



Percival Frederick Hardy

5780467 Private, 7th Battalion Royal Norfolk Regiment

He died on 13th November 1940 at Grimsby & District Hospital, aged 28

Percival is buried at Grimsby (Scartho Road) Cemetery, Lincolnshire. The cemetery contains 258 WW2 burials, as well as 281 from WW1

Percival Hardy was another of our Harleston Heroes who came from elsewhere to live in Harleston and have their life memorialised in Broad Street. He was actually born in 1912 in Attleborough to Frederick and Ada Hardy; Frederick was a wheelwright, a job that is almost extinct today but, in a time when farm vehicles, indeed most vehicles, were mounted on metal rimmed wood wheels, a job essential to keep the rural economy running. The work often also embraced the making of the wagon that sat atop of the wheels!

Percival's father, Frederick Hardy, was the third of four boys, with a sister, Eleanor, between the two older sons and the two younger ones; their father was a middle size farmer, Charles Hardy, who had 77 acres, Nr the Fen, Great Buckingham in 1881 And, guess what, both of his parents had been born in places other than Great Buckingham! Charles had come from Ellingham and, unusually in those days, was one of only two sons of a chap with the splendid name of Peregrine Hardy. T

In the way of the time, Charles' father, Peregrine, named his oldest son Peregrine, who in turn named his oldest son Peregrine, this being in addition to Charles also naming one of his sons Peregrine; they had a striking name and they weren't afraid to use it! The roots of the name go deep – the earliest one I found dated back to the marriage of Peregrine Hardy in 1704; I suspect it was the son of this chap, or even his grandson, who was one of a number of local land owners and Gentry who had got up an association for pursuing and apprehending Horse stealers and other ne'er-do-wells back in 1775.

Norfolk Chronicle
18 May 1776

N O R F O L K.
AT the annual Meeting held the 16th of November, 1775, at the GEORGE in Watton, in the said County, by the Association for the apprehending and convicting of Horsestealers, &c. in the Hundred of Weyland, and adjacent Hundreds, Mr. EDWARD STEVENS of Watton in the said County, was appointed Treasurer for the Year then next ensuing; and all former Rules and Orders were confirmed, and the Reward of Ten Guineas order'd to be paid upon the Conviction of any Person who should thereafter steal any Horse, Mare, or Gelding, belonging to any of the said Society, and that such a Reward be offered as to the Treasurer should seem meet, for the apprehending and convicting of any Person or Persons who should thereafter commit any Robbery upon the Persons or Properties of any of the Subscribers to the said Association, to be paid, with the Expence of such Prosecutions, upon Conviction of such Offender.
The Subscribers are as under :

The two lads, Charles and Peregrine, remained close all their lives; Uncle Charles had previously stepped in on Peregrine Jnr's behalf when the irritating little herbert wound a labourer up to the point of assault in 1887; William Day was hauled off to court charged with assaulting the little darling.

William Day of Banham, labourer, was charged upon the information of Charles Hardy of Wilby, farmer, with having assaulted Peregrine Hardy, aged nine years, at Banham, on the 15th October, and was fined with costs £1.

Norfolk News
22 Oct 1887

Seq., his family, Miss Ormiston, and the teachers

WILBY.—Fatal Accident.—On Wednesday last week Mr. Charles Hardy, farmer, in this village, had been attending to his harvest operations in a distant part of his farm on Old Buckenham side, and about three p.m. he returned homewards with his pony and cart. His man, John Day, rode with him. There is a meadow to cross when leaving the highway to reach Mr. Hardy's farm house, and the gateway stands back a few yards from the roadside, the fence curving sharply inwards to the posts. The highway there is a narrow winding one, and the entrance for vehicles somewhat cramped. John Day and his wife and family of little ones live in a cottage, which is also approached by means of the roadway through the meadow. At the time when Mr. Hardy drove up to the gateway, Mrs. Day was also there with her little boy, and she opened the gate in readiness for her master's horse and cart to pass through. As she swung the gate inwards her child stood back on the grass at the opposite side. Mr. Hardy had to turn the pony to the right when entering; and Mrs. Day held the gate back in the meadow on the same side. Just as the pony turned it shied at a Mrs. Loveday, who happened to be walking in the road towards the spot. For a moment Mr. Hardy lost his control over the animal, and the sudden plunge brought the wheel close to the bank and gate-post on the driving side; a quick pull at the left rein averted a collision with the post, but at the same time the pony shot ahead through the gateway to where the child stood. The poor little fellow was of course unable to dart out of the way, and being helpless, he was struck down, and the wheel passed over his body before his father's and mother's eyes. The pony was soon pulled up, and the little sufferer was taken home. Dr. Wilson quickly attended from Kenninghall, but he found that internal injuries would inevitably prove fatal, and the child died shortly after. An inquest was held at Mr. Hardy's residence on Friday evening by Joseph Stanley, Esq., Coroner. Evidence was given by several witnesses of the sad occurrence, and a verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

It may have been purely co-incidence, Day is a common enough name, but 2 years previously, the son of a John Day had been killed in a farmyard accident. John Day and his employer, Charles Hardy, were returning to the farmhouse in a pony drawn cart, being watched by Day's wife and a number of children. Unfortunately, a sudden move by another woman caused the pony to shy violently, to regain control of the creature, Hardy turned it in through the gate where the woman and children were. 3 years old Frederick Day was knocked over and then run over by the cart in front of his parents eyes. He died shortly after; accidental death. Charles was to become a stalwart of the village of Wilby (or at least until he had to move farms again) and in 1889 was both the Churchwarden and the Parish Constable.

Norfolk News
26 Sep 1885

Further cementing the links between the brothers, Uncle Peregrine signed as the witness to the marriage of Charles' middle daughter and only child to the son of the landlord of the Attleborough Railway Hotel in 1899. This was only a brief foray into pub work, although Eleanor's new father in law, William Self, had been the son of a pub landlord, William was actually a farmer in Gt Ellingham having started as a cattle dealer. He basically took the pub over from his father

but after only 3 years returned to farming, with his own son, Eleanor nee Hardy's new husband, now in charge of the pub. Further links between the Selfs and the Hardys appeared when Charles Hardy and William Self were, along with another few people holding rights on Carleton Rode Common, fined 5s per creature for allowing horses to roam on the Highway.

Norwich Mercury
29 May 1847

Until we get to Charles' younger children this was a family deeply involved in farming and livestock. Peregrine, grandfather of Frederick, father of Charles and great-grandfather of our Harleston Hero Percival, also claimed to be a farmer but way back in 1851, with only 9 acres, he was really more of a small holder! It appears he had been given notice to quit when his rented farm was sold out from under him in 1847; he must have been a good tenant as the new owners let him renew – a precarious position being a tenant farmer in Victorian times!

By 1861 Peregrine had doubled his holding to 18 acres, and 10 years after that he had 84 acres and was employing 2 men and 2 boys including his unmarried son Charles. Charles' mother, Martha, died in 1885 leaving poor old Peregrine to struggle on which he did with the aid of a housekeeper, keeping going until late 1891

Little Ellingham,
Within a Short Distance of several Good Corn Markets, and of the Attleburgh Station of the Norfolk Railway, by which large quantities of Live Stock, Corn, and other Agricultural Produce are daily sent, safely and expeditiously, to all parts of the Kingdom.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,
By Mr. John Eaton,
At the Cock Inn, Attleburgh, on Thursday, the 10th day of June, 1847, at Six o'clock in the evening, in One Lot,
A DESIRABLE
Small Freehold Farm,
Situate at Little Ellingham,
COMPRISING a Farm-house, Barn, and other Buildings, Garden, Orchard, and **9a. 3r. 13p.** (more or less) of superior Arable Land, now in the occupation of Mr. Peregrine Hardy, who has had notice to quit at Michaelmas.
There is a Good Vein of Brick Earth on the Land.

OUTGOINGS:—

	£.	s.	d.	
Land-tax		0	9	9
Apportioned Rent Charge in lieu of Tithes		3	1	6

For further particulars apply to Mr. Charles Cockell, Solicitor, or to the Auctioneer, Attleburgh. (2630)

WANTED, a HOUSEKEEPER, by an elderly Man.
Light Place. Age about 50 years.—Apply, P. Hardy, Old Buckenham, Attleborough. [5613]

Norfolk News,
5 May 1888

35 black-faced wethers from the Duke of Grafton, 37s. 6d.
162 half-breds from Mr. L. Jillings, Bridgham, 60 at 38s., 60 at 36s. 6d., 42 at 33s. 6d.
60 ditto from Mr. G. T. Clarke, Mundford, 37s. 6d.
62 ditto from Mr. H. Rix, Eccles, 40 at 41s., 22 at 35s. 6d.
97 ditto from Mr. A. Osborne, East Harling, 80 at 36s. 6d., 17 at 29s. 6d.
94 ditto from Mr. A. Goodchild, Bressingham, 60 at 38s. 6d., 34 at 35s.
96 ditto from Mr. J. Rayner, Rockland, 36s. 6d.
99 ditto from Mr. Peregrine Hardy, Snetterton; 50 at 34s. 6d., 49 at 30s. 6d.
80 ditto from the Duke of Grafton; 50 at 39s. 6d., 30 at 36s. 6d.
100 ditto from Mr. M. T. Wales, Great Cressingham; 50 at 38s. 6d., 50 at 35s. 6d.
200 ditto from Mr. Porter, Feltwell; 100 at 40s. 6d., 50 at 39s., 50 at 37s.
100 ditto from Mr. E. J. Smith, Bunwell, 41s. 6d.
104 ditto from Mr. M. Joyce, Old Buckenham; 90 at 37s., 14 at 33s.
50 ditto from Mr. P. Eagling, Caston, at 43s. 6d.
47 ditto from Mr. C. Bullen, Hockham, at 45s.
59 ditto from Mr. A. Carrier, Stud Farm, Merton, at 38s. 6d.
45 ditto from Mr. Downes, jun., Great Ellingham, at 36s.
39 ditto from Mr. James Knights, East Harling, at

Charles Hardy's brother Peregrine Snr came to a sudden and unnecessary end in 1906. Having harnessed a young horse to a wagon to help with the harvest he decided to sit upon the horse who, having not previously been ridden, objected violently. Peregrine Snr managed to stay aboard by grabbing the front part of the cart but as the runaway horse shot through a gateway, the wheel hob hit the gatepost and the jerk through Peregrine to the ground, causing his death. Then as now farms were dangerous places.

Norfolk News
8 Apr 1899

Unfortunately, a legacy of £135 from his father's estate inspired Peregrine Snr's son, Peregrine Jrn to change from his career of colt breaking to farming. He proved not to have the family instincts or abilities and went broke within 4 years, in spite of support from his Uncle Charles Hardy. Mind you

when his father sold 100 half bred sheep in 1899, he only received very middling prices for his stock, 10 to 20 % less than most of the rest of the sellers

I am afraid to say that, as an adult, Charles' own son, (Arthur) Peregrine got himself arrested for being drunk (in 1896) and along with his other farming brother also caused a huge ruckus by not telling one of his father's neighbours that he had gone to keep an eye on his father's animals or indeed that his name was Hardy. Said neighbour, thinking he was defending Charles' flock from a

stranger, wound up in court convicted of assaulting Peregrine. Nominal fine and a set of unimpressed magistrates!

Norfolk News
29 Aug 1896

Farms to Let. OLD BUCKENHAM.

A MOST Desirable SMALL FARM, with Excellent House and Premises, and about 100 Acres of Arable and Pasture Land, as occupied by Mr. C. Hardy.

There seems to be a streak of impetuosity that comes with the name Peregrine!

By 1891 the footloose family had moved on to Wilby; by 1896, Charles was back in Old Buckenham and that is where he appeared in the 1901 census with his 17 years old son actually in his household, Hall Farm and his 36-year-old son next door! Hall Farm was a very nice place – the sale details of 1901 reveal it to consist of 250 acres and four labourer's cottages in addition to the farmhouse complete with tennis court!

Large farm as it was, there appear to have been times when it still struggled, Charles gave his labourers a week's notice in late 1900 that he would be dropping wages from 13s to 12s; one of the labourers stomped off in disgust leaving Hardy to arrange a replacement for him. The incident wound up in court when Hardy sued his former employee for the 5s he reckoned this had cost him. By this time the former employee was regretting his actions, was happy to come back to work and must have been a good worker as Hardy was ready to both then drop the case and re-employ him.

Eastern Daily Press
24 Jun 1901

OLD BUCKENHAM, NORFOLK.

About 3 miles from Littleborough G.E.R. Station and 7 miles from Wymondham Junction.

A Valuable Tithe-Free and principally FREEHOLD ESTATE.

To be Sold by Auction by

GEOERGE S. ANDREWS, at the Royal Hotel, Norwich, on SATURDAY, 6TH JULY, 1901, at Two for Three o'clock (by direction of the Trustees of the late Mr. Edward Bird), the very Valuable and Compact OCCUPATION known as the **HALL FARM**, exceedingly well situate in Old Buckenham, comprising a Capital Farmhouse with Tennis Lawn, Gardens, and Orchard, Ample Farm Premises, Four Labourers' Cottages, and Convenient Off-Farm Premises, with several Enclosures, containing altogether about

230 ACRES

of Rich Mixed-Soil **ARABLES** and **PASTURE LAND**, all now in excellent heart and condition, now in occupation of Mr. Charles Hardy (under a Lease for Twelve Years, expiring 11th October, 1904), at the yearly rent of £266 11s.

N.B.—The Arable and Pasture Lands, of which there is a very fair proportion, are all in a high state of Cultivation, and intersected by good roads. The Agricultural Premises are well placed in the centre of the Farm, the whole forming a most Valuable and Desirable Investment.

Principally Freehold and Tithe Free.

Further Particulars, with Plans and Conditions of Sale, of the Auctioneer, Wells-next-the-Sea; or of the Vendor's Solicitors, Messrs. J. Wilson, Gilbert, & Co., Norwich.

Then, as now, farming was a profession fraught with unexpected risks, in 1910 a Hay Stack of Charles' was burnt down by an arsonist on his way back from the pub and so drunk that the next day he woke up to find himself in the closet, theft of livestock was a constant issue, the Hardys also had fleeces stolen from them. We mentioned above the tragic incident in which a toddler was killed, another bizarre accident, this time causing the death of a valuable colt occurred in 1894. A lad was put to cutting thistles with a scythe in a field full of colts, lad got distracted by the arrival of another chap in a tumbril drawn by a horse and laid his scythe down. Most of the colts also came to investigate the arrival of the older horse and wagon, two colts did not and instead, managed to step on the scythe the young man had laid down. One of the colts promptly bled to death in the field, the other hung on for a while after – eventual fate of this second valuable creature unknown.

Even when things were going smoothly on the farm, there was always the risks associated with sharing your household with people who weren't members of your family; in Victorian times this usually meant servants. This was a time when ready-made clothes (except second hand ones) were

a bit of a rarity and people used to buy lengths of fabrics to be made up, either by themselves using a sewing machine or by a local seamstress. In 1889, Charles Hardy's wife, Jane, reported that a number of smaller items had gone missing. Ann Wilby, house servant was accused of stealing 15 yards of dress material, some cotton print, 3 yards of towelling and, very exotically, 2 ostrich feathers. Ann Wilby's 'box' (a small trunk that servant used to keep their personal items in) was searched but nothing was found. However, the local police keep their ear to the ground and local residents love to gossip; the next day they visited the Marjoram household. Herbert Marjoram, one of the sons of the house was courting Ann and it transpired that Ann had made gifts of, not only the fabric, but of a few other items she had filched, to the family. Since these 'gifts' resulted not only in the mother being called to give evidence but Herbert being charged with receiving stolen goods, I think this ploy may well have backfired! Ann's former employer, Mrs Jane Hardy, spoke kindly about Ann so she was given the relatively light sentence of 21 days; this was a time when theft by servants was an anathema.

A successful tenant farmer would tend to stay in the same place and slowly improve the land they were renting, less successful ones would tend to hop from one farm to another, really successful ones would hop from a smaller farm to a larger one! The 12-year lease on the 250-acre farm ran out in 1904; a court case in that year when a Mr Girling, the new tenant to this farm was coming in gives some idea of the upheaval that changing farms created with crops to be dressed and animals to be disposed of. In 1905 Charles was on a much smaller farm of 60 acres and then in 1907, after years of tenanted farms, Charles finally bought a small farm of his own, just over 11 acres, in Old Buckingham.

Norfolk News
5 Nov 1904

Norfolk News
31 Aug 1907

Old Buckingham, small freehold holding, comprising dwelling-house, garden, orchard, agricultural buildings, with several enclosures of mixed soil arable and pasture land, embracing an area of 11a. 1r. 24p., in the occupation of Mr. James Shardelow, at an annual rental of £30 per annum. Mr. Charles Hardy, Old Buckingham. £310. Messrs. Foster, Calvert, & Marriott, Norwich, were the vendor's solicitors.

In the case of Charles Hardy's sons, whilst the older two worked with their father, I suspect that as the third son, there was less scope for Frederick on his father's farm, instead he became a carpenter. Alternatively, there may have been more money about in later years and less need to put the younger lads straight onto work on the farm. This would enable them to either get more education or, more likely, be apprenticed to a skilled trade. In 1901 Frederick was working as a day carpenter and lodging at the Railway Inn, Attleborough, then being run by his slightly older sister, Eleanor, and her husband Leonard Self.

By the time of the 1911 census, Frederick's younger brother, Robert, aged 27 had been married 4 years and already had three children to show for it. Robert had also optioned for work off the land, being a marine engineer living in Beccles re-enforcing the idea that the older boys had taken up what opportunities their father could give the lads on his land, whilst the younger boys pursued other careers.

A CORN TRANSACTION.
Hardy v. Girling.—This was an action brought by Mr. Charles Hardy, farmer, of Carleton Kode, against Mr. R. G. Girling, farmer and landowner, Old Buckingham, to recover the sum of £47 10s., the selling price of 100 coombs of old oats at 9s. 6d. Plaintiff stated that whilst the oats were being threshed defendant agreed to take 100 coombs of them at the price Hardy made of the remainder, which was 9s. 6d. a coomb. The oats, by Mr. Girling's instructions, were left at the end of the barn at Old Buckingham. Mr. Girling said he went to the machine whilst the oats were being threshed, and remarked to plaintiff's son that the oats were very full of rubbish and dirt, and he should not accept delivery unless they were dressed, as were the remainder, which were sold to Messrs. Collier & Sons. He thought there would be five coombs of dirt taken out of the 100 coombs. Questioned by his Honour, defendant said it would cost about 6s. to dress the oats. Plaintiff explained that as he was the outgoing tenant, and Mr. Girling the incoming tenant, it was Mr. Girling's place to thresh, dress, and deliver the corn left on the farm. There would not be anything like five coombs waste. Plaintiff's son gave corroborative evidence. His Honour pointed out that Mr. Girling had not the trouble of delivering and carting this 100 coombs of oats, and he undoubtedly accepted delivery of them, therefore he must pay for them. He gave judgment for the plaintiff for the sum of £47 10s., and costs.

This family was more mobile than many of the time possibly as a result of the necessary moves from one tenanted farm to another; Frederick John Hardy had moved from Old Buckenham to Attleborough, whilst his wife Ada Elizabeth nee Balls had come from Streatham! Ada may have been Streatham born but the two married locally in the Guiltcross area. It is all a bit debateable as to whether you might call Ada a Norfolk girl or a Londoner – her family were part of the great Victorian diaspora from the rural areas to cities; for most East Anglians, London was the city of choice. Ada and 5 of her 6 siblings may have been born in Streatham (the oldest was, like their mother, born in Farnham Surrey) but her dad, William Balls, had been born in Gissing.

Ada's father William Balls was also a bit of a footloose fellow, his parents came from Winfarthing but he and his siblings were born in Gissing. By the time he was 19, William had sort of followed in his father's footsteps and was a Farm Servant but down in Kent! I then lose him for a few years until he turned up in Streatham in 1891 as a 49 years old policeman. He may well have joined the Army which would explain how he had met his Farnham wife; Aldershot, home of the British Army is just down the road from Farnham and many ex-service men joined either the railways or the police where their self-discipline prove an asset. William Balls had, by 1901, retired to Gissing and in sort of gamekeeper turned poacher career move, was no longer a policeman but was running a pub in Banham!

By 1911, as mentioned above, Percival's father Frederick had moved from being a general carpenter to the more specialised job of wheelwright and the family, the year before Percival's birth were living in Attleborough. Frederick just quietly got on with his life, the only time he appeared in the papers was when he was stopped without a bicycle light! Percival was one more generation removed from the land which was still providing employment for his cousins and uncles; he wound up in Harleston as the manager of the International Stores. This we know from a case in 1939 when a barefoot tramp broke into Stacey's outfitters and the International stores, all in one night. The burglar, Pilbeam, stole 4 boxes of matches, 3 boxes of chocolates, a pound of ham he cut off the bone, four or five jars of lobster paste (fancy!), two jars of meat paste and a fruit cake.

Percy was by then a married man having married young Gertrude Mary Adams in spring 1938; I say 'young' Gertrude as she would have been only 18 whilst Percy was then 26. Gertrude was a local lass, daughter of John Adams and Bessie Keeley. And, oh my goodness me; in 1939 the young couple were living with widowed Bessie in

Crown House, Harleston! Gertrude's father had died tragically young in 1929, leaving Bessie with Gertrude to raise. John Adam was a most steady and respectable chap; at the time of his death he had worked for Henry Martin, butcher, for 22 years. By a slightly odd co-incidence Bessie's own husband, butcher John Adams from Needham, had also been lodging in Crown House but back in 1911.

Diss Express
1 Mar 1929

Percy and Gertrude had already got their family underway by the time of the 1939

census with baby Sylvia being born at the start of the year. In spite of this Gertrude put her name down for the Women's Land Army, an essential element in the fight to feed a nation beset by assaults on supply ships. A second child, John, followed in late 1940 and Percy was given special leave from his regiment to come and meet his second child and first son. Shortly after this leave,

NEEDHAM.

FUNERAL OF MR. JOHN ADAMS.

Despite the severe weather the little church at Needham was crowded with friends and parishioners on Tuesday, for the funeral of the late Mr. John Adams of Harleston, who died on Saturday. Mr. Adams, who was only 44 years of age, was taken ill with pneumonia and as it was an illness which he had had before he was unable to throw it off. He had worked in Harleston for Mr. Harry Martin as a butcher, for the past twenty-two years and was highly respected both in Harleston and Needham. He leaves a widow and one little daughter. The Rev. H. S. Bally, vicar, conducted the service.

Percy was accidentally killed, leaving his wife with a toddler and a baby to raise. I have no doubt that her mother, Bessie, having lost her husband when her daughter was still a child would have sympathised and supported her daughter, widowed even younger and with 2 children to raise.

Diss Express
17 Jan 1941

HARLESTON

SYMPATHY

A message of sympathy from the King and Queen has been received by Mrs. G. Hardy of Old Market Place, Harleston. The message follows the death of her husband, Pte. Percy F. Hardy who was accidentally killed after he had been on special leave to see his wife and his newly-born son.

Rather meanly Gertrude was one of a number of victims of a one-person crime wave through Harleston delivered by a 15-year-old lad who was working in a Harleston Furniture shop. This lad managed to steal:

£30 of furniture from one lady; a Ration Book; more furniture to the value of £1/4/-; a pair of opera glasses from a chap in Pulham Market; 10/- from the widowed

Gertrude along with 3 bedsheets – a precious commodity in the times of rationing. The boy had climbed into her house through a living room window and roamed freely until he found what he fancied. There were another 6 charges of larceny and one of embezzlement he asked to be taken into consideration. Having initially denied the charges, the wayward lad admitted his crimes, said he was very sorry and that he did not think it would happen again – unfortunately the Magistrates had been down this route once before with this young man and he was sent off to an Approved school for three years.

Finally, the war was finished and those men who had survived, a far higher proportion than those who had left for war during the previous conflict, returned to pick up their lives. One of those men was Reginald Seaman who had been born in Mendham the same year that Percy had been born in Attleborough. Before the war he had been working for James Humphrey Jordan at Home Farm Alburgh but during the war he had been a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps, Reginald had been detained in a German Prisoner of War Camp, Stalag XVIII A and on his return he promptly married lovely Gertrude and, in early 1948, the couple set up as landlord and land lady of the Heath House Inn, Weybread.

Widowed Gertrude's husband and stepfather to Percy's children, Reginald Seaman posed in his uniform and in the PoW Camp.



WEYBREAD INN DESTROYED BY FIRE

A Centuries Old Building

Just before daybreak on Thursday week, the Heath House Inn, a centuries old building at Weybread, one mile from Harleston, was completely destroyed by fire, after the licensee, Mr. Reginald Seaman, and his wife and young family of four had had a miraculous escape.

Mr. Seaman was awakened by the ringing of a small battery powered bell, and on opening his bedroom door found that he and the family were trapped in their bedrooms, as volumes of smoke prevented them from using the stairs to the ground floor. He had to jump to the ground from a low bedroom window, and quickly fetched a ladder and rescued the remainder of his family. The fire apparently started in the bar. Mr. Seaman had to cycle to Harleston to call the Brigade which, under Section Leader J. W. Keeley made a prompt turn-out. Unfortunately the engine of the fire pump failed and another had to be fetched from Harleston. By this time the flames had spread rapidly and in less than five minutes the entire well timbered house was involved. Bungay and Long Stratton Brigades were also called, but despite their combined efforts little was saved.

Mr. and Mrs. Seaman lost all their personal belongings and were still in their pyjamas and coats lent by neighbours when they told a reporter that their young family consisted of a girl aged 10, a boy of 8 and twins two years old. They only took over the Inn in November last year.

District Officer W. Smith (Norwich Fire Headquarters) later took over control. The premises are owned by Messrs. Bullard & Sons Ltd., Norwich. Only the walls and chimneys remain.

Diss Express
3 Sep 1948

Unfortunately, there was a 'disastrous fire' shortly after they took on the tenancy and the couple, Percy and Gertrude's two children and Reginald and Gertrude's 2 years old twins were lucky to escape with their lives. It seems the fire started in the bar in this ancient timber building and trapped the family on the 1st floor which was still low enough for Reginald to jump from the window and rescue the rest of the family via a ladder. Reginald cycled to Harleston to call out the fire brigade which

MR. and MRS. REGINALD SEAMAN, of the Heath House Inn, Weybread, desire to thank their many kind friends and neighbours who came to their assistance following the recent disastrous fire, and all who have sent messages of sympathy which they deeply appreciate.

responded speedily – with a water pump that promptly failed. By the time another engine was fetched from Harleston, even with the assistance of the Long Stratton and Bungay appliances, there was nothing really remaining of this ancient building except the chimneys and a few rafters

With true spirit the family decamped to a nearby barn to set up, initially, their home, then subsequently the temporary replacement Pub!

Diss Express
15 Oct 1948

Bullards did actually properly rebuild the pub, a generously proportioned building which still

Weybread Heath House
The Magistrates granted the application of Messrs. Bullards for the transfer of the licence of Weybread Heath House to a barn some 30 yards away. Since the Heath House was destroyed by fire the barn had been converted to provide temporary accommodation for the licensee, Mr. Reginald Seaman and his family and for use as an inn.
Mr. W. O. Carter, who appeared for the brewers, said it was hoped to rebuild the inn as soon as possible.
Adjudicating were: Mrs. B. Biddle (chairman), Mr. T. M. Scoggings and Mr. R. C. Hayward.

stands although it is over 50 years now since a pint was served there.

Had Percy returned from the war, I imagine he would have continued to climb the career ladder of the retail trade; maybe he would have been promoted to a larger branch and followed where his job took him. Even if he had remained in Harleston, his children would have been town children with all the advantages and disadvantages that entailed. I don't know how long Gertrude and Reg stayed in the new Heath House Inn in Weybread but, for a time at least, Percy's children returned to their rural roots.

In a bizarre echo of the Warnes family who got done for driving an uninsured tractor on the road without bands to protect the road from the metal cleats that tractors had in those days rather than the deeply treaded tyres, Charles grandson, Charles Jnr and his father Joseph Charles got done for the self-same offence in 1938- there seems to have been a lot of it about! As in the case of the Warnes family it transpired that the Hardy's tractor was not insured either. The Hardy's excuse for lack of bands was that the cleats had recently been replaced with ones that were larger and the bands no longer fitted. However, the Hardy's topped the Warnes as not only was their tractor not insured, or fitted with bands, it was also not taxed or registered!