



Charles Russell Baldwin

2062 Private, 1st/4th Battalion Norfolk Regiment

He died at Gallipoli on 18th September 1915

Charles is commemorated at 7th Field Ambulance Cemetery, Gallipoli, Turkey

The memorial to Charles Baldwin, states 'believed to be buried here' indicating the degree of chaos that must have accompanied the necessarily rapid disposal of a high number of fatalities in the heat of the Turkish summer. Over 350 of the 640 people buried or commemorated here were brought in from earlier cemeteries following the Armistice. Of these, 276 are unidentified but memorials stand for 207 known or believed to be buried amongst them, including Charles.

A result of the importing of bodies is that the majority of the graves are not Australian but mostly casualties from the 54th (East Anglian) Division. A variety of epitaphs could be recorded on the rear of the stones, varying from the wistful 'until the day breaks, the intense 'I am not dead but sleeping here, sweetly resting in Jesus' to the slightly more prosaic 'Their Glory shall not be blotted out' favoured by George Baldwin and the majority of those resting alongside his son.

Born to Elizabeth Jane nee Gooderam and George Baldwin on 27th March 1893, Charles Russel Baldwin was baptised on the 11th June of the same year in the village of Topcroft. His birth followed his parent's marriage by almost exactly 3 months and a day, quite a common occurrence in rural Norfolk at the time. It was worth noting that both his parents could sign their names, although much less common than 100 years earlier it was still not that unusual, in spite of compulsory state education being well established, for working class people to remain illiterate.

The same cleric celebrated both the parent's wedding and the baptism of their first-born child. However, I don't believe this was a shotgun wedding, more a case of a well-established couple jumping the gun slightly as, on the night of the 1891 census, Elizabeth, a domestic servant born in Shottesham, was visiting George and his widowed mother, this almost 2 years before the birth of young Charles.

1897. Marriage solemnized in the Parish Church in the Parish of Topcroft in the County of Bedford

| No. | When Married. | Name and Surname. | Age. | Condition. | Rank or Profession. | Residence at the Time of Marriage. | Father's Name and Surname. | Rank or Profession of Father. |
|-----|---------------|--------------------------|------|------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 135 | 2 Oct 26 | George Baldwin | 23 | Bachelor | Spec. Labourer | Topcroft | James Baldwin | Labourer |
| | 18 92 | Elizabeth Jane Gooderham | 23 | Spinster | | Topcroft | Charles Gooderham | Farmer |

Married in the Parish Church of Topcroft according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by me, J. H. Rowe Rector

This Marriage was solemnized between us, George Baldwin and Elizabeth Jane Gooderham in the Presence of us, Edward Marshall and Alice Baldwin

Marriage record in the Topcroft Register.

| No. | Name and Surname. | Age. | Condition. | Rank or Profession. | Residence at the Time of Marriage. | Father's Name and Surname. | Rank or Profession of Father. |
|----------|------------------------|------|------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| No. 779. | Charles George Baldwin | | | Labourer | Topcroft | | |
| | Elizabeth Russell | | | | | | Rector |
| No. 780. | | | | | | | |

Charles' Baptism record in the Topcroft Register.

However, Charles makes his first census appearance in 1901, not in Topcroft but in nearby Denton where he was lodging with uncle, Edward Marshall, and his wife. I would strongly suspect that Edward Marshall was one and the same as the Edward Marshall who witnessed Charles' parents' marriage. The family were living in Trunch Cottage, next to the School House in the census returns. This is almost certainly the property now known as Trunch House, at the time it was a double dwelling with two families living in it but still fairly spacious. Edward Marshall, like his young son and nephew had been born in nearby Topcroft whilst Edward's wife came from Beddingfeild.



Trunch House as it is today, Trunch Cottages as they were in 1901

As well as the 8 years old Charles, his cousin (5 years old William Marshall), was also in the household. At this time, it was not unusual for children to live with relatives, sometimes for short periods in times of crisis, longer periods if the child's own parents were struggling to raise a large family in cramped conditions or even on a permanent, semi adopted basis. The arrangements, for working class families, were almost always made informally. Some host families would be paid a certain amount to help cover bed and board,

others would take the child on for free, as a sort of family-based welfare system of mutual support.

Tragically, it seems that in young Charles' case he had been farmed out following the death of his mother at the sadly early age of only 30; it appears she had some form of congenital or acquired heart condition. Elizabeth was buried in Denton churchyard in late March of 1900.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|--------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Elizabeth Baldwin | Denton | March | 30 | Wm Martin |
| No. 773. | | 27 | years | Curate - |

DENTON.

A VERY sudden death occurred in this village last week. Mr. Baldwin left his wife in bed as usual at about a quarter to 7 in the morning, she complaining of feeling cold. He returned home about 8 o'clock, and found her lying near the fireplace quite dead. A doctor from Bungay was immediately summoned, and said death was due to heart disease, and no inquest was held. Deceased was buried on Tuesday. Much sympathy is felt for Mr. Baldwin in his bereavement.

Norwich Mercury
31 Mar 1900

Charles' father, still a relatively young man, did not remain a lonely widower for too long. In early 1902 he married a Marie Elizabeth James; in 1911 after 9 years after marriage they had

one son, a three years old boy. Whether Charles returned home to live with his father and step-mother or if he carried on living with other relatives I do not know but, in 1911 when he was an 18 years old farm labourer Charles (Russel) Baldwin was living, back in Topcroft, with another uncle, this time James Baldwin, from Beddingfeild. I hope the only reason Charles was living with this uncle was for work reasons – the Aunt and Uncle with whom he was living in 1901 were still living in Denton.

This Uncle Edward, after 17 years of marriage still had only the one son but on the occasion of this 1911 census they had two nieces from different branches of the family living with them. One a local girl born in Topcroft, one from another branch of the family who was born in London, reflecting the rural diaspora of the late Victorian period.

Of course, it is possible that Charles, having lost his mother at such an early age, was a tedious youth who was difficult to live with but, on the whole, I would like to assume he was not! I have not found any records of him appearing in the local magistrates' court for drunkenness or troublesome behaviour as so many of his less respectable peer group did in this period. With police constables firmly embedded in static communities, troublesome folks would soon be spotted, targeted and dragged off to court!

So in a nutshell, Charles was born into a working class family, descended from land workers on both sides and doubtless he too was expecting to carry on in a similar vein had the war not arrived. An only child, he had lost his mother when still young and it is questionable whether his father's second marriage had led to him being welcomed back into his household or whether he had continued to live with other relatives.

Having joined up in 1914, when he gave his hometown as Brook, Private Baldwin 2062 of the 1/4th Norfolk Rgt. died out in Galipoli on the 18th of September 1915. The troops in this arena of warfare were particularly plagued with malaria and vermin whilst the Turkish opposition tended to execute surrendered or overwhelmed opposition.



Photograph: A soldier sitting on a slope at Ryries Post looking south along the coastline to Gaba Tepe.

The following is a diary entry written by another combatant on that day.

ANZAC - Corporal Percy Smythe, 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Division, AIF - By 18 September Percy Smythe had been made Corporal just before his battalion were withdrawn for a period of rest in Shrapnel Valley - presumably in the offshoot Rest Gully. Here they settled down into a routine.

"Commenced with a regular order of things this morning. "Reveille" at 6a.m., consisting of a lot of blasts of a whistle; "Warning for Parade" at 6.15a.m. being three long whistle blasts; "Assemble" at 6.25a.m. being two blasts; and "Fall in" at 6.30a.m. being one blast. We got the platoon on rifle shooting with the periscope rifles. Most of the shooting was very bad. After breakfast we went on with the shooting which continued to be very bad. Long was the only one to get a decent group. At the end Sgt. Hunt and I had a go at it, and by mistake we both fired at the same target. The whole ten shots got in the bull. After finishing at the range, we went round to White Valley and practised bomb throwing till 11a.m. Organised a chat-hunting expedition, and searched all through my clothes. Did well, bagging three chats and about twenty eggs. After dinner, went for a swim with Long and McNamara. Washed singlet and some handkerchiefs while there. We found a little humpy where milk was for sale at 1/9 a tin. It is downright robbery. These fellows are taking a mean advantage of the soldiers who are fighting for their country, and who have to either pay the exorbitant price or else go without. Bought a tin of the precious stuff. Wrote a letter to Vern with birthday greetings. At 4p.m. we all had to fall in for an inspection by General Walker. As, however, he had addressed A Co. before, we were promptly dismissed. When we fell in for tea the usual quiet prevailed, an occasional rifle shot breaking the stillness. All of a sudden, however, the place seemed to be in an uproar, the air vibrating with the crackling, spluttering, and hissing of musketry, the bursting of shrapnel shells, and the heavy roaring of our own artillery. Now and again shrapnel bullets pattered down around us, one striking Sgt. Hunt on the knee, but doing no damage. It sounded like a violent thunderstorm on a large scale. I felt quite happy while it lasted, as I like to hear the

noise. It sounded more like a real battle than anything I've heard yet. It didn't last long however, and soon died down again. As we could hear no machine guns, I thought it was probably only a demonstration, but heard afterwards that the Turks attacked at Lone Pine, but were beaten back. After tea, started writing a letter to Bert. When it got too dark to write I went for a walk down to the beach. Went along towards Gaba Tepe as far as our supports, which were occupied by the Light Horse."

SOURCE:

Internet: *The World War I Diary of Percy Smythe*, <http://www.smythe.id.au/diary/index.htm> This diary was transcribed by his daughter Betty Smythe.¹

¹ <https://www.gallipoli-association.org/on-this-day/september/18/>