop – described as a grocer when she appeared in 1891 with her retired father in the household.

This is all a bit of a diversion from the main story, really only interesting in so far as we have now overlapped with the families of two more Harleston Heroes, James Loom (descendent of Benjamin Leggat, one of the 1851 lodgers), and Austin Gower, descendent of Maria Gower nee Rayner and of course demonstrated how those Victorian folks just worked and worked and worked!

Galloping up a few paragraphs, we rediscover Samuel Rayner, the baby of the family who followed in his father's footsteps as a butcher. It was this gentleman who was to become the father of our Harleston Hero. Samuel married Anne Eliza Olley, from New Fakenham, in 1875. When I saw the 1881 census entries with 13 years old William Olley in the household, I blithely assumed that William was one of the many children swishing around Harleston families who had been born prior their mother's marriage. Well shame on me; the Marriage Banns reveal that Anne Eliza Olley was a widow when she married Samuel Rayner.

Ann Eliza Farrall's first marriage was to Davy Olley in 1870 – which actually does not quite match with her son, William Olley's stated age of 13 in 1881! Back where we were perhaps? Davy died very young, only aged 28 on October 23rd 1873 and although he was buried in the village of Denton, where he had not long ago been married, he actually died in Wortwell.

1870. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Denton in the County of Norfolk

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
114	April 14 <sup>th</sup>	Davy Olley	25	Bachelor	Dealer	Denton	William Olley	Farmer
		Anne Eliza Farrall	25	Spinster		Denton	Joseph Farrall	Farmer

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by me, W. D. Bussell Rector

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Davy Olley and Anne Eliza Farrall in the Presence of us, Wm. Farrall, Wm. Olley, Sam. Cressall, William Olley

<u>Davy Olley</u>	<u>Wortwell</u>	<u>October 23<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>28</u>	<u>J. D. Turner</u>
No. 548.			<u>years</u>	<u>Curate.</u>

Davy was one of the oldest sons of William Olley a farmer originally from Kirby Cane who, after a number of his children (including Davy) were born in Kirby Cane, returned to his wife's hometown of Denton. Whilst I could not find Anne or Davy Olley in 1871, it seems her little boy William (going

under his true name of Farrell and born before either of Ann Farrell's marriages) was being boarded out with the Smith family in Alburgh.

I then suffered an outbreak of confusion, there was a David Olley who would have been quite a catch for this young lady; in 1867 he was a farmer in his own right having previously been the steward at Earsham Hall. But since he also had a stackfire in 1878, I can only guess that this was another part of the family!

I think the David Olley who was the landlord of the Wortwell Bell between at least 1871 and 1872 was one and the same as the 'dealer' who married single mother Ann. He appeared in the paper having taken a very pragmatic attitude to a pair of quarrelsome customers in mid-December 1871. On 30th December 1871 it was reported that Mr. Olley had permitted disorderly conduct in his house on the morning of 15th December. He had cleared the tap room to allow two quarrelsome customers to go 'about four rounds'. His excuse of wanting to get rid of the drunken party was considered lame and the magistrates were not satisfied. He was fined £2 10 and £1 10s costs. I wonder who snitched?



The Bell c 1915. and in the inter war period



I am glad to say Anne Eliza's second marriage, to the butcher Samuel Rayner, was rather longer lived than her first to Davy Olley. As mentioned above, in 1881, young William Farral aka Olley was in the household, but in addition there were also 2 younger half siblings: Ethel and Ada. I am a firm believer that there is very rarely such a thing as a total co-incidence when investigating family history; and where were Samuel and Anne Eliza nee Farral formerly Olley living? In 1881 Samuel Rayner, was combining his trade of butcher with being the landlord of the Wortwell Bell, a license he had held since at least 1875, presumably following on from David/Davy Olley. I wonder if the role of landlord came with the marriage to Anne Eliza?

1890. 19 <sup>th</sup> July Born 13 <sup>th</sup> April 1868. No. 637	Peter Olly	William & Rose Matilda	Olley	Wortwell	Driver	F. J. Pennington Rector
1890. 19 <sup>th</sup> July Born 15 <sup>th</sup> June 1890 No. 638	Clare Davy	William & Rose Matilda	Olley	Wortwell	Driver	F. J. Pennington Rector
1890. 19 <sup>th</sup> July Born 4 <sup>th</sup> July 1864. No. 639	Sidney Joseph	Samuel & Anne Eliza	Rayner	Wortwell	Butcher	F. J. Pennington Rector
1890. 19 <sup>th</sup> July Born 9 <sup>th</sup> Oct 1868. No. 640	Silda Maria	Samuel & Anne Eliza	Rayner	Wortwell	Butcher	F. J. Pennington Rector

By 1883, Rayner had given up the Bell; in 1891 the family had expanded to 5 children, all girls except second to last child Sidney Joseph. Rather touchingly, William Olley (or actually Farrall) baptised two of his children on the same day as his mother baptised two of his half siblings. William named one of his sons Clare Davy, carrying the name of his supposed father Davy Olley who had died so young some 17 years previously.

In one of those strange slides of time, shortly after I had finished writing this biography, I was running through the list of names whose biographies were yet to be done. The name Clare Davy Olley leapt out from the list, he died on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1917 and it was almost as if that was current news, shocking and sad.

Mother, Anne Eliza nee Farrall formerly Olley, died in 1897 at the age of 51 leaving Samuel with the children to raise, the youngest of whom would have only been about 8 or 9. Unlike many of his peer group he does not seem to have moved in a 'housekeeper' but carried on raising the children himself. I say 'himself' but to be fair, the village or Wortwell was fairly cluttered with Rayners of various degrees of closeness so I suspect there was a fair bit of support for him. In 1891 Sam described himself as a 'pig killer'; judging by his father's census entries, the butcher's shop had essentially closed following the death of his mother; Sam's widowed sister Marie Gower nee Rayner

Annie Eliza Rayner No. 456.	Wortwell	22nd July, 1897	51	J. J. Perrowe, Rector
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appears to have focussed on the grocery side of the business when she took over the reins of what had been a butcher's and grocer's.

In the 1901 census, Sam and Annie's only son amongst 4 sisters, Sidney, was described as a ginger-beer maker, presumably at Everson's works at the foot of Station Road. By 1911, our Harleston hero's father Samuel was living all by himself in a 3-room house within shouting distance of the Bell where he had been the landlord for a few years. I have not been able to track down our Hero Sidney in this census, but I doubt he got too far as in 1915 he married Elizabeth Alice Dade. She had been born just across the border in Syleham but in 1911 she was working as a servant for Arthur Ship in Harleston. Mr Ship was a mat and net dealer which seems like a low-key sort of job for a man living in an 8-room house with a servant on the books! I rather suspect this former horse dealer may have inherited the property.

Elizabeth Alice had been (partially) named after the slightly younger sister of her father, William Dade. This aunt, Alice Dade, had been born 3 years after William; their mother Mary was 5 years older than their father John Dade. Mary predeceased her slightly younger husband sometime between 1881 and 1891, leaving Alice Dade looking after her father and grandfather (both called John Dade) whilst in the house next door, Alice's brother William and his wife Rose (from Needham although the couple had married in Pulham) were starting off their married life. I say starting off their married life but they had been married 4 1/2 years by the 1891 census although they had no children, or at least none that had survived to the census.

1891. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Syleham in the County of Stafford

No.	When Married.	Name and Residence.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Residence.	Rank or Profession of Father.
254	3	William Dade	25	Single	Labourer	Wortwell	John Dade	Labourer
		Rose Aldous	22	Spinster		Wortwell	William Aldous	Spinster

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church after Banns by Spencer Fellows Rector

This Marriage was solemnized between us, William Dade and Rose Aldous in the presence of us, Harry Agar and Anna Maria Peterson

All very nice and cosy but only 18 months later all this came crashing down in tragic jealousy.

Alice and William's widowed father had decided to remarry: John Dade must have known that this was not going to be approved of by his daughter as he happily stated he had not told Alice about his wedding and the first she knew of this was when the banns were called. This was obviously not going to be a happy household, so Alice went off to work at Monk's Hall in Syleham.

### UPSET ABOUT HER FATHER'S MARRIAGE.

On Wednesday morning Mr. Coroner Chaston held an inquiry at Monks Hall, Syleham, into the circumstances attending the death of Alice Dade, domestic servant, aged 28 years, whose body was recovered from the River Waveney on Monday.—John Dade, agricultural labourer, living at Syleham, said deceased, who was his daughter, had acted as his housekeeper for several years. About a month ago, in consequence of his marrying again, she entered the service of Mr. James Read, of Monks Hall, Syleham. Witness said nothing to the deceased about his proposed marriage, and he believed her first knowledge of it was from the publication of the banns. Witness had never known his daughter to be strange in her manner, or thought her to be other than right in her mind, and responsible for her actions. He had never heard her threaten to commit suicide. Witness believed she threw herself into the river. It might have been because she was upset about his marriage. He believed she was well treated at Monks Hall.—Rosa Dade, sister-in-law of the deceased, deposed that deceased had told her that her father ought to have made known to her his intended marriage, as then she would have known what to do. She further assured witness that she need not be surprised if she drowned herself.—Mrs. Gorton, housekeeper at Monks Hall, stated that the deceased was dreadfully upset about her father's marriage.—The Jury returned a verdict of "Suicide while temporarily insane."

*East Anglian Daily Times*  
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After nursing her grievances for about a month, the distraught Alice flung herself into the river. Alice had already told her sister-in-law, Rose Dade, that she (Rose) should not be surprised if she (Alice) drowned herself. John himself admitted his daughter Alice was upset by his marriage, Rose said that Alice had complained that her father should have told her of his plans; even the housekeeper at Monks Hall said Alice had been very upset by the marriage. Alice had been to visit her father on the Saturday afternoon, John claimed she had been perfectly normal during the visit (although I suspect he may not have been the most sensitive of folks). She returned to Monks Hall and was said to have been in her usual health and spirits at 7pm

that evening in the servants' hall. However, she was noticed as missing on the Sunday morning and her footprints ( this was November so I suspect the paths would have been muddy) were followed from the Monk's Hall gate and across the Marshes. She must have then waded through water that was about a foot deep – again this was November, that would have been deeply cold and unpleasant. She finally got to the river about 200 yards from the Hall. Her father was of the party that dragged the river for her body. Verdict was suicide whilst temporarily insane although the Coroner rather pointedly suggested to Alice's father that it would have been kinder if he had told his daughter of his marital intentions. I hope John had a happy 7 ½ years of marriage before he died in 1900, aged 63.

I am not sure how I would have felt about being named for a suicidal jealous Aunt but hey ho, different times, different places.

Anyway, Sidney And Elizabeth Alice Rayner's marriage was blessed with a little girl, Ada H Rayner, born across the river in Suffolk, I suspect that Elizabeth had gone back to her parents whilst her man was fighting away. This little girl was born in early 1917; Sidney's daughter and widow only received a £5 war gratuity which would indicate he had served less than a year before he perished in the Battle of the Somme; his date of death is vague and in the register of effects it is given as somewhere between the 21<sup>st</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of March 1918. I suspect he was last seen on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March and either his remains were found on the 27<sup>th</sup> or it was accepted he was dead at that point. Since he has no burial place and instead is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial, I would suggest the latter applies. To give some idea of the confusion at the time, initially he was not officially recorded as missing until the 28<sup>th</sup> of May. However, at the end of the day, the precise day of his death at a distance of almost 100 years is not as relevant as respecting the sacrifice he and his young family made. I hope Ada's father had the opportunity to spend some time with his little girl before he was called upon to leave his family and do his duty for his country.

Slightly confusingly the register of effects mentions, as expected, his widow Elizabeth Alice, but also describes his daughter Ada as his widow – even the Army makes the occasional mistake!

Elizabeth Alice Rayner nee Dade married William Garnham in 1920, it seems that 9 children followed in the next 16 years – assuming that all the Garnham / Dade children baptised in Wangford during this time were Elizabeth's.