



## Allen Brown

28686 Private, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Essex Regiment

He was killed in action on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1916 in France, aged 28

Allen is commemorated at the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France

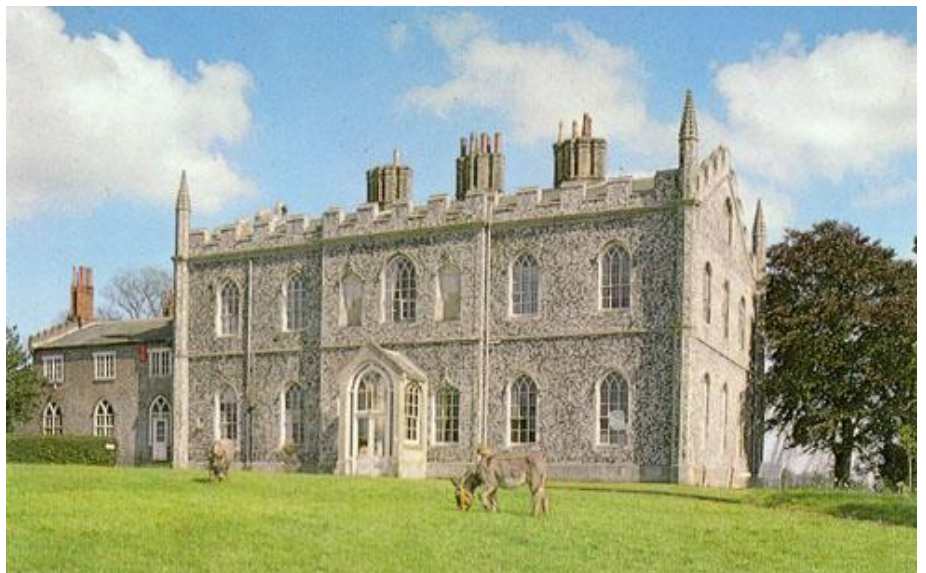
Albert and Allen Brown were brothers with barely a year between them. Appearing in the 1891 census with two older siblings, Frederick and Clara, Albert at age 4 was a year older than Allen, aged 3. Their parents, Robert (a cart driver) and Esther Victoria nee Nunn were both Suffolk born but, judging by the age of their oldest son, had been in Harleston for at least 9 years.

The parents lived up in Jay's Green, a working-class enclave on the fringes of Harleston, for at least 20 years. In their thirty-year marriage they had had 7 children but by the 1911 census 3 had died, by the end of WW1, they would have lost 5 of their children with only 2 still living. I suspect 2 of the children died too young to appear in the censuses, whilst an older sibling, Frederick Robert, died aged 17 in 1899 which would have accounted for the three deceased children. Personally, I don't believe parents got used to their children dying, The pain of their loss would have been just as great for modern parents.

Albert and Allen, had barely a year between the two of them, but with 5 years between them and their next older brother and 7 years between them and younger brother George, they would have been particularly close when growing up. Clara, their older sister, was working at Perownes at the foot of the Old Market Place as an under-house maid in 1901. In 1911 their younger brother George was Carter for a builder – only 16 and in charge of a horse and cart? Not many 21<sup>st</sup> century lads would be up for what was normal at the time

In 1911, Clara, still unmarried, still a housemaid, was working at the rather grander 22 room Beeston Hall near Norwich.

*Beeston Hall*



That same year, Albert whose previous job had been as a groom, had gone even more upmarket than his sister; he was working as a valet at Coldoverton Hall near Oakham in Rutland. This substantial establishment boasted 26 occupied rooms and was headed by a Peer, Earl Cowley who,

along with his wife, Milly, his son, a visiting Austrian peer and another visitor, was being cared for by 19 indoor staff from all over the country.



*Coldoverton Hall*

*By Bikeboy, CC BY-SA*

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The atmosphere at Coldoverton Hall may have been rather fraught in 1911 when Albert was employed there.

Earl Cowley, one of the Wellesley's, had an unusually high number of divorces, and got tangled up with an unusually high number of divorcees! In 1911 he was running up to his second divorce. His first marriage, in December 1889, to Lady Violet Nevill, had ended in February 1897 due to his "misconduct".

After a decent interval the Earl's second marriage, to then Hon. Millicent Florence Eleanor (née Wilson) Cradock-Hartopp took place in December 1905 at Colombo in Sri Lanka. Millicent (or Milly as she appeared in the 1911 census) was the divorced ex-wife of Sir Charles Cradock-Hartopp, 5th Baronet. The next year, in 1912, while still married to his Milly, Earl Cowley was named as a correspondent in the divorce suit of Geoffrey Charles Buxton against his wife, Clare. Millie divorced Cowley in 1913, citing his "desertion and misconduct with Mrs. G.C. Buxton"

Cowley's third, and final, marriage was to Clare Florence Mary (née Stapleton) Buxton on 19 January 1914. Clare was by then divorced from her husband Geoffrey Buxton of Dunston Hall. Such goings on amongst the great and not so good – must have been a very fraught atmosphere at Coldoverton Hall in 1911 when our Harleston lad was working as a valet.

Some-time during this melee of marital infidelity, Albert Brown found himself in London from whence he joined up in 1914, giving his home address as Paddington.

Rather more typically, in 1911, Albert's brother, Allen, was a boot repairer, lodging with his elderly boss Zephania Watling and his family, in Wilson's Square. Zephania and Harriet Elizabeth Whatling's daughter, Lizzie Whatling, was also in the house with her 2 years old son Sydney. Also in the household, was another lodger, Sydney Kerrison. If Lizzie had been following the local naming etiquette for illegitimate sons, she might have been a cheery lass and was hedging her bets as her son, already two years, was actually named Sydney Allen Whatling! The other potential father, Sydney Kerrison, a 23-year-old groom, had been born and raised in Bungay.

Allen Brown joined up in 1914 and, although 'Lizzie' was four years Allen's senior, the couple married in early 1915. Lizzie appeared under her full name of Harriet Elizabeth, along with Allen's parents, as Allen's next of kin.

This wedding may have been a matter of necessity as much as of romance as another son was born to the couple, 7 months after their wedding – although of course young Albert Robert (bearing his uncle and grandfather's names) Brown may just have been rather premature. Another son, Ernest George Brown (with his other uncle's name as a middle name) was born about a year later, Pte Allen Brown would never know that he was the proud father of another baby boy as he died 9 days before this second son's birth.

Whilst Allen Brown's son/step son? Sydney Allen Whatling may have used his putative father / step father's name in day to day dealings, he retained the surname given at birth, dying at the respectable age of 75 in Barnet in 1984. I am afraid I did not track down Allen's other sons – rather a lot of Browns out there.

The one surviving brother of the three who appeared together in the 1901 census, George,

### SCHOOLGIRL'S DEATH.

Considerable sympathy has been extended to Mr. and Mrs. George Brown, of Jay's Green, Harleston on the death of their daughter Dorothy Kathleen Maud, aged 14 years, which occurred on Saturday last at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. The funeral took place at Redenhall Parish Church on Wednesday afternoon after a short service had been held at Harleston Congregational Church. Among the large number of choice floral tributes were wreaths from the Harleston Congregational Church Sunday School, staff and scholars of the East Anglian Deaf and Dumb Institute Gorleston, teachers and scholars of the Redenhall Girls' School and many relatives

remained up at Jay's Green. He married Florence Moore in 1917. Dorothy was born in 1918, Esther in 1920 and Freda in 1926. Although there as a bit of an age gap I hope the three sons of Allen and the three daughters of George got on with each other!

Dorothy died at the early age of 14, I suspect she may have had other issues as her death was not described as accidental or disease and there appears to have been a link with the East Anglian Deaf and Dumb Institute

*Diss Express*  
1 Jul 1932

A few years later and as another war had just drawn to a close, one of Dorothy's sisters, Freda, having married a USAAF chap who had been posted locally, was waiting to be sent to join her husband in the states. Tragically before she had even started her journey across the Atlantic, she received the news he had died and been buried before ever seeing their baby son; an echo of the fate of Dorothy's Uncle Allen almost 30 years previously. Freda and Carlos Casemore had married in February 1945 when Freda would have been about 19, Freda had been working at the International Stores and was given a Carving Set and six teaspoons by her erstwhile colleagues. This was not a shot gun marriage – their son, named for his father, was born 10 months after the wedding.<sup>1</sup>

*Diss Express*  
14 Dec 1945

### KILLED IN AMERICA

Mrs. Freda Casmore, of Jay's Green, Harleston, has just received news that her husband, Corporal Carlos Shern Casmore, who served seven years in the American Army and had recently been discharged, was killed in a road accident at Colfax, U.S.A. A native of Nevada City, he was 25 years of age, and while serving with the American Forces at a Station near Harleston married Miss Freda Brown, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Brown, of Jay's Green, Harleston, who was expecting to rejoin her husband in America. There is one son of the marriage, who, unhappily, Corpl. Casmore has never seen. Corpl. Casmore was buried in America, the funeral service being under the auspices of the Jess E. Taylor Post of Veteran Foreign Wars, and much sympathy is felt for the widow, and young child, and her parents. Corpl. Casmore was well-known in the Harleston district where he had many friends.

However, the world had shrunk since Allen and Albert set off to Flanders. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 1947, fifteen months after her husband's death and still only 20 years old, widowed Freda was on her way across the Atlantic on the George W Goethals, a ship dedicated for reuniting U.S. military with their British wives and children. As one of the few, if not the only, passengers who were widows, Freda was heading for Colfax, the place of her husband's death and also the home of his mother. Doubtless many tears were shed at the first meeting between those three generations.

<sup>1</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> November 1945 according to a later shipping roster.

9. CASMORE, Freda (Widow)	30	F	300637	Br.	Jays Green,
<b>13328</b>			Visa. No.	3008	Hareston.
10. CASMORE, Michael S.	1 yr 3 mos.	M		Am Civ.	Norfolk.
Dependents of:	T/Sgt. Carlos Casmore, ASN 3562346, US ARMY. (deceased)				
	Box 172, Colfax, California.				

When Freda returned home is unclear but things then get a little confusing; Freda went on to marry a William Hockensmith in Suffolk in 1953. Not a common name in this area, checking out the details it transpires that Mr Hockensmith was also a USAAF man. Two years later, the then 9 years old Carolas Casmore set off to New York on a US Navy ship; apparently travelling alone amongst a number of other US personnel dependants. He was described as a 'step-son' so might have been travelling to see his grandparents under the aegis of his new father or perhaps his mother had already travelled on whilst he had been delayed by an administrative glitch? Freda herself set off to America in 1960, again on a US Naval ship bound for New York. She was one of 6 British wives intending to settle in in the U.S. but where was her son?

Freda's uncles Allen and Alfred had both been dead 10 years by the time Freda was born but the rest of the family must have been close, as seen above Freda had been working at the International Stores, her uncle, Frederick, also of Jays Green, was given a Gold Award and financial gift in 1948, following 22 years of incident free driving for the International Tea Stores! He already had a silver medal and two oak leaf bars!

Although the brothers died three months apart, with no known grave for either, they are both commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.