



## Robert George Dove

819 Corporal, E Company, 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Norfolk Regiment

He died on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1915 in Gallipoli, aged 27

George (as he was known) is commemorated on the Helles Memorial, Gallipoli, Turkey and is also commemorated on the Sandringham War Memorial



*Possibly the Sandringham E Coy – from context, but not actually detailed as such.*



*'The Lost Battalion in the Suvla Bay Operations', First World War, c1915, (c1920). 'Officers of the 1/5 (Territorial) Norfolk Regiment, sixteen of whom, with Colonel Sir Horace G. Beauchamp, charged with their men and were lost in the forest'. Need permission to use via Almay **Image ID: W6P94K***

Robert George Dove was the name George was baptised under back in mid-1888, but other than then and in his military records he always appeared under the name George. Quite a number of Harlestonites born in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century wound up working as servants in some rather grand houses and for some rather grand people, all over the country, George Dove of Wortwell may not have travelled so far geographically but he was certainly working for as grand a family as possible at the time. In 1911 he was one of 12 gardeners living in a single dwelling next to the head gardener's home on the Sandringham Estate. There were about 100 gardeners in total, the grounds had been opened to the public in 1908, doubtless marvelling at the work carried out by this small army of men.

The foreman who was one of the inhabitants of the Bothy, kept things in good order, and there were some very unequivocal rules:-

No Smoking

No Nailed Boots upstairs

Indoors by 10.30

If drunk or incapable – you will be fired

Inhabitants to share the work of keeping the Bothy tidy, including lighting fires, washing dishes etc etc

The man in charge (a weeks spell at a time) not to leave the Gardens

No showing the Gardens or Guests without permission

All breakages or improper use of anything connected with the bothy, to be reported to the Head Gardener.

Church attendance at least once every Sunday

Mis behave too much, and you can be fired!

Since their dwelling had a total of 16 dwelling rooms, I think we can assume that each had their own bedroom and shared a common room and a dining room.

George was the son of an unremarkable farmer and thatcher, Frederick Dove, born in St Cross and raised in Wortwell. George's father, Frederick was himself the son of a local blacksmith who had come to a tragically early end. In 1857, in the yard of the Dove public house, a fatal accident occurred to Richard Dove, a blacksmith and a man accustomed to working with horses. Having had a drink or two with the owner of some just shod colts (the equine equivalent of a hormone driven teenager and intrinsically skittish and unpredictable), he laid his hand upon one which promptly kicked him so hard that he died shortly after, leaving his wife and four fatherless children destitute.<sup>1</sup> George's father was one of those four children but, fortunately his mother rapidly re-married, in 1859, to a John Ray, appearing with her new husband (eleven years her junior!) and the four children, who retained the name of Dove, in the 1861 census. By 1871, Hannah Ray nee late Dove had added two more children to the clutch whilst 2 of her sons, including Frederick, remained in the blended household.

The Dove family was of a decent size, in 1881 Frederick and wife Alice had 5 children under the age of 5; what a handful, in many ways! The Doves were all over Wortwell and the area at the time, not only were there George's parents and at least 12 of his siblings<sup>2</sup> there were also various aunts, uncles and cousins scattered around the village of Wortwell. From 1938 onwards, three of the Dove boys from Wortwell, Malcolm, Jack and Billy, had their local boxing exploits reported in the paper – Jack was still boxing in 1948. 60 years earlier lads from the village would have been more likely to indulge in drunken fisticuffs than elegant Queensbury! Indeed, in 1866, Georges father, Frederick was sent before the magistrates for assaulting another man in Alburgh! This however seems to have been the only slip up from an otherwise most respectable family.

George gave his place of birth as Harleston when he enlisted, at Sandringham, along with many of the other workers on this grand estate. His sacrifice is also marked on the Sandringham estate memorial the records of which confirm that he did indeed work in the gardens, but also more precisely that he enlisted on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1914 and died at Sulva Bay, Gallipoli on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1915.

The chap who instigated the Sandringham Coy of Volunteers (E Coy, 5<sup>th</sup> Norfolk) was BECK, FRANK REGINALD, M.V.O., Capt., 5th Battn. The Norfolk Regiment. (T.F.), son. of the late Edmund Beck, Land Agent to H.M. The King at Sandringham and was himself Land Agent at Sandringham to H.M. the late King (when Prince of Wales), 1891—1901, to King Edward VII. 1901-10, and to H.M. the King from 1910 till his death. Having founded the unit in 1906, Frank Beck was appointed the first Capt. Along with his brother, Beck was one of the first to die, during the disastrous Dardanelles campaign.

Perhaps it was the polish he acquired working at Sandringham or that, at 26 when war broke out, he was just more capable and mature, or perhaps the effect of the almost military discipline of working in one of the grandest establishments in the land, but George Dove did achieve the rank of Cpl even though he survived barely a year.

More precisely, Dove was one of a number of the Sandringham volunteers to die on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1915:-

Lt Albert Edward Alexander Beck M.C. – 5<sup>th</sup> Btn. KiA 12<sup>th</sup> August 1915. No known grave<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Norfolk News 2 May 1857

<sup>2</sup> The 1911 census reveals that the parents had had 13 children of whom only 2 were not still extant.

<sup>3</sup> His brother Cpt Arthur Evelyn Beck M.C. also KIA but on 19/04/17, Buried in Gaza.



Cpt Frank Reginald Beck M.V.O – 1<sup>ST</sup> / 5<sup>TH</sup> Btn. Brother of the above. KiA 12<sup>th</sup> August 1915.  
No known grave

Pte Edgar Samuel Cox 1<sup>ST</sup> / 5<sup>TH</sup> Btn. KiA. 12<sup>th</sup> August 1915. No known grave

Cpl Ernest Emmerson 1<sup>ST</sup> / 5<sup>TH</sup> Btn. KiA. 12<sup>th</sup> August 1915. No known grave

L.Cpl Charles Hunter 1<sup>ST</sup> / 5<sup>TH</sup> Btn. KiA. 12<sup>th</sup> August 1915. No known grave

George William Needs 1<sup>ST</sup> / 5<sup>TH</sup> Btn. KiA. 12<sup>th</sup> August 1915. No known grave

L.Cpl Frederic Ernest Phillips 1<sup>ST</sup> / 5<sup>TH</sup> Btn. KiA. 12<sup>th</sup> August 1915. No known grave

According to the records, another 10 men from the estate, who would have known all too well the fate of their colleagues, also died at Gallipoli on the 21<sup>st</sup> August, some listed as dying at Sulva and all having no known grave– it is possible they were all killed in the same action and the dates of 21<sup>st</sup> August and 12<sup>th</sup> August were transposed in contemporary records

Pte William James Bond

Pte Leonard Arthur Bridges

Pte Sidney Carter (one of only two casualties whose body was later identifiable – see below)

Pte William John Humphrey

Pte. Frederick Robert James Kerrison

Pte Wallace Robert Needs

L.Cpl Fred Ernest Phillips

Pte Ronald Edward Ringer

Pte Morris (Mallet) Walden

Pte William Walker

This sounds like a particularly disastrous action, so I made some more investigations and have to thank Steve Smith for the following information about how the entire Sandringham volunteer company was wiped out.<sup>4</sup>

We know that a number of the Norfolks managed to advance 1400 yards to a sunken road before stopping and awaiting the rest of the battalion. Second Lieutenant Fawkes commanded this small group and he was ordered to press on by the C.O. Colonel Proctor-Beauchamp. Virtually all of them were taken down when they bunched up in a gap covered by a machine gun.

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CSM Charles Beckett KiA also on 19/04/17, Buried in Gaza

Pte William (Albert) Bunn KiA also on 19/04/17, Buried in Gaza

Cpl Edward Hugh Grief KiA also on 19/04/17, Buried in Gaza

Pte James Howell KiA also on 19/04/17, Buried in Gaza

Pte William Jordan KiA also on 19/04/17, Buried in Gaza

Pte Walter William Mindham KiA also on 19/04/17, Buried in Gaza

Pte R Pilcher KiA also on 19/04/17, Buried in Gaza

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/5th-Battalion-Norfolk-Regiment-The-True-Story/>

A small element of the Norfolks managed to reach a small vineyard and another element managed to get to a group of small cottages where they were joined by Colonel Proctor-Beauchamp and the Adjutant. Beauchamp was seen by Private S T Smith to say *'Hound them out boys!'* It was the last time he was seen alive and probably the last order he ever gave.

It was here that the surviving officers managed to take stock of what had happened and Major W Barton and Lieutenant Evelyn Beck led the survivors back to friendly lines when it became dark. And the mystery was, in fact, cleared up by the press very early on.



*Private 1432, Cecil Ernest Bullimore, killed in action on 12th August 1915*

The local papers initially reported the loss of 5th Norfolk officers on 28th August 1915 and accounts from men who were there were published soon after, especially in the Yarmouth Mercury and the Lynn News. One article dated 27th August 1915 noted:

*'It is with the deepest regret that we publish the list of missing officers of the 5th (Territorial) Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment. At the time of going to press, no further information is available than the bare fact that they are missing.'*

Hamilton's dispatch did not appear until 6th January 1916 and on 7th January 1916 the Eastern Daily Press reported, 'SANDRINGHAM MEN DISAPPEAR.' The article went on to state that 16 officers and 250 men pushed deep into enemy lines and *'...were lost from sight and sound. None of them ever came back.'* This directly quoted Hamilton's after-action report.

But on 15th February 1916 the Lynn News reported that one officer was now recovering from wounds in a hospital as a prisoner of the Turks in Constantinople and noted:

*'This news of Capt. Coxon will come as a relief to not only his friends but also to those who are still awaiting news of other officers and men of the 5th Norfolks. It is obvious that an*

officer in hospital would have greater opportunities for writing home to his friends than others who were not wounded but are prisoners of war.

CAPTAIN CEDRIC COXON. AT  
CONSTANTINOPLE.

This (Friday) morning we have received the news through the Mayor of Lynn (Mr. R. O. Ridley) that Mrs. S. A. T. Coxon, of King Street, has received a post-card from her son, Captain Cedric Coxon, who was officially reported as missing from his regiment, the 5th Norfolks, stating he is at Constantinople. He is wounded and in hospital. He states that he was wounded on 13th August, and was then captured. He appears to have made a great effort to regain his lines, and was only captured 100 yards away from them. He adds that he is being treated well and is making good progress towards recovery.

This news of Capt. Coxon will come as a relief to not only his friends, but also to those who are still awaiting news of other officers and men of the 5th Norfolks. It is obvious that an officer in hospital would have greater opportunities for writing home to his friends than others who were not wounded, but are prisoners of war.

And there is an excellent article printed in the Lynn News from a survivor:

*'I did not see anything of the missing officers after I got lost. I heard the Colonel call out when we approached the huts I have referred to, but I did not see him then. I did not hear him again afterwards. During the attack I did not see anything of Capt Patrick. I did not see any wood into which the officers and men could have disappeared, and I certainly did not see them charge into a wood: in fact, the Norfolks did not charge as far as my knowledge goes. I know absolutely nothing about how the officers and men disappeared. At first, like others, I thought that the officers and men who are now reported missing had returned to other trenches but later I found that this was not the case. I inquired a lot about them but all I could find out was that they had disappeared-vanished. We could only come to the conclusion that they had advanced too far, had been captured and made prisoners of war. We knew that some of the men had been killed and others been wounded, so it did not seem at all unlikely that these others had been captured by the enemy. I heard no news about the 5th Norfolks charging into a wood until I came home.'*

*Private Sidney Pooley 1/5th Norfolk Regiment.*

As with countless engagements in World War One, the bodies of the men who fell that day did not have the luxury of a burial detail. In fact, they lay where they fell until 1919 when the battalion's Chaplain the Reverend Pierrepont Edwards found them and reported at the time:

*'We have found the 5th Norfolks – there were 180 in all; 122 Norfolk and a few Hants and Suffolks with 2/4th Cheshires. We could only identify two – Privates Barnaby and Carter. They were scattered over an area of about one square mile, at a distance of at least 800 yards behind the Turkish front line. Many of them had evidently been killed in a farm, as a local Turk, who owns the place, told us that when he came back, he found the farm covered with the decomposing bodies of British soldiers, which he threw into a small ravine. The whole thing quite bears out the original theory that they did not go very far on, but got mopped up one by one, all except the ones who got into the farm.'*

And the actual casualty list, recorded between 12th and 31st August 1915, is 11 Officers and 151 Other Ranks killed. This total comes from a database called 'Soldiers Died in the Great War'.

Supported by recent research, this article may perhaps help to clarify what actually happened to the 5th Battalion Norfolk Regiment and acknowledges their bravery and tenacity in the face of an extremely determined enemy.

Edward Erickson in his book Gallipoli: The Ottoman Campaign details the disastrous lead up to this attack on the Tekke Tepe hill mass claiming that the 'attack was poorly planned with no reconnaissance or rehearsals .. the maps were inaccurate, the officers had no idea of exactly where the enemy were .. what strength.. The inexperienced territorials rushed into the well laid defensive fires .. and were mown down .. immediate counter attacks that pushed the survivors back .. 6.30 unleashed the 9 Coy and 11 Coy .. delivered a slashing pursuit of the 1/5 Norfolks .. Turks reported killing 15 Officers and 250 men.

Horrendous.

Goerge Dove died on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, 2 days after arriving on Turkish soil, the contrast between the luxury liner, the Acquitane, they had been shipped in on and the dirt, heat and lack of supplies they met when they landed, could not be greater. In the panic and confusion of brutal warfare; another of the Sandringham garden team sharing the bothy on the night of the 1911 census, Ernest (Bertie) Emmerson died in the same skirmish as George, I was going to say side by side but it seems in the chaos, the men became scattered, confused and lost. Another gardener, not sharing the Bothy on the night of the 1911 census but quite possibly a later inhabitant was Frederick Kerrison, he also died during the same action.

In fact the entire company was obliterated on that day and whilst we will never know the exact details of what happened it was well known that the Turkish Army were reluctant to take prisoners, witnesses testified that many of the British troops were executed, one isolated survivor spent the rest of his life with a bullet in his head.<sup>5</sup>

The leader and founder of E Coy, Frank Beck, who in his 50's need not have engaged in active service but chose to go with his men, was last seen leaning against a tree, head tilted to the side after a shell had exploded close to him. Dead or alive, no-one had time to check. His brother, Evelyn Beck, managed to regroup the small number of survivors amongst the Norfolk Rgt, he too died in an almost equally futile attack on a well defended placement in 1917, along with a number of other Sandringham men, see above.

This second massacre of the Sandrigham Volunteers occurred in Gaza in 1917, Charles Beckett, a Sandringham gardener from Surrey was one of those also to die. I say a massacre of the Sandringham man, in fact the 1/4<sup>th</sup> and 1/5<sup>th</sup> suffered casualties of about 75%, a number of about 1,100 men.

Horace Reed and John 'Rathie' Smith were later recruits from the Sandringham gardening team who also died during the war.

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<sup>5</sup> It was known that the Turks did not like taking prisoners. This was confirmed by the second piece of evidence, which told the story of Arthur Webber, who fought with the Yarmouth Company of the 5th Norfolks during the battle of August 12, 1915. According to his sister-in-law, Arthur was shot in the face. As he lay injured on the ground, he heard the Turkish soldiers shooting and bayoneting the wounded and the prisoners around him. Only the intervention of a German officer saved his life. His comrades were all executed on the spot. Arthur Webber died in 1969, aged 86, still with the Turkish sniper's bullet in his head.

The tale of George Dove and his colleagues with their faith in their officers, experienced in estate management but novices in military tactics seems a particularly poignant example of how many of the deaths in this war were ultimately futile. One cheering light in all this sorrow is that George had married, in the second quarter of 1915, less than 6 months before he died. His bride, Agnes F Wagg, was a 33 years old lady, 6 years George's senior, and the keeper of a boarding house at 1 Langham Cottages Hunstanton. It seems she inherited the establishment from her grandmother as she appeared there back in 1901 along with 4 other grandchildren, with three different surnames and a boarder! Intriguingly, trekking back 10 more years and little Florence (Agnes) was again living in the same house, with both grandparents, two of their sons, a daughter in law and another 2 grandchildren – all of whom, with the exception of local born Florence, were born in Kings Lynn.

I can imagine George on holiday and enjoying a whirlwind romance before returning to duty, unfortunately no children resulted from this brief union. Agnes remarried some-time after the war, in 1923 when she was 41.

Sadly, George was one of the many casualties of the war whose body was either never found or identified and is memorialised on one of the panels of the Helles War Memorial.