



Reginald Herbert Ward

242317 Private, 1st/5th Battalion Norfolk Regiment

He was killed in action on 19th April 1917 in Palestine, aged 22

Reginald is commemorated on the Jerusalem Memorial, Israel

Back in 1841, there were at least 31 'Wards' living in the middle of Harleston, all working class folks working hard in manual trades: a husband, wife and daughter in Duke William's Yard (Constable Court), and two more households on Bunkers Hill, now known as Candler's Lane; a single widowed lady in Old Chapel Yard (just Chapel Yard in those days!); another widow Rebecca, raising 5 children between the ages of 8 and 20 in Gilberts Yard (I think but am not sure this is now 'Old Post Office Yard) and six more at The Cap where the young, recently widowed Elizabeth was having a good go at taking over the tenancy from her dead husband Henry Ward Snr.

In so far as Harleston ever had slums, it is fair to say that Duke William Yard would have been those slums with small overcrowded houses, poor sanitation and inhabitants who were teetering on the edge of society

At Harleston, in the Duke (*William*) yard and on the Common, during the past quarter there have been 14 or 15 cases of typhus, 3 of which were fatal. Bad drainage, especially in the Duke-yard, appears to be the principal cause of the disease.¹

I think it fair to say the Wards covered a wide spectrum of character, some were absolute rotters, some (Including Henry Ward, our V.C. winner who, whilst being related to these Wards, features nowhere amongst these miscellaneous Henry Wards) were incredible heroes, some were caught up in overwhelming situations; most just bumbled on trying to make ends meet and keep themselves and their families alive and healthy in challenging circumstances. At the risk of being repetitive, our forebears, particularly those in tough circumstances, were at least as wild if not wilder than anything you might come across in our more genteel times.

The environment that Reginald's ancestors came to maturity in was not a good one, which makes their achievements (raising children and largely keeping out of the courts) even more remarkable; the following details the exploits of a number of Ward cousins who were less successful at keeping out of trouble.

In 1841, at the Cap, one of widowed Elizabeth's children, Robert Ward, cousin of Henry Ward Jnr (grandfather to be of Harleston Hero Reginald), went on to be a real 'sort'. It took a while to untangle which of a selection of Robert Wards of Harleston, all of close enough age, was our 'gentleman' but

¹ Bury and Norwich Post 18 Aug 1863

careful cross checking points the finger firmly at Elizabeth and Henry Ward Snr's son to have been the man convicted in 1850 of being an incorrigible rogue!

labour.

LEAVING A WIFE CHARGEABLE.

Robert Ward, (29.) was charged with having been an incorrigible rogue and vagabond, he having been convicted before the magistrates of having left his wife and family chargeable to the parish of Redenhall-cum-Harleston. The Clerk of the Peace read several convictions against the prisoner, for similar conduct; and he was sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

Norfolk Chronicle 19 Oct 1850

Robert Ward, fishmonger, had been baptised just across the border in Weybread Suffolk; he reappeared in 1851 along with his wife, Jane, in Chapel Yard in 1851 and again in 1871 by which time the yard was named Vipond's Yard. By 1881 the widowed Robert

was lodging at the slightly dodgy Royal Oak on the corner of what is now Union St and Broad Street. With the exception of the Royal Oak, this all seemed fairly standard until, when trying to locate him in the missing census, 1861, I found him in Norwich Castle Prison! There can't be that many Weybread born fishsellers of that age and that name around so I think we can assume them to be one and the same as our gent married to Jane. – was this the incorrigible rogue detailed in 1850? Certainly, checking back to Chapel Yard in 1861, there is his poor wife Jane, with three girls to raise, described as 'Fishmongers Wife Deserted'. By 1891 Robert Ward, incorrigible rogue and fish seller was in the Union Workhouse just outside Pulham Market, one of approximately 150 inmates.

So, a bit of a swine and perhaps it serves this man right that having abandoned his family, he wound up alone in the Pulham Work House. But this is only a very small part of his story which gets far more dramatic!

Having dug a bit deeper to see what Robert Ward, cousin of Reginald Ward's grandfather, had done to get himself into jail, a rather tangled case of passion and betrayal comes to light.

It appears that Robert Ward, who at 21 was 12 years younger than his wife Jane, the mother of his children, had already cast his eyes towards Emma Rayner Snr, 23 years old and living in the Thoroughfare with her parents, basket maker Samuel Rayner Snr², various siblings and little Emma Rayner Jnr, the illegitimate daughter of older sister Jane Rayner. Jane went on to marry James Hales, a bricklayer, who took on her illegitimate daughter Emma and gave her his name; In the normal way of the time, Emma Rayner Jnr, went on to have her own two illegitimate children, twins (another Emma and a Laura) baptised when she was 19. The twins do not survive but Emma Rayner Jnr does marry in 1870, to a John Kent, they set up home on the Bungay Road and then finally wind up on the Common in 1881. I only mention this as it sort of sets the scene for the family being less than totally buttoned up; Emma Jnr was not the only illegitimate child in this generation of sisters!

Jane and Emma Snr's younger brother, Samuel Rayner Jnr, also a basket maker, was visiting with another branch of the family.

Although the 3 months sentence for being 'an incorrigible rogue' and failing to support his family, seems to have chased Robert Ward back to his wife for the 1851 census; this did not last long, and Robert Ward and Emma Rayner soon eloped off to the other end of the county, Kings Lynn to be precise. Initially trading as Hawkers, they soon settled down, running various pubs together.

How do we know this? Basically, a tale of chaos that runs through the regional press, this summarised version is taken from <http://norfolkpubs.co.uk>.

² Rayner had a narrow escape in 1850 when fetching a load of osiers (willow whips for basket making) in a cart on the road at Weybread the vehicle .. upset and he received great injury from the fall so that slight hopes are entertained of his recovery. Norwich Mercury 7 Dec 1850 He evidently survived for another 20 or so years when On the morning of Tuesday an old man by name of Rayner, a basket maker in Harleston, was discovered on his wife coming downstairs to be lying dead on the floor. He had only risen a short time previous. Norfolk News 15 April 1871.

White Swan 110 Norfolk Street, Kings Lynn

On Monday 5th May 1856, Robert Ward was accused of an assault on beer house keeper William Dennis who had entered the White Swan and wrung a customer's nose. Causing a disturbance and offering to fight Ward, Dennis was knocked down and kicked.

Case dismissed – fair enough Robert Wad was defending his business.

On Monday 13th October 1856 Emma Rayner and Samuel Rayner were accused of stealing £63 and a silver watch from Robert Ward. It was heard that Emma Rayner was housekeeper to Mr. Ward and had been asked the previous week to place the money in an upstairs room. On Thursday 9th October Ward had returned from a sale and found that his housekeeper and her brother had decamped and the money and watch were gone.

Case dismissed owing to insufficient evidence.

This does all tie in very nicely; as we know Emma Snr did have a brother Samuel Rayner, a basket maker, 7 years her junior. Describing Emma as a 'housekeeper' was a euphemism. The light-fingered brother and sister headed back to Harleston where the law caught up with them. Ward refused to prosecute, and the reconciled Robert Ward and Emma Rayner Snr settle down again in King's Lynn. Reading between the lines it sounds as if Robert and Emma had fallen out, Emma (with the support of her younger brother) had grabbed what she could and hightailed it back to Harleston.

This reconciliation did not last; in 1858 Robert Ward lost his license and thus his income, whilst Emma Rayner got her own license and set herself up at The Cattle Market Tavern between 1860 and 1861. Whilst Robert seemed to have been a bit of a loose cannon which probably led to the loss of his license, Emma was a determined lady. In 1860, two customers would not pay their bar bills, she took them to court and received satisfaction.³ After about 10 years together, the romance was wearing thin.

In court Monday 10th December 1860 it was heard that at one time Robert Ward, alias Farmer, had lived with Emma Rayner as man & wife. (*housekeeper indeed!*) On 27th November Ward had entered the house and sat next to Miss Rayner and asked if she was to marry anyone. Before she could answer, Ward drew a razor across her throat saying `Before you shall marry anyone else, I will do you.' Miss Rayner called her sister Mary Ann who assisted her and called for Doctor Smythe. Ward then threw the razor onto a table in front of Charles Parr, William Rungay, Edward Raby and the charwoman, Sarah Colman. Ward expressed satisfaction with his deed saying that `no one else could have her' and that he would not run away. Constable Tungate took the prisoner into custody. Doctor Smythe stitched up the wound and it was only by 10th December that Miss Rayner was able to attend court.

Ward was fully committed to Norwich Castle for trial at the next assizes

Emma's sister, Mary Ann Rayner, who had come to the assistance of Emma after her throat had been slit, had also appeared with Emma in the 1851 Harleston census, only a year younger than Emma, the two were probably very close.

³ Norfolk News 11 Aug 1860

Emma was extra-ordinarily lucky both in the angle of the cut and in having a doctor attend her fast enough to prevent her bleeding to death. Luck stayed on her side as she also managed to avoid infection of the wound. Another article describes the

Wound six inches in length .. extended upwards from the collar bone to the chin .. it is strange that the windpipe and important veins escaped uninjured.⁴

After the attack Ward seemed strangely calm, sitting by the fire until taken away by the police. Emma was not well enough to attend the first committal hearing but did give evidence at the second hearing. I suspect that Emma did indeed, certainly in the earlier days of their relationship, want to marry but of course Robert Ward was still married. As affair began to fizzle out, he seems to have adopted the toxic principal if he could not marry Emma, he would prevent anyone else from doing so. The blade was so sharp that Emma had felt no pain and, until she saw the blood, had thought Robert had just drawn his thumb across her throat.

Charwoman Sarah Coleman gave evidence of the lead up to the evening attack. All started normally with Robert Ward cleaning his boots in the morning, although he refused breakfast. All through the day he was in and out of the house, becoming steadily more drunk as he repeatedly received the cold shoulder from Emma, who basically told him to leave. Half an hour later, the attack occurred; in the court Ward made no denial of the events but claimed 'I did not do it with intent to do any harm to her'. Really?⁵

Three months later and the case had got to the Assizes when Robert Ward alias Farmer (40) was described as a fish seller. Emma starts her evidence by stating she was a single woman who had known Rayner for 13 years – indicating it was her who provoked Rayner's initial desertion of his wife Jane back in 1850. Rayner had disappeared for 5 weeks before the assault and was only intermittently around for the three nights before the attack. Emma may have had enough of his drinking, 'he was always very kind to me when sober', but he had suffered from delirium tremens in May and Emma had refused to share a bed with him from about a month before the attack.

Ward's defence was that he had no intention of actually cutting her throat, his counsel claimed

The wound was the result of an accident from the incautious holding of a razor by a person who was intoxicated.

The jury found him guilty of wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm; when passing sentence, the judge commented the prisoner ought to be thankful all the days of his life that death did not follow from his offence. Two years hard labour⁶ - which seems extraordinary light a sentence for this unprovoked, deliberate and almost fatal attack.

Emma continues to have tough times, on the 28th of March, the Norwich Mercury reports that Joseph Meal, landlord of the Plumbers' Arms was convicted of assaulting Emma Rayner, landlady of the Cattle Market Tavern – 11s 6d expenses.

Emma stayed, along with her sister Mary Anne Rayner, at the Cattle Market Tavern long enough for them both to appear there in the '61 census, Mary Anne helping landlady Emma behind the bar. More illegitimate children appear, Emma's baby niece, Emma Jane Rayner, is presumably Mary Anne's illegitimate daughter. Little Emma Jane barely survived the census whilst her aunt, Emma

⁴ Bristol Daily Post 4 Dec 1860

⁵ Norwich Mercury 12 Dec 1860

⁶ Norfolk Chronicle 30 Mar 1861

Snr, was buried in Yarmouth at the end of 1862⁷. After surviving everything else, she probably died of some infectious disease shortly before Ward left prison, having completed his two years sentence. If she had not died, would Emma, the woman that Robert Rayner threw everything up for before, and in an intoxicated and besotted, jealous state had tried to kill, have been there waiting? I suspect that it was at this point he returned to his long-suffering wife after an absence of over 10 years. I wonder how that first meeting went.

Back to the humdrum of life in Harleston in 1841; the Ward households on Candler's Lane were both young families: Noah, his wife and two children and Stephen, his wife and 6 children, the youngest of whom was Henry, aged three, the grandfather to be of our Harleston Hero, Reginald. Slightly surprisingly, whilst the family were still at the top of Candler's Lane in 1851, Stephen was now an 'Undertaker' rather than the ubiquitous 'Agricultural Labourer' he claimed 10 years previously.

Stephen Ward may have stayed on Bunkers Hill with his family but by 1851, two of his older brothers, John and Thomas Ward had moved into Rodwell's Yard, later Duke William's Yard now Constable Court. By 1861, Henry Ward was himself lodging in one of 17 households in Duke William Yard, now known as Constable Court, one of the more crowded and less sanitary courtyards in town.

The Duke William Wards were a lively lot; Noah Ward, (another of the brothers) was committed for 7 days in 1867 for assaulting Maria Goldspink. Eleven years later, in 1878, the same chap wound up spending another week in the Castle, this time for stealing a shovel from John Soans, a bricklayer, in Needham. Intriguingly, back in 1828, an Eliza Soans had baptised her illegitimate child 'John Ward Soanes', the middle name indicating his parental lineage. I wonder if John Ward Soanes grew up to become our robbed bricklayer which could mean that Noah Ward was stealing from an (illegitimate) uncle/cousin whatever! Although he totally denied the crime, Noah should have taken the stolen shovel further on than Harleston when he tried to sell it!

The family of Henry's brother, John Ward, were struck by two more tragedies. John, his wife Charlotte, 5 daughters and youngest child, a son, were living out on the Rushall Road in Starston in 1861. The second child Almena was aged 12 and the third, Mary Anne was aged 8, the family may well have returned to Harleston later on that year as in November 1861 a Charlotte Ward tipped up in court due to her involvement in a circular drunken brawl also featuring William Bird and Sarah Ann Cook, also of Duke William Lane. More of the Birds later - this certainly was the rough end of town, balanced by the Common, almost as wayward on the other side of town.

Bear with this tragic tale, linked strongly as it is to the Ward family and indicating once more the chaotic families in this particular courtyard!

Henry Parker, the sawyer son of a mostly perfectly respectable sawyer originally from Bungay, had been raised between Bungay and Wortwell until he appeared in Duke William Yard in 1871 whilst his parents were on Duke William Lane. Henry Parker's landlady, Hannah Dunn, was the wife of an 'agricultural labourer in prison' and was struggling to keep herself and her four children aged 6 and under out of the workhouse whilst her husband served his sentence. Whilst I don't know what Edward Dunn, 'marine store dealer' – (slightly iffy scrap/general dealer) was doing in prison in 1871 he was a recidivist. In 1875 Dunn was caught poaching, one of only two out a gang of six, on Sir Robert Shafto Adair's Estate. In 1879, he was charged with failing to send his two oldest daughters, Patience and Emily Dunn to school. In 1880 he was in much worse trouble when, along with Henry Gostling,⁸ he was convicted of stealing a 30-shilling watch from a chap from Brockdish.

⁷ An Emma Rayner at any rate and since I was unable to trace her after this point, I am assuming this to be her.

⁸ Raised on the Common – see 505, 508.

This was a bizarre echo of when Hannah Dunn's lodger Henry Parker 'for a lark' nicked a turnip of a watch of his chum Ambrose Frost in 1871. Parker was given four months hard labour so poor Hannah Dunn wound up with both her lodger and her husband in jail. Another demonstration of the nature of the rougher folks of Harleston during so called respectable Victorian times. I am delighted to say that by 1891 Hannah's husband Edward had sorted himself out, was working as a Plate Layer for the G.E.R and the family were living out in Lush Bush.

Also, in Duke William Yard, was Emma Shepherd from the Common whom Henry Parker married in 1876, by 1881 the childless couple were living out in Weybread whilst Henry's parents were living on the Common. By 1891 Henry Parker and Emma nee Shepherd were living in Bungay next door to Henry's parents. I think we have already gathered that Henry sometimes mixed in slightly shady company but nothing we have heard so far would prepare one for the next episodes in his life.

It appears that Henry and Emma Parker's marriage was a bit of a mixed bag. A newspaper report of 1904 confirms how they had married at Redenhall in the late 1870's living there for 2 years before moving to Weybread followed by the move to Bungay shortly after the 1881 census.

It was during this period that Henry Parker became friendly with Robert Baker, town road sweeper (or scavenger as he was listed in the 1891 census) and his wife, Mary Ann Baker. Before the 1891 census Baker had been a bricklayer, indeed the son of a very successful bricklayer, who at one point had actually employed 7 men and a boy; I am not sure Robert Baker was in his father's league. So friendly did the threesome become that Henry Parker stayed at their house in Webster Lane for a week over the Christmas of 1891 and continued the occasional overnight visit during the next year.

This may have been a bit of a relief to Emma; it was reported that "Parker was a very nasty tempered man when in drink and would knock his wife about and otherwise treat her very badly". Following such a bout in September 1892, he semi strangled his wife who wrenched herself away and called for help. Parker's parents, then just turned 60, rushed to help from their neighbouring house. Emma threatened to have her husband locked up, Henry promptly left the home.

Things then become decidedly bizarre; Henry Parker returned to his marital home that afternoon to collect his clothes whilst, that same evening, the Bakers sold up their home for a pittance to a local furniture borker and all three (Parker and Mr and Mrs Baker) set off on the tramp the next morning. Well, I say all three as in the 1891 census, Robert Baker and his wife had three children still at home, Emma 14, Charles 12 and William 9. The two older children had good trade apprenticeships going on, Emma to a print compositor and William to a tailor. Did they take the children with them or leave them at home? What the heck had been going on in that little cottage when Henry stayed over?

We then have a period of vague speculation and reported gossip; it is said that the group wound up in Ipswich but, shortly after, Baker left his wife and (as it transpired) her paramour, Henry. Perhaps three became a crowd. The following year, in 1893, Baker returned to the Shipmeadow Workhouse at Bungay. It was also rumoured that he left the workhouse in the company of a Bungay woman whose husband had killed himself and this unlikely couple moved onto Chelmsford. Half a decade or so later, Baker was spotted in Bungay where he had a few days' work and was believed to have then moved on to Bishop's Stortford. I was not able to trace Baker after the 1891 census.

Now this is when it gets relevant to the story of Reginald Ward; Mrs Mary Ann Baker was nee Ward, daughter of John Ward, niece of Reginald Ward's Grandfather Henry. Mary Ann had married Robert Baker in 1870 when she was just 19, the same age as Henry Parker. Perhaps the two couples had

struck a friendship back in Harleston which Henry revived when he moved to Bungay?

Henry's wife Emma Parker nee Shepperd heard no more from her husband after he headed off to Ipswich, seemed to be glad not to have her husband about and was happily and respectably maintaining herself by her own work.

Mary Ann Baker nee Ward's family, then living in Needham kept in touch with Mary Ann Baker, travelling under the name Mrs Polly Parker, as she and Henry Parker settled down in Ipswich. In 1901 Henry had got himself work as an occasional labourer at the Ipswich Gas Light Company, Mary Ann's son Charles Baker was also in the household but going by the name of Parker whilst another 'son' (of whose parentage I am not sure . . .) Edward Parker, aged only seven, was also living with them. They were then living on Black Horse Lane, the eponymous pub probably being the only part of the street scape that the Parkers would recognise today.

In 1904, the unreliable income from the Gas Works Job was being supplemented by Polly and Henry taking in a boarder. According to this boarder, and indeed all their acquaintances, they were of moderate habits, enjoyed the occasional drink, Henry sometimes becoming a little the worse for wear but not to excess by the standards of the day. The neighbours also testified that the couple were very fond of each other.

And with that word 'testify' I think we can guess this elopement was going to end in trouble of some sort. They were also described as having a young lad, aged about 11, who lived with them, whom they had adopted, presumably this was Edward 'Parker' who had appeared with them in 1901. It was believed that young Edward was the son of one of Mary Ann's daughters so really, he should have been logged as a grandson or a 'son-in-law' a term commonly used at the time to describe an adopted child.

Well, a little unconventional maybe but nothing to warrant the description 'tragic' until we introduce the report of the Coroner's hearing into the tragic double death of this couple who had started out married life with different partners only to follow their passions and find happiness together in their more mature years.

On the final morning of Henry and Polly (Aka Mary Anne Baker nee Ward)'s life, Henry woke the lodger at the normal time of 5.25 in the morning to rouse him for his work at the local foundry. The lodger stated that the couple were happy and that a brother-in-law had recently stayed with them a few days, all parties being perfectly content with each other.

Later on, that morning, at about 11, little Ethel Ladbrook was sent by her mother to invite Polly for a chat. Ethel rapped three times on the back door, with no answer she, as any inquisitive child would, peered through the window only to see Mr and Mrs Parker lying on the hearthrug. Luckily the door she tried to push open was stuck too firmly so the little girl ran back to fetch her mother. Eliza Ladbrook checked out her daughter's tale, realised the couple were covered with blood and ran to a neighbour; this pair then (as any good Victorian women would) went off and found a man to have a look, this young man had a peer himself then ran to a Mr Ling who finally called the police.

Later, Eliza Ladbrook described Mrs Parker as her dear friend and neighbour, a most respectable woman and Mr Parker as a quiet and respectable man. She had known them before they had moved to Blackhorse Lane and knew the couple had come from Bungay; whether she knew the

details of their departure from that town is another matter! She also described how affectionate and happy the couple were.

Surprisingly to us but normal at the time, a neighbour reported he shared two pints of beer with Parker that morning, walloping a quart down between 5.15 and 5.45 – yes in the morning. Personally, that would have floored me but seems to have been fairly par for the course at the time. Another neighbour who passed Parker at 5 minutes to 6 reported he seemed quite normal and also testified to the general happiness of the couple.

The police called Harry Pearce (aka Henry) down from Harleston to Ipswich to see if his testimony could shed some light on what had led to the death of the couple. Harry was married to Anna Ward, Mary Ann's 14 years younger sister. Henry repeated that the pair seemed very happy and respectable but the little lad, Edward, had fair crazed him to take him up to Harleston for a few weeks which he agreed to do. When Anna Pearce nee Ward was called, she stated she had never been to her sister's house and, (before the complexity of Henry and Polly's relationship had been untangled) was decidedly evasive about her sister's domestic arrangements.

The unfortunate jury, were sworn in, then trotted round to Black Horse Lane to view the bodies in situ, to a great deal of interest from a crowd assembled in the street and in the house. All returned to the court, witnesses gave testimony, the Doctor gave evidence and at 10 in the evening, the hearing was adjourned, and the bodies removed from the house.

Next morning, the inquest re-convened and Parker's abandoned wife Emma nee Shepherd came to give evidence, almost rejoicing that she was now officially a widow. Henry's father, Robert, also had the sad obligation to give evidence. He had visited his son in Ipswich about 15 months previously and recognised the little boy (Edward) as being Polly's grandson although the Parkers had been passing him as their own. Rather interestingly Robert said his son had been a teetotaller for a period of seven years and that he had not seen him drunk for 20 years – this is the father who, barely 10 years earlier, had to stop his son from half strangling his wife Emma in a drunken rage. He then slightly spoilt the effect of his evidence by stating that Henry was very violent when in drink and, neatly dumping the problem at his wife's feet, claimed that his wife had a brother and cousin who had died in asylums.

Little Edward Parker (Baker?) was now called, he was living at Harleston for the moment, but said his 'parents' often quarrelled although not violently although his father had hit his mother some 5 or 6 months previously. He also said his father was often the worse for drink, to the point of not being able to walk, but his mother never was, although the landlord stated she got her lunch and supper beer from the Black Horse Inn.

What did transpire was that after Parker had had a quart with his neighbour, he then went to another pub and had another quart with a break between the two pints. It also transpired that Parker, who according to the neighbours was a paragon, had a bit of a reputation as a drinker at his work although it rarely interfered with that work.

The jury passed a verdict that Polly had been murdered by her 'husband' who then committed felo de se; they were unable with a clear conscience to conclude that his mind had in anyway been unsound when he committed the deed.

So, what could possibly have possessed Henry, mid-morning, to remove his boots, tiptoe up behind his 'wife' in the back room when she was doing some hand laundry, slit her throat from side to side and then remove himself to the front room where, to insure the job properly, he stood before a mirror and slit his own throat to the bone? Having done so he then staggered back to the other room where Polly lay dead or dying and laid his head in her lap before he too passed away. I think this last act of devotion from a man who had rarely shown anything but love and affection to a woman he was always kissing and calling 'darling', may provide the clue – bearing in mind this is a time when working class men were not renowned for being openly affectionate.

Henry had thrown his lot in with Polly Baker, abandoning his family, job and whole life to set up home with her which he had done, more or less happily, for about 12 years; whilst Polly had kept in contact with her children, (whether they moved into the house or stayed with other relatives I cannot tell) she seems to have been estranged from the rest of the family for many years. However, in the last few months she had visited her family in Needham, her brother-in-law had come visiting and had taken her grandson home with him. Perhaps her husband was no longer the centre of her universe; in an almost obsessive relationship with a woman who was losing patience with him, he was back sliding into poor drinking habits and, rather than have her attention dispersed amongst her family, or perhaps in fear she might leave him, as she had left her previous husband, and further fired up by the effects of alcohol, he slit the unfortunate woman's throat and then joined her in her gory fate.

What a sad and tragic end to an almost romantic elopement by a couple who had been approaching middle age by the time they met each other.

A week after their deaths, their Parish funeral was suitably Gothic. Having laid side by side in the dead house, the coffins were wheeled together to the Cemetery Church where Henry's coffin was left outside the Church whilst Polly's, accompanied by 5 mourners proceeded into the church. The mourners were her son, William Baker, (a driver in the Royal Engineers who had come down from Newcastle), her daughter Emma, now Mrs Torrel, her sister and brother-in-law, Mr and Mrs Pearce and Mrs Ladbroke, the friend and neighbour whose daughter had found the body. Other than Anna Pearce, none other of the Wards came to the funeral. Originally, under the impression the two were married, a double grave had been dug but on finding the couple had been living without benefit of Clergy, the pair were separated in death as Henry had feared they might be in life and the couple were buried in adjacent plots. Even though the burial had been planned as secretly as possible, some 60 or so spectators, largely women and children, attended the graveyard to see the two varnished coffins interred. Polly, though viewed as a sinner, was also viewed very much as the victim of this tragedy; the vicar had rather more words at her graveside than at Henry's. 90 years earlier, Parker's suicide would most likely have led to him being buried in the roadway with a stake through his heart, not amongst his peers in a Christian graveyard.

Both Robert Ward and Mary Ann Ward wound up in obsessive relationships, that could not, in this time before divorce for the working classes, be anchored in marriage. Both relationships seem to have been further poisoned by alcohol but Robert Ward, back in 1860, failed to cut his lover's throat. 40 years, and a generation later, Mary Ann Ward's husband (who had also abandoned his family in pursuit of the woman he loved) succeeded in cutting both her throat and his own.

You would think this would be enough for one family but no, we have another tale of misery involving another of John's daughters. This could so easily have also resulted in death but instead I feel this

is a tale of a young girl totally out of her depth who came very closely to bringing about the demise of children left in her care.

Almena Ward, 4 years older than the Mary Ann aka Parker ex Baker nee Ward who came to such a grim end in Ipswich married John Borrett in Hoxne in 1866 when she was only 17 years old. This marriage to a man more than twice her age ended tragically, not so much for her but for the two young stepsons and the stepdaughter who came with the marriage. It appears that she was totally unequipped to look after these children whilst her new husband, was too infatuated with his new wife to bother much either. Particularly striking in this case was the general public's different attitude to father and stepmother. There was a strong prejudice amongst the townsfolk in favour of the father and against the stepmother, indeed it was stated in several reports that if Almena's father, John Ward, great-uncle of our Harleston Hero Reginald, had not stepped in, the town's folk would have lynched her.

John Borrett rather assumed that bringing in wages and providing his children with a stepmother had fulfilled his parental duties. Beyond beating Almena on Saturday evenings for not providing sufficient food, he took no more proactive steps to care for his children – leaving the young and inexperienced stepmother to struggle on whilst also doing casual work in the Osier fields on the Waveney Marshes.

It was only two years later after the marriage, in 1868, that John (40) and Almena (19) Borrett appeared in the Harleston Court for a

CASE OF ALLEGED STARVATION

. . . . a case which excited considerable degree of public indignation in the neighbourhood was investigated... John Borrett . . . was charged as the father of Stephen Borrett, a child aged ten years with omitting and refusing to provide his son with proper and nutritious food. The man appears to have married a woman much younger than himself. He was then a widower and had six children, three of whom were of a tender age, and were consequently left under the care of the stepmother during his absences at work. When charged with the offence he at once disclaimed all knowledge of it.

My underlining – surely even an averagely unobservant father would have noticed his children fading away in front of his eyes?

Mr Robert Borrett, (*no relative but equivalent of Social Service Officer*). . . said, "My attention was called to the state of . . . Stephen Borrett, on the 23rd of April. . . Mr Colson, surgeon . . . undressed the child in my presence. The limbs were very much shrunk and . . . emaciated. The child asked for food ...Mr Candler (*stated*) ... the child ... was brought to my surgery by Mr Hudson. The child was very much emaciated in every part except the body. That arose, I imagined, from insufficient food – not from atrophy. The body was swollen. There were no marks of bruises. Mesenteric disease had commenced. An insufficient quantity of food would be sufficient to bring on the disease.

A neighbour also gave evidence, I don't think this is the Mary Ann Rayner whose sister Emma Rayner had her throat cut by Almena's father's cousin, Robert Ward but was instead the wife of Carpenter Robert Rayner! Yes, the relationships in these Yards were very tangled.

Mrs Mary Ann Rayner said .. I have been in the habit of seeing .. Stephen Borrett without food .. I have told the father about it. He said the woman (his wife) had taken a dislike to this child, The stepmother has beaten it two nights running....she is rather (Hesitating) well a person I don't neighbour with....I have seen the children up the yard. I have seen them pick up the crumbs from the stones .. get into the muck bin and eat potato peelings. I have often heard this child scream, .. when the step mother came home.. put them to bed without a bit of anything to eat... in cold seasons during the winter to be kept in the house all day without a bit of fire... I have known the child to be three days without a drop of water...

(This does rather put the lie to John Borrett having no knowledge of the sufferings of his children).

Mary Johnson, wife of a bricklayer ...I saw Stephen Borrett at different times sitting on the threshold of the door crying for victuals. .. he said he was crying for bread. ... When the crumbs were very small, I've seen the poor thing wet it's finger and pick 'em up. I've seen the girl in the muck bin picking the bits of parsnip out. Did you see them eat them? Yes, I've seen the little one come out on the step and eat them

A week later John Borrett was back in court with the three children who had been removed to the Depwade Union Workhouse.

After a fortnight's proper treatment and diet the children presented a better appearance than might have been expected. . . Adelaide, . . . looked pale and wan, as also did Frederick; but the most noticeable effects of the neglect were visible on the appearance of Stephen, five years of age, but who looked only two, having evidently suffered from mesenteric disease. ...Mr R.S.Gowing ... They all looked in a most filthy condition. . . . Frederick had a large ulcerated sore, as big as the palm of my hand on the back of his head. [Sensation] It appeared to have been caused by neglect but he seemed to have had more food than the other two. The children were covered with vermin.... Hannah Harper said – I live in Crowe's⁹ yard. ... I have seen the boy pick up crumbs from my dish cloth and from stones in the yard and when the crumbs were very small, he would wet his finger and get them up. I have seen the girl pick potatoes and parsnip peelings from the muck bin and eat them. .. The little boy Stephen often used to say he would be glad when five o'clock came and then his father would come home and give him some bread. I washed the little boy several times as I could not bear to see him so filthy. ...

The little girl Abigail was then brought into court – difficult to imagine nowadays

.. the child sobbed and wept so much .. afraid to be amongst so many people... she did say .. the neighbours gave her and her brother food sometimes, because they had not enough at home, that was when her father was from home . . . Her little brother was beaten by his stepmother 'because his belly ached'. ... very often with a big strap and a stick which was 'not very thick'.. .. the window and door were tied up by her stepmother . . Her brother Edgar would give them bread and cheese for dinner when there was any. Their stepmother would give them bread and cheese and treacle when she came home.*(to her father)* you never beat me and always gave me victuals when you were home.

⁹ Crowe and Burford – grocers.

The youngest child was passed to the bench . . . on being asked if he would like to go home said “yes” and on seeing his father said “Daddy go home too” and holding up some sweets which had been given him. He said look here Daddy”

The older brother, Edgar, also gave evidence

I have come lately to live at Harleston with my father. Sometimes no food is left for us . . . my little brother cry, and . . . complain of being hungry. If there was any bread or cheese we used to get it. Mother washed the children almost every Sunday morning. I have seen both my brothers beaten by my mother but not by my father. .. My sister washed them almost every morning; she almost always had soap. I go home at eight and one o'clock every day. I have bread and cheese, if there is any. Mother leaves it for us if there is any. If there was only a little we had it amongst us. We often have no dinner on Saturday. I saw my brothers head was in a bad state; father told mother to clean it and keep the children clean. I have seen mother beat Stephen as many as twenty times all together with her hand. I never saw her with a stick. There was almost always a fire in the house when I went home. *(To his father)* – you never misused me. You always gave me victuals when I was at home and mother took it away from me and you took it away from her again. She used to take victuals from Stephen. ... Stephen used to cry for food. ... I have seen you beat mother almost every Saturday night because she did not give the children enough victuals. You used to beat her with your hand. You told her to mind and give us enough food. Mother made me go without food sometimes when there was food in the house, sometimes because I was a naughty boy. You never made me go without food. We dare not get food when we were hungry.

That does all seem rather muddled and I feel Almena is being thrown under the juggernaut of justice out of the children’s loyalty to their father – I think it no coincidence that the mother got beaten on a Saturday night, traditional boozing night. The article goes on to report

On leaving the court, the stepmother, a young woman who did not appear to be more than 21 years of age, *(actually only 19)* only escaped rough treatment by her father hurrying her away from a crowd of people who seemed bent on venting their indignation upon her.

...children ...taken back to Pulham.

Three weeks later, and Almena was also in the dock

indicted for wilfully neglecting, omitting, and refusing to provide food and nourishment for their children,...

Henry Lombard Hudson....the children were sent by witness’ direction to the workhouse. They were in a most shocking and horrible condition. The cottage was in a very dirty state. ...

Mr Candler Surgeon ..(Stephen) was removed to the workhouse and was now very ill. The swelling had not gone down and the limbs were still very much wasted.....When he saw the boy Frederick (about ten days after he saw Stephen) the child's head was full of scars, and supposed that lice &c

...guilty against both defendants, but they thought the female very much the worse...male prisoner three months hard labour and the female six months imprisonment

It should be noted that evidence had been given that the mother was also out working from seven in the morning, peeling 'rods'¹⁰ at Wortwell and that when she was working she would lock the children in a bedroom without food. From the modern perspective it would seem the stepmother was totally out of her depth; only the same age as her oldest stepchildren, their father gave neither practical nor emotional support to her. Judged harshly by her neighbours, they too could have contacted the authorities earlier than they did. Part way through the hearings it was queried by the magistrates as to whether the wife could be held responsible in a legal point of view (it being traditionally held that a man was responsible for the actions of his wife) – the counsel decided yes so Almena, having already been tried and found guilty in the eyes of the town and the gossip of the yards, was taken to legal trial. This in spite of evidence from the older son, Edgar Borrett, that his father regularly beat his stepmother on Saturday nights – presumably after a drink or three.

With splendidly oblivious hypocrisy, directly below the reporting of the decision that Almena was to stand trial for cruelty to her children appeared a reported of a startling sentence given by the magistrates to 9 years old George Baker (Barker) from Brockdish. For the crime of being on the premises of Mr Coulson one evening for some unlawful purpose,¹¹ apparently no actual crime having been committed, this young lad was sent to Norwich castle for twenty-one days hard labour. I still cling to the hope that this was a mis-print and young George was actually 19 not 9, but there was a George Barker, Brockdish resident and born, aged 1, in the 1861 census so it is quite possible this primary school age child was sent to the Castle Gaol in 1868. Harsh indeed.

150 years after the event I was delighted to find that the three children survived the ordeal of their early childhood into adult hood and at least one went on to have children of their own.

In 1881, Almena, the 'wicked stepmother' so harshly judged by both the town and the magistrates, was living back with her parents, younger sister and grandmother on Candler's Lane and working as a dress maker. I lose track of Almena after this '81 census.

Lets go off a bit sideways for another tale of scandal and tragedy from Duke William Yard; we have already mentioned above how, back in 1861, John Ward's wife Charlotte was involved in a fracas involving William Bird. In 1851 William was heading one of only two non-bricklaying households in the yard and living with his bride to be Emma Barkaway, the couple married that same year. Yup, the Barkaways were another family lurking at this end of town, father was a butcher who had come into town just after the 1841 census.

In the census of 1861, the Birds were still in Duke William Yard with three children, the oldest of whom died in the second quarter of 1863, by which time Emma Bird, a recognised prostitute, had already moved to the shady side of the tracks in Gas House Lane Bungay.. Harleston was either very tolerant of prostitution and never bothered prosecuting those involved or very intolerant and ran the ladies out of town – have found no reports of cases in the magistrates courts at all! By late 1864 William Bird, labourer of Harleston had wound up in Norwich Castle doing 7 days hard labour for leaving his two surviving children chargeable to the parish, this in spite of Emma having

¹⁰ Most likely willow stems grown prolifically in this area in Osier beds for use in the basket making industry.

¹¹ Norfolk Chronicle 4 Jul 1868

abandoned the family.

Whilst William and Emma Bird were living apart, she semi hooked up with Robert/William Savage, both from a fine clutch of large families of Savages in nearby Ellingham, just across the border in Norfolk. The 1851 census list brothers, Robert and William Savage, aged 19 and 21; the pair weave their ways in and out of the Bungay courts.

In 1863, between two and three in the morning, a fire broke out in a stable adjacent to Emma Bird's cottage in Gas House Lane. Other neighbours had been alarmed by

a loud knocking noise accompanied with groans and cries of 'murder', 'thieves,' fire ...from a boarded ...partly a cottage .. partly a stable . . .The knocking was so loud that police constables ... hastened to the spot and ... PC Farthing saw the woman Bird rush out of her house, dressed .. in her night clothes, and immediately after ... Savage .. usually called King, come out of the same house, having only his trousers on. Savage pointed at the building ... on fire 'There's a man in that place' and rushed at the door which at once flew open and a man was then seen all on fire ... Savage dashed through the fire .. and tried to pull him out but he lost his hold as the man's clothes and flesh gave way. ... Savage was obliged to retreat but ..renewed the attempt to rescue the man ... he was obliged to run out as his own clothes caught fire and he left the building fearfully burned in the hands, head and various parts of the body.

The neighbours ... were exerting themselves to extinguish the fire, but without avail, until Charles Palmer, got upon the roof and pushed the rafters down .. the flames were quickly subdued .. some time elapsed before anyone could clear away the debris and recover the body of the man ... but a mass of charred matter.

It was good job that Palmer had leapt into action as the Bungay Fire Engine failed to appear. Pc Farthing tried to raise Mr Balls, who was in charge of the engine and got the fairly curt response that he could not move the engine by himself. Balls did actually turn up at the fire, without engine so the firefighting efforts were focussed on locals forming chains of buckets from the local pumps.

The inquest was opened on the assumption the dead man was a person unknown and the unfortunate jury were sent to view the remains of the deceased

Which had been deposited in a coach house, but they were so much shrunk, shrivelled and blackened by the fire as to have lost all trace of humanity, and presented a horrifying spectacle.....

As no-one knew that a man had been in the shed and Savage declared he did not know who he was ...but as Savage was known to have been out at two-o'clock in the morning in the company of a man named Borrett ... it was supposed it was he.

Although PC Farthing could see the victim when Savage attempted to rescue him, the man was stooped against a wall with his head turned away, Farthing believed he was already dead at that point. Quick reminder – as Savage tumbled partially dressed from Bird's cottage he had shouted that there was a man in the stable!

The reasons for the vagueness begin to emerge as Bird and her paramour William Savage aka King Savage start giving their direct testimony. Emma Bird rather primly starts

I am a married woman. I lived alone in a cottage adjoining the stable. ... I was with Savage and some others at the Bell ... about half past eleven o'clock, Savage went out, but came back again ... said a young man was coming in to stand a pot of beer. ... the landlord said it was late and he must have his house cleared ... but afterwards we had some beer. I left ... but Savage and some others stopped. I went directly home and went to bed and as I was not sober, I soon fell asleep.

The Bury and Norwich Post plainly refers to Emma as a prostitute, a statement backed up by later news reports. After this Emma's rather dubious respectability takes a further tumble

I unfastened the door and let him (Savage) in; he was very drunk. He undressed himself and got into bed with me.

Thus, explaining why Emma was initially seen in her night dress and Savage in just his trousers. While Emma Bird nee Barkaway, former inhabitant of Duke William Yard Harleston, did not know the young man in the Barn, locals identified Sam Borrett as a Bungay born lad, aged 25, who had been living with wife and family up in Norwich and returned to his hometown in search of work.

William Savage and Borrett had been drinking in a local pub the previous evening, looking for lodgings for the young man. The landlady refused and suggested Savage give him lodgings; she later recognised Sam Borrett's baccy tin and scarf amongst the remnants that survived the fire. Savage and Borrett were both drunk when they left her house at about 2 am, Borrett smoking as he went – yes 2am, no 'Time gentlemen please!' in those days!

Due to the extensive burns incurred during his rescue attempts, William Savage was not well enough to attend the inquest, instead he gave testimony from his bed and suggested that Borrett had let himself into the stable, Savage emphatically denied he had given Borrett permission. Savage knew Borrett, freely admitted having spent time together at the Bell and that by the time they left the Horse and Groom they were three parts drunk. He claimed the two parted ways further down the road, Borrett saying he would look for lodgings at the Ship. Alternatively, Savage could have been lying through his teeth, and it was his guilty conscience that had made him so determined to rescue his drinking partner he had incurred serious burns in the process. This was the view adopted by the magistrate who concluded

It was evident that Savage had made up his mind to deny having put Borrett into the stable but he (the coroner) confessed he had some doubts as to the truth of the statement.¹²

It is not too surprising that the magistrate was dubious as to the truth of Savage's testimony- this was a very iffy set of people.

We know Emma had flown the nest from Duke William Yard by 1863 when the fire took place, by 1864 Emma having initially transferred her affections from William Bird to William Savage had now moved onto his brother Robert Savage. They were still cohabiting in 1871 but the relationship

¹² Norfolk Chronicle 21 Feb 1863

ASSAULT ON THE POLICE.— *Samuel Plumb*, laborer, was charged with having, on the 7th inst., unlawfully assaulted George Pont, police constable, with intent to prevent the lawful apprehension of Robert Savage for an assault upon one Emma Bird. The complainant and another constable named Futter were taking Robert Savage to the police station, at Wortwell, at 5 a.m. on the morning of the 7th inst., having apprehended him at Homersfield on the same morning. When they had gone about 50 yards over the bridge, the prisoner Plumb assaulted Pont by striking him repeatedly with a stick, and also attempted to rescue Savage from custody, saying "He shall not go." The prisoner in his defence said he knew nothing about it, as he was drunk at the time. He had served in India during the mutiny, and had suffered from sunstroke, and when he took a pint or two of beer he did not know what he was about. The prisoner was committed for trial at the Sessions.

seemed to have the odd rocky moment as evidenced when Savage was arrested for assaulting Emma in 1864.

Norfolk News
25 Jun 1864

Perhaps this is not too surprising, bearing mind both seemed to enjoy drinking, Emma had been described as a prostitute and Robert was a punchy fellow. In March 1860, theoretically before Emma and Savage got together, Robert Savage, Marine Store Dealer, was summonsed to the Halesworth Court for assaulting and beating a miller at

Halesworth.¹³

Three months later, William Savage, dealer, was one of 3 men and a wife, fined for drunkenness at Halesworth.¹⁴ They could neither walk straight nor talk straight and, almost certainly, not think straight. Just to add to the confusion, another local paper's concurrent coverage of the same event¹⁵ claimed Savage's name to be George! It has to be said that whatever the other failings of the men of Bungay, unlike the men of Harleston, they seemed to be quite happy to take a wife along with them to join in the boozing.

Also, in June, William Savage had been on Bungay Common where the Cricket Club were practising and the Rifle Corps were drilling. The Cricketers had left their coats etc in a marquee, Savage and Taylor had been in and out of the Marquee, money went missing, 6 weeks hard labour apiece

A mere two months after that incident I rather assume Robert, who seems the punchier of the two men, to have been the

Savage, labourer, ... charged with having ... unlawfully assaulted and beaten Edward Bowles of Bungay Innkeeper.¹⁶

The case boiled down to Savage had already been banned from the pub refusing to leave when Bowles asked him to do so. Savage then struck Bowles when the landlord tried to implement this ban. Inspector Gobbett, when quizzed by the bench

Said that the defendant had already been complained about by other innkeepers as they would not have him at their houses. He has been fined twice for drunkenness and is a troublesome character.

£2 fine plus 8s 6d costs or, in default, the absent defendant was to be sentenced to one month. As a by the way, Robert Savage was living with Ann Yallop in Turn Stile Lane during the 1861 census whilst Emily Bird was still with her husband, William Bird.

In mid '65

¹³ The Suffolk Chronicle 17 Mar 1860

¹⁴ The Suffolk Chronicle 23 Jun 1860

¹⁵ 26 Jun 1860

¹⁶ The Suffolk Chronicle 30 Mar 1861

Robert Savage was convicted of being drunk and disorderly in Bungay, early in the morning of the 17th June, and was fined 5s., and costs 3s. 6d., which he at once paid ¹⁷

In early 1866, marine store dealer (shady second hand & scrap merchant) Robert Savage was remanded in custody on the charge of having stolen a donkey at Eye¹⁸ whilst at the other end of the same year Robert Savage, of Bungay, labourer, was charged with having ... assaulted policeman French while in the execution of his duty. Savage pled guilty and as he had been repeatedly fined for drunkenness and for assaults, he was fined £5 and in default was sentenced to two months imprisonment with hard labour¹⁹. As there would have been little to no chance of him finding the fine, I think we can assume he did the two months! In between these two convictions he also managed to pick up a two-month commitment to Ipswich jail.²⁰

In the late 1860's Emma, already described as a prostitute was mixing in very dodgy company indeed and appeared to be up to her old tricks

Ellen Haystead, a flax worker from Scole, (Emma's birth place) who had not seen or heard from her husband in 8 years, met Emma Bird at Bungay Fair in September 1867. The pair do seem to have a cavalier attitude to the state of matrimony! A complicated tale boils down to a married millwright claiming Emma and Ellen stole his money. Much to the surprise of all concerned, the 'ladies' were acquitted of so doing. The following April, on the basis that if she been acquitted of stealing the money it must therefore be hers, Ellen Haystead tried to reclaim the money that had been confiscated from her. , took the local Police Inspector to court to reclaim what she said was actually hers!

In the subsequent case the original evidence was rehashed; during the Bungay Fair the ladies went together to the King's Head at Bungay where they met Geo. Balls who was known to Emma Bird, pulled both Emma and Ellen down beside him treated the pair to rum and water. The three carried on drinking all afternoon, Balls repeatedly asking Bird if she would go out for a walk although it may be inferred he was interested in a different form of exercise. Neither ladies took him up on his charming offer but after varying to-ing and fro-ing both ladies left and a short while later Ellen Haystead was arrested at Bungay Fair by policeman Farthing.

Haystead claimed her and Emma were then taken to Beccles, the money she had on her person (to pay her rent and buy some flour with) was taken from her by Inspector Cole. The pair were sent to trial in the October Sessions for stealing money from Balls, but were both acquitted after which Haystead tried to reclaim 'her' money – Cole offered her back her purse with the silver in it but not the gold sovereigns which Ellen alleged he kept in his hand.

In cross questioning, Ellen stated she earned her living in Yarmouth by selling yeast and herrings! She denied she was a disorderly prostitute but admitted to having been fined for not being at home and being out rather late. She went on to claim no knowledge of whether Emma Bird was or was not a prostitute but that she was living with a man. To be fair, at the time there was a fairly grey area between full time prostitutes and women who earned themselves a little extra money when times got hard.

¹⁷ The Suffolk Chronicle 1 Jul 1865

¹⁸ The Suffolk Chronicle 27 Jan 1866

¹⁹ The Ipswich Journal 29 Dec 1866

²⁰ The Suffolk Chronicle 2 Jun 1866

Things then get rather complicated; it appears that when the two women were in a cell together at Beccles they had a falling out – according to Coles about sharing out the money the two had stolen from Balls.

The police

At some length ...point(ed) out the bad character of the plaintiff and her companion Bird

Balls then gave his evidence with his wife also in court – a tricky situation which he covered by ‘recollecting’ that he went in to have a drink with two watermen and at some point his drink was drugged as

I was never in such a state before in my life. I do not recollect what happened after that.

Ho hum! His more than slightly irritated wife stated that Balls had gone out in the afternoon with £11 8s 8d in his pocket in spite of his wife asking him to leave it at home. One of Ball’s sons brought him back that evening helplessly drunk with only £2 in his pocket.

Sarah Mills, the pub cook, saw Balls buy the watermen beer and some 30 minutes later saw Heystead and Bird join him. She went on to state that as Balls produced money to buy drinks, each woman took drinks money plus more money for themselves. Fairly damning evidence but Mills did back up Ball’s claims that his drink was tampered with at which point Mills went to fetch her mistress but when they returned together, Balls was alone in the kitchen.

This evidence was followed by a bit of a rehash, Inspector Coles had returned the gold coins in question to Balls who apparently just wanted the whole thing to go away – possibly the thought of his wife’s reaction to the whole sorry case being dragged through court again, to the entertainment of the locals, was out weighing the attraction of getting some of his money back.

The judge’s conclusion was that, contrary to what had been decided at the Quarter Sessions, the women had stolen the money, had no right to it and therefore Coles actions in passing it onto the most likely owner, i.e Balls, were quite reasonable.²¹

After all this you would have thought George Balls would have really kept his distance from Bird and Heyward but just six months after the court hearing described above

Emma Bird, described as a prostitute, was charged with stealing a sovereign from the person of George Balls, millwright, Bungay at the Royal Oak.²²

I have no doubt that George would have really got stick from his wife when the details of this latest transaction with the ill-reputed Emma Bird hit the local papers. Sent up to the quarter sessions, the bill against Emma Bird (35) no occupation²³ was ignored.

In the 1871 census Emma Bird, claiming to be a ‘gloveress’ was still living in Gas House Lane, Bungay with a ‘lodger’ Robert Savage whilst her husband, ‘married’ in name only William Bird and his son John were lodging in Diss. Extraordinary as it seems, Emma and William Bird eventually settled their differences and by 1881 they were back together and living in Warham where they both

²¹Yarmouth Independent 25 Apr 1868

²²Norfolk News 24 Oct 1868

²³Norwich Mercury 24 Oct 1868

died, aged only 53 and 57 respectively, in 1887.

So as well as drama and tragedy, I think we are getting the picture that some of the Harlestonites of the olden days were not exactly chocolate box Quality Street!

ordered to pay 4s. 6d. costs.—William Emms, of Harleston, labourer, was brought up on a warrant for stealing manure, the property of H. Lombard Hudson, merchant, of Harleston, on the 20th of July last. Emms stated that he was called up that morning by G. Ward, who was summoned the same time he was, and who appeared, and was let off by paying the expenses. As Mr. Hudson withdrew the charge, he hoped he would do the same for him; and after a short consultation, Mr. Hudson withdrew the charge, the magistrates ordering Emms to pay 15s. 6d. expenses.—William

Moving back to Reginald's immediate ancestors; by 1861, great grandfather Stephen Ward was living on the Thoroughfare with his wife and was now claiming to be a Carter so I think we can assume he had previously been driving the hearses when he claimed to be an undertaker. His household was then headed by his 28

years old son James, also involved in transport but in a very modern way; he was a Railway Shunter. Youngest son George had followed his father and was also a carter. George got into trouble 4 years later, accused of stealing night soil (human poo!) – and yes there was a market for such stuff, used in fertilisers. Nice.

Norwich Mercury
4 Oct 1865

George had colluded with a former neighbour, William Emms formerly of Bunkers Hill and before that of Duke William Yard, and whilst George had been merely charged expenses at the original court case, local business man Hudson (the owner of the pooh) was terrier like in his pursuit of these people who had stolen the pooh! Luckily it seems the magistrates managed to talk Hudson out of perusing the matter beyond gaining recompense of expenses. Years later, in 1888, William Emms was . .

Buried Alive – On Monday afternoon a very sad occurrence took place at a gravel pit at Needham, about a mile from this town. An old man named Emms, in the employ of Mr J. Smith, bricklayer, Harleston, was sent to the pit for the purpose of carting sand. While ... in his work a portion of the gravel bank caved in and covered the poor fellow who was alone at the time. When news of the sad accident reached the town help was ... sent and the deceased extracted. ... had no doubt been buried at least two hours before his remains were dug out ... "Accidental death"

And indeed, a William Emms, aged 63 funeral took place at Redenhall on the 8th November 1888.

Henry Ward stayed on in Duke William Yard, that hot bed of brawls and misbehaviour, whilst his various relatives scattered throughout the town and to that Yard he brought Mary Randall from Brockdish whom he married in late 1861; there was an outbreak of Typhus in both Duke Yard and on the Common in 1863, but dear Henry and Mary struggled on and in 1871 his house must have been bursting at the seams with 6 children and a lodger.

The youngest child, appearing as Frank Herbert, name had changed to Herbert Frank by 1881 – this was Reginald Herbert's father to be.

In 1874

Jubal Shephard of Harleston, laborer, was charged with stealing pair of boots, value 2a. 6d., the property of Henry Ward of the same place.

Very much 'of the same place', the Shephards also lived in Duke William Yard, Henry had gone to bed, leaving his boots safely in his house, next morning following a visit from Jubal, they were gone! Mind you, as former partners in crime, I don't suppose the theft came as a great surprise although it was way back in 1852, when they were still teenagers, that the two lads got off the charge of duck stealing, essentially due to a technicality. Once Henry had got through the awkward teen years he seems to have kept a fairly clean record. Although in 1868 Robert Calver took Henry to court for stealing his shovel, it transpired Calver had left the shovel in the care of the landlord of the Red Lion, a pub in the centre of Harleston, and since Henry Ward had the blanket permission of the landlord to borrow any of his tools (although in light of other goings on in the town this might have been retrospective permission), the case was dismissed.

By 1881 the family had broken away from the shady end of town and had moved up to live next door to the Three Horse Shoes, living in one of the muddle of cottages demolished to make way for the petrol station that stands there today. Further muddle; Frank Herbert was now Herbert Frank and baby Frank, only 5 years old, had been added to the mix – confusing!

The family were back on the Eastern side of the town, up in Jays Green, in 1891, neighbours to the Barkaways! At this point father Harry Ward was away, mother Mary was claiming to be a coal merchant and the two children left at home, (Frank) Herbert and Frank were both coal carters – good to keep it in the family! And there Mary stayed for the next 20 years, although in 1901 she was away and Harry was home! In 1911 she could claim to have raised all but one of her 8 children to adulthood and as a 71 years old widow was doing a spot of sick nursing.

Herbert had married to Lucy from Costessey, not sure when, but they seem to have set up home, back at the other end of town as when Ethel was baptised in 1893 they were living on the Common. By 1901 they had 5 children – oldest one Frank, already 10 years of age indicating that the wedding was a bit of a rush job! By 1911 Lucy and Herbert had 9 children, all at home, only Frank (a Valet) and Reggie (a builders labourer) bringing in a wage – Herbert as a jobbing gardener must have been working hard!

Times were hard, most happily accepted that unplanned babies came along but not all girls dealt with this so well. Edward Dunn, son of Hannah Dunn who had been Henry's Landlady back in the

A SERIOUS CHARGE.
Ellen Mary Dunn of Harleston, domestic servant, was charged with attempting to conceal the birth of her child at Harleston on an unknown date this year.
Herbert Frank Ward of Harleston, scavenger, deposed to the finding of the body in a pit on Mr. Richard Blakeley's premises in Station Road, Harleston, on the 10th inst., and to handing it to Police-constable Stone.
Police-constable R. J. Stone stated that he went with Ward to Mr. Blakeley's premises, and took possession of the body, which he handed to Dr. Robinson.
Dr. J. C. R. Robinson deposed to making a post-mortem examination of the body, which was that of a fully developed male child. He found no evidence of the child having had a separate existence.
Sergeant John Addy stated that he had an interview with defendant, who, after being cautioned by Superintendent Southgate, admitted that the child was hers, and that she placed it where it was found.
Defendant was committed for trial at the Assizes, and her father's recognisance of £5 accepted for her appearance.

1870s, named his daughter Ellen for one of his sisters. In 1910, Hannah Dunn's granddaughter and the son of her former lodger Henry Ward, Herbert Frank Ward, were united in a tragic incident, involving once more a child. At this time Herbert Francis/Frank Ward was a scavenger or rubbish man; he found Ellen Dunn's abandoned baby in a pit on Station Road. The doctor who inspected the baby could not state it had ever lived, although doctors at that time could be very understanding of what might have occurred when a young and scared girl gave birth alone; older women had a harder time in the courts

Norfolk News
21 May 1910

A year later Ellen was back at work, the only servant in the 9 room White House,

Somerleyton.

In 1912 young Reggie joined the Territorials who at that time were based up at the Drill Hall behind the station. With magnificent Gun Carriages, splendid Uniforms and regular Drill Meetings this was very much the centre of social life for many Harleston lads at the time. Reggie was then working as a carter for local builder Arthur Rayner who not only employed many of the other lads whose names feature on the war memorial but also lost his own son in the war that was shortly to break out.

At aged 17, Reggie (who probably had another inch or so to grow, lads tended to mature slower on those days) was a very respectable almost 5'8" although slim as most of the recruits were in those days. Of course, being in the Territorials would have meant that Reginald would have been one of

Reginald Ward, of Harleston, labourer, was charged with using obscene language on 27th June. Police-constable Harward stated that at Harleston he saw defendant leave the Cherry Tree Inn and stagger about the road. He was not drunk but pretended to be so, and used very foul language. Defendant was fined 2/6 and costs 4/-, and advised by the Chairman to leave off playing the fool. What he had done was silly.

the first to enter the forces at the outbreak of war and doubtless he went off with all his other Drill Hall chums ready for an exciting adventure. Reggie died on the same day, side by side with two other of those friends, George Frost who also worked for Rayner, and Frederick Borrett a carpenter. Frederick is the only one of the three with a known

grave.

Diss Express
3 Jul 1914

As an 19 years old lad, Reginald, son of the branch of the Wards who had managed to keep their heads down and out of trouble, rather kicked his heels up and got himself into a minor spot of trouble for acting the fool after a few drinks at the Cherry Tree. Things would have ended very differently if he had gone the whole hog and landed a punch on the policeman who arrested him; men with criminal records were not wanted by the army

Diss Express
9 Dec 1932

Perhaps it was the family's involvement in the Congregational Church that had helped keep Herbert Ward and his brood out of mischief? Mr and Mrs Ward had taken on the role of caretaker halfway through the war; after 8 years, their daughter, Gertrude had relieved her ailing mother of the role and became her father's assistant.

Gertie was 10 years Reggie's junior and would have been just 10 when her big brother died. She may have assumed that with so many men not returning from the war, she would have been unlikely to marry however in 1937, aged 30, she tied the knot with Reginald Staff at the Methodist Church.

WEDDING.

Two Harleston families were united at the Harleston Methodist Church on Thursday of last week when Mr. Reginald Ernest Staff, son of the late Mr. F. J. Staff, Harleston, was married to Miss Gertrude Harriet Ward, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. Ward, Jays Green, Harleston.

The service was taken by the Rev. Howard of Wymondham, and the Rev. W. Suttor, of Fressingfield, while the hymns "Oh perfect love" and "Lead us, Heavenly Father" were sung.

The bride, who was given away by her father, wore a pale blue dress and a similarly coloured blue veil to tone, in addition carrying a bouquet of white chrysanthemums.

Bridesmaids were Miss Maud Leeder, cousin of the bride, and Miss D. Last, niece of the bride, both being attired in dresses of pale pink with hats to tone, wearing heather necklaces and carrying bouquets of pink roses. The best man was Mr. Alec F. Dyer.

Following the ceremony a reception was held in the Wesleyan Sunday School Hall, after which the newly married couple left for Bognor Regis (Sussex) on their honeymoon. For going away the bride was dressed in blue, with a blue flecked coat and hat to tone.

Reginald Ernest came from the same end of town as his bride, a, much more respectable area in the early 20th Century than it had been just 50 years previously.

Gertrude's groom, Reginald Ernest Staff was one of the older sons of Frederick and Ellen Staff although by 1911 his mother had died and his stepmother, Louisa, was helping raise him and 5 siblings in Everson's Yard. Father Frederick was a groom, to the local vet; as a jolly little aside, Frederick and his employer, John Buckingham MRCVS enjoyed a lock in the Duke William back in 1901, Frederick got so plastered he was fined 6s 6d, the land lord, John Reeve, was fined £1 4 /- for permitting drunkenness, the vet got away with it!

Reggie Ward did not really live long enough to leave a lasting inheritance behind him, but he came from an interesting family. The town would have known all about his relatives: the wild, the heroic, the victimised and the vilified. I have no doubt that this would have shaped him as he grew up even though those involved in the dramas described above were cousins of his forbears rather than direct ancestors.

Reggie's story also casts a light into the shadier parts of our Town's history; sleepy now, wild back in the day with many teetering on the edge of coping and with none of the safety nets that those on the edges of society have available today.

Harleston Congregational Church.

An interesting ceremony took place at the close of evening service at the Harleston Congregational Church on Sunday when a presentation was made to Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Ward and Miss Gertrude Ward on their relinquishing the duties of caretakers owing to the continued indisposition of Mrs. Ward. The Rev. G. Sydenham presided; and Mr. F. G. Aldis (church secretary and senior deacon) on behalf of the church, referred to the 16 years' faithful service rendered, as to the first eight years by Mr. and Mrs. Ward and as to the latter eight years by Mr. Ward and his daughter. Mr. and Mrs. Ward were appointed in October, 1916, and carried out their duties with marked regularity, special mention being made of the deep interest shown by Miss Ward, who had frequently exceeded her bare duties in the interests of the church.

Mr. Sydenham then handed to Mr. Ward, on behalf of his wife and himself, a case of stainless knives, accompanied by a knife box; and to Miss Ward a clock in oak case, suitably inscribed.