



Frederick John Goffin

8748 Rifleman, 1st/16th (County of London) Battalion (Territorial Force)

The London Regiment (Queen's Westminster Rifles)

formerly 2666 2nd Battalion, The London Regiment

He was killed in action on 10th September 1916 in France, aged 26

Frederick is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France

Frederick John Goffin, a Harleston Hero, was born in Fressingfield but his family's roots were in the village of Reedham and based around the River Yare. His father, Frederick Goffin Snr, was a poster boy for the introduction of free or heavily subsidised education in the Victorian Times. Even when schooling became compulsory in the 1880's, attendance, particularly in rural areas, amongst the labouring classes could be patchy to say the least. Even amongst those parents who were, in principal, keen that their children got an education, the pressures of their employers needing a few extra hands for harvesting, earning a few extra pence for the pot or even difficulties in providing boots and clothes adequate to attend school in, may have precluded many from attending as regularly as they might. Boys in particular could miss chunks of education, resulting in a surprising number of enlisted men in the first World War being, to all intents and purposes, illiterate. Conviction and prison records abound with descriptions of convicts who were either illiterate or whose illiteracy was 'imperfect', a gross understatement!

However, Frederick Goffin Snr came from a family that esteemed education. In the 1861 census, there were three households of Goffins by the river in Reedham; John Goffin, Wherryman, (father of Frederick Snr), John's brother James Goffin, Coal Merchant and Richard Goffin Carpenter and of an age to be the father of both James and John (although in those times of large families he could equally have been a first child and the others the last children of a single family). In spite of his advanced years, Richard had a wife 27 years his junior and a clutch of sub-teen children.

James' three younger children (boys and girls), John's only school age child (Fredric Snr) and the three of Richard's three children who were in the right age group (boys and girls) were all attending the National School – true commitment to education. Not only that, but another child, Isabelle Goffin, aged 15 and living with her maternal grandparents, was a National School Pupil Teacher – a sort of educational apprenticeship. Back in 1851, Isabella was the youngest of the 6 of James' 7 children who were Scholars. James was a lime burner at the time; this was a big and long-term commitment to education. In 1871, Mary Ann, big sister of Frederick Snr was also a School Mistress as was Julia Goffin, Isabella's older sister, all the way up in Yorkshire – have education and the world opens up to you! At this point, I will digress into a brief chunter about the surname being spelt Goffin, Goffen, Goffon and transcribers of censuses rarely being able to decipher any of the variations; this makes quickly finding out the trajectories of the educated descendants of the river dwelling Goffins too difficult to quickly discover!

I would also like to state that as keen as they were on their children having good futures, the Goffins were not saints. There was the odd report of drunkenness and brawling, pub owning (most notably the Brickmakers Arms) was another strand of the families' trade but essentially, they were hard working steady going folk.

Rather touchingly, in 1911, when Miss Julia Goffin had retired to her hometown of Reedham, she did so to a house headed by one brother, a never married, Retried Commission Agent and shared with another brother a widowed Railway Clerk. All that education had not been wasted!

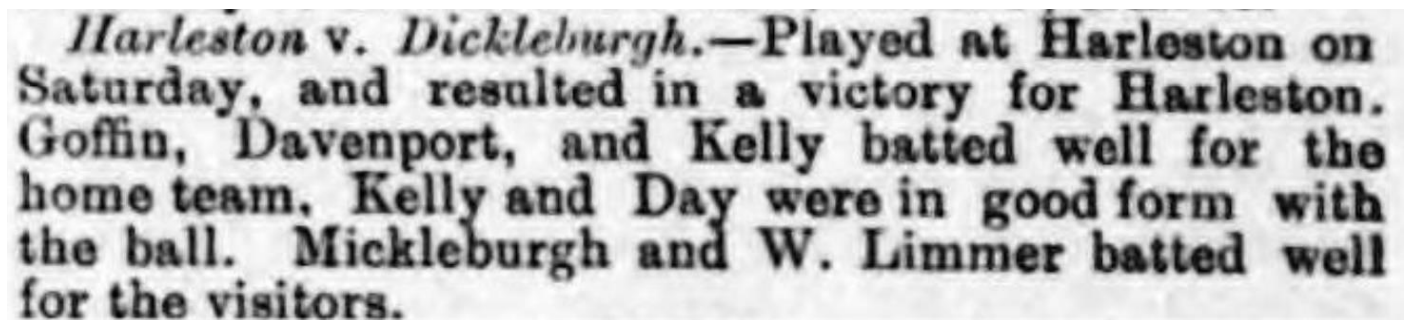
Whilst James and Richard both had large families, so far as I can discover John only had two children (or at least only two that survived to census). Mary Ann, the school mistress to be, and Frederick Snr. Mary Ann was 16 years older than her younger brother. This is a situation that could occur if the mother had a rhesus negative blood group, the oldest child (if it was rhesus positive) would provoke anti bodies in the mother and all subsequent children, unless they also happened to be rhesus negative would be either mis-carried or still born. The poor mother would have sad loss after sad loss; the rhesus factor was not discovered until the 1940's.

We cannot tell now if this is what happened with the Goffins but, for whatever reason this unusually large gap between the two children existed, I am sure the arrival of Frederick John on the 14th of January 1855 was greeted with much joy. There may have been only two children in his immediate family, but Frederick Snr would have grown up surrounded by cousins, all living close by to him and close to the river at Reedham. Frederick Snr's father, John, died at the early(ish) age of 59 on the 10th of April 1862 leaving his wife Ann nee Stone to raise his 7-year-old son, Frederick Jnr, doubtless with the help of their 23 years old daughter Mary Ann. In order to do so and keep Frederick Snr in education (which she did until at least the age of 15) Ann became a laundress. In the time of boiling coppers, harsh, caustic soaps and mangles, this was a tough job. In addition, by 1871, Ann had her elderly father, Benjamin Stone, ex Brickmaker, aged 84, at home as well.

Roll on 1881 and widowed Ann (still living with her daughter Mary Ann and a couple of doors away from her brother in law James) had a 7 years old great nephew James Wales, scholar, living with her. This was a very tight knit and extended family, but Frederick Snr had flown the nest and headed out to the coast where he was living in Yarmouth, boarding with an 'Engine Smith' and following the trade of Millwright.

Being a millwright was a challenging and skilled job involving combining both metal and wooden components together to harness the energy from either wind, water or steam to grind materials ranging from grains of all sorts to bone! Precise mathematics, the ability to follow plans and both abstract and practical skills were required.

Frederick Snr worked his way back inland and married Eliza Vipond from Weybread in 1885, their first child was born in Weybread in 1886, but by 1888 they had moved to Stradbroke after a stint in



Harleston v. Dickleburgh.—Played at Harleston on Saturday, and resulted in a victory for Harleston. Goffin, Davenport, and Kelly batted well for the home team. Kelly and Day were in good form with the ball. Mickleburgh and W. Limmer batted well for the visitors.

Fressingfield where our Harleston Hero Frederic Jnr, to be their only son, was born. Sometime between 1901 and 1906, the family moved to Harleston, roughly opposite the Knight/Estcourt Iron works on the London Road. I think we can safely assume that he was working for this company who held a major and well-respected position in the local trade, well placed to service not only the local windmills but also the mills on the nearby River Waveney.

After a fairly footloose time in the early prime of his life Frederick chose to settle in Harleston, being also recorded on the London Road in 1911 with three of his four children of whom Harleston born Hilda was the youngest. His oldest daughter Alice Mabel had married Herbert Isaac Brown from East Dereham, in 1906, a gentleman we can be confident she met at her workplace in a local draper's. Herbert's father was a commercial clerk and his mother, a lady from Canning Town (unusually) was a boot manufacturer indicating production at some scale. By 1901, Herbert was a clerk whilst his father had a boot and shoe shop, by 1911 Herbert was busy selling his father's product. The family had settled in East Dereham following their marriage and Mabel had named her first born child after her father.

DICKLEBURGH NOTES.

Dickleburgh played at home on Good Friday and had Harleston as visitors. The home team was fully representative and the visitors had the assistance of Goffin, their last season's prolific goal-scorer. A well contested game resulted in a win for the visitors by 3 goals to 2. Harleston were the superior team in the first half and notched 2 goals. Half-time score 2-0.— Dickleburgh pressed on resuming, but were unable to score. Harleston got away and added a third. The homesters played up strongly and had the best of the latter stages of the game scoring two good goals. A penalty was awarded against Harleston in the last minute but their goalkeeper managed to effect a save, the closing score being 3-2 in favour of Harleston.— Our team was:—F. P. Algar; D. Hammond, A. G. Bartrum; W. Limmer, A. A. Bryant, R. Brown; C. Aldous, G. Bullock, G. Limmer, S. Chilvers, S. Limmer.

Meanwhile, back in Harleston, Mabel's sisters were following her footsteps whilst Frederick Jnr was an auctioneers clerk, almost certainly working for Durrant's who at the time dealt not only with property auctions but also ran the regular, large scale stock markets in the town. Frederick was making the most of town living and by 1908 he was turning out for the Harleston cricket team – and owing a decent job of

it. He was also a fine football player, and in 1913 was described as a 'prolific Goal Scorer'.

Frederick Jnr was 26 when he died in one of the engagements that made up the Battle of the Somme. Still single when he married (he came from a family in which the men tended not to rush into marriage) this only son of an only son was the end of this line of the name from Reedham. His grandfather, great grandfather and brothers had prioritised education to get their children and grandchildren away from a perilous life on the river and manual labour (al be it skilled) into 'clean' clerical jobs. Frederick never had the opportunity to reach his full potential, instead he died two years before the son of his employer, Lombe Atthill Durrant, a man much the same age as himself who also met his end in the bloodbath of WW1. When Goffin died he left the bulk of his estate, such as it was, to his mother Eliza as well as (Back Pay?) £5 12 – in March 1917 and a war gratuity in August 1919. However, he did not forget his baby sister Hilda May, and left her his savings, in the Post Office Savings Bank, Harleston!