



## Clare Davey Olley

21039 Private, 9<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment

(Prince of Wales's Own). He died at home on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1917, aged 28

Clare is buried at Lawns Wood Cemetery, Leeds, Yorkshire

Clare Davey Olley was the half nephew (although much the same age) as another of our Harleston Heroes, Sidney Joseph Rayner, but actually should really have gone under the name of Clare Davey Farrell!

Samuel Rayner, who followed in his father's footsteps as a butcher in Wortwell, married Anne Eliza Olley, from New Fakenham, in 1875. When I saw the 1881 census entries with 13 years old William Olley in the household, I blithely assumed that William was one of the many children swishing around Harleston families who had been born prior their mother's marriage. Well shame on me; the Marriage Banns reveal that Anne Eliza Olley was a widow when she married Samuel Rayner.

1867 July 10 <sup>th</sup> No. 78 1867	William Olley base- born son of	Anne Eliza received into the congregation August 22 <sup>nd</sup> 1869	Farrall	Denton	Spinster
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But actually, not quite that simple either: back where we were and lo and behold, we find William Olley Farrall (paternity clearly ascribed), baseborn child

of spinster Ann Farrell baptised in Denton on July 10<sup>th</sup> 1867. Davy Olley hardly rushed to get the mother of his son to the Altar, finally getting around to marrying Ann Eliza Farrall in 1870, about 3 years after the birth of their son.

1870. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Denton in the County of Norfolk								
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.
114	April 14 <sup>th</sup>	Davy Olley Anne Eliza Farrall	25 25	Bachelor Spinster	Dealer	Denton Denton	William Olley Joseph Farrall	Farmer Farmer
Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by me, <i>W. D. B. Curate</i>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us, <i>Davy Olley</i> and <i>Anne Eliza Farrall</i>			In the Presence of us, <i>Wm. Olley</i> , <i>Wm. Olley</i> , <i>Wm. Olley</i> , <i>Wm. Olley</i>					
<i>Davy Olley</i>		<i>Wortwell.</i>		<i>October 23<sup>rd</sup></i>		<i>28</i>		<i>T. D. Turner</i> <i>Curate.</i>
No. 548.								

Davy Olley died very young, only aged 28 on October 23<sup>rd</sup> 1873 and although he was buried in the village of Denton, where he had not long since been married, he actually died in Wortwell. No further children had resulted from this liaison.

Davy was one of the oldest sons of William Olley a farmer originally from Kirby Cane who, after a number of his children (including Davy) were born in Kirby Cane, relocated to his wife's hometown of Denton. Whilst I could find neither Anne

nor Davy Olley in 1871, it seems her little boy William (going under his true name of Farrell and born before either of Ann Farrell's marriages) was being boarded out with the Smith family in Alburgh. I wonder if Davy actually accepted the boy was his?

I then suffered an outbreak of confusion, there was a David Olley who would have been quite a catch for this young lady; in 1867 he was a farmer in his own right having previously been the steward at Earsham Hall. But since he also had a stackfire in 1878, I can only guess that this was another part of the family!

However, the David Olley who was the landlord of the Wortwell Bell between at least 1871 and 1872 was one and the same as the 'dealer' who married single mother Ann. He appeared in the paper having taken a very pragmatic attitude to a pair of quarrelsome customers in mid-December 1871. On 30th December 1871 it was reported that Mr. Olley had permitted disorderly conduct in his house on the morning of 15th December. He had cleared the tap room to allow two quarrelsome customers to go 'about four rounds'. His excuse of wanting to get rid of the drunken party was considered lame and the magistrates were not satisfied; a drunken person in the morning? No such thing as licensing

hours then and it seems that many men started their day with a pint or three! Olley was fined £2 10 and £1 10s costs. I wonder who snitched?

*The Bell c 1915. and in the inter war period*



I am glad to say Anne Eliza's second marriage, to the butcher Samuel Rayner, was rather longer lived than her first to Davy Olley. I am a firm believer that there is very rarely such a thing as a total co-incidence when investigating family history; and where were Samuel and Anne Eliza nee Farrall formerly Olley now Rayner living In 1881? They were at the Wortwell Bell where Samuel Rayner, was combining his trade of butcher with being the pub landlord, a license he had held since at least 1875, presumably following on from David/Davy Olley. I wonder if the role of landlord came with the marriage to Anne Eliza?

1890. 19 <sup>th</sup> July Born 13 <sup>th</sup> April 1858. No. 637	Peter Olly	William & Rose Matilda	Olley	Wortwell	Drover	F. J. Perrowe Rector
1890. 19 <sup>th</sup> July Born 15 <sup>th</sup> June 1890 No. 638	Clare Davy	William & Rose Matilda	Olley	Wortwell	Drover	F. J. Perrowe Rector
1890. 19 <sup>th</sup> July Born 4 <sup>th</sup> April 1864. No. 639	Sidney Joseph	Samuel & Jane Eliza	Rayner	Wortwell	Butcher	F. J. Perrowe Rector
1890. 19 <sup>th</sup> July Born 9 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 1888. No. 640	Eliza Maria	Samuel & Jane Eliza	Rayner	Wortwell	Butcher	F. J. Perrowe Rector

By 1883, Rayner had given up the Bell; in 1891 his family had expanded to 5 children, all girls except second to last child Sidney Joseph. Rather touchingly, William Olley (strictly speaking 'Farrall') baptised two of his children on the same day that his mother baptised two of his much younger half siblings. Those much younger half siblings included his brother Sidney Joseph Rayner who has his own biography, having died in France on March 27<sup>th</sup> 1918.

William had named one of his sons Clare Davy, carrying the name of his supposed father Davy Olley who had died so young some 17 years previously. William himself had married Rose Matilda Pearce in late 1887 when he was 19 and she was 20. Rose Matilda had been born in Norwich but

**Lot 7. A desirable Brick-and-Glazed-Tiled BLACKSMITH'S SHOP and SHOENING FORGE, with Loft over, having a frontage of 34 ft. 6 in. to the Duke William Yard, in the occupation of Mr. Henry Pearce.**  
Further Particulars and Conditions of Sale may be obtained of the Auctioneers, Harleston, Beccles, and Bungay; and of the Vendor's Solicitor,  
**G. O. LYUS, Harleston.**

this was more an accident of birth; she was actually the daughter of Henry Pearce who was the son of the Rushall Blacksmith. By 1871, Henry was the Wortwell Blacksmith. Henry seems to have been fairly footloose; Rose was not the only child not born locally. By 1881, Rosa's father Henry and family had

moved back into town and were living on Candles Lane, I suspect behind the Duke William but with an entrance to Candles Lane. In this 1881 census, as a 14-year-old, Rose Matilda was a live in general servant – Jasmine House or thereabouts on the London Road, Harleston.

Eastern Daily Press  
1 Aug 1900

Annie Eliza Rayner, late Olley nee Farrall died in mid-1897 in early middle age. I suspect she took the secret of her son's true conditions of birth with her to the grave, a secret that may have only emerged when a nosy researcher started ferreting around in her family's history.

Annie Eliza Rayner No. 456.	Wortwell	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 1897	51	F. J. Perrowe Rector
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Olley and his wife Rosa settled down to married life; William was a drover which was a job for the trustworthy but not really that highly paid. I imagine that the family may have struggled on occasion. By 1901, when they were living on Holbrook Hill, adjacent to the Station Master's buildings, there were 7 children: oldest brother Peter 12; Clare 10; 5 more siblings aged 8, 6, 5, 3 and 11 months! One more child was to be added to the family, all 8 children being still alive in 1911 when only our hero had flown the nest. Father William Olley had then given up being a drover, oldest son Peter had taken over the mantle and was a cattle drover whilst his father was now dealing in Fowls and Furniture!

Clare and his new wife (married less than a year) had set up home in the tiny two up two down Church Cottage in South Elmham. With one all purpose room and a small scullery below two bedrooms this was the perfect starter home. Clare's wife, Mary Jane Vasey, 8 years the senior of her 20 years old farm labourer husband came from Armley, Leeds. She was the daughter of woollen cloth warehouse man, a trade her older brother was also involved in. It looks as if Mary persuaded her man that the north held greater opportunities as when he enlisted in May 1915, he gave a Leeds address and he was, not unlike his grandfather, a forge labourer. He joined the West Yorkshires; in a time when regional accents had not been softened by the effects of the cinema, let alone television and radio I wonder if him and his fellow recruits could make head nor tale of what the other was saying!

In May 1915, his little baby, Reginald, born on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February was only a few months old. Sadly, this little scrap died in late October the same year; in a bizarre tragic twist, little Reginald died the day after his father was posted out with the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force as part of the launch of the Dardenelles Offensive. Doubtless Clare and Mary hoped more children would follow but this does not seem to have been the case.

Having left the holding camp and joined his Battalion on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1915, he was already ill by January, in hospital with scabies on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January where he stayed for a fortnight discharged on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1916, the day he left Imbors, arriving at Alexandria on the 7<sup>th</sup> February. After 5 months stay in Alexandria, he left for Marseilles arriving on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July. After almost a year out in the extremely unhealthy conditions of malaria and dysentery that were rife in the Dardenelles, Olley was posted to France in July 1916. Two months later Olley was posted home from France to the West Yorkshire Depot and discharged on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 1916, two weeks after his repatriation. So, at a time when all able-bodied men were being called to arms, what had led to this 27-year-old with a 'Good' military record being discharged. Well, at grade 'E' he was described as 'being no longer physically fit for war service'. Further details follow below of him being 'unsteady and (*in?*)temperate movements. Shell shock maybe?

Apparently not; a far more detailed medical record card details the progress of the disease, tubercular lungs, that was to fell him. As we had already established, he had been sent out to the Dardenelles in late 1915, then was moved onto Egypt where (even in these dry conditions) he developed a cough which led him to being hospitalised. He was then sent on to France in 1916 where his coughing got worse, he lost weight and got night sweats. In September it was decided he had Bronchitis and he was eventually sent to via Hosptial Ship Salsa to a Hospital at home. The Army stance was that the disease was not a result of but aggravated by exposure and exertion on Active Service. The T.B. was rife through his lungs, his earnings were nil, his incapacity total – he must have known his time was limited.

Whilst the CWGC details his death as sickness following being gassed; I suspect this was a polite fiction. TB was viewed with shame and fear, he may well have had some exposure to gas in his time in France, but it was the underlying TB that killed our Harleston Hero. 6 months after he was returned from France, Clare Olley was dead, he died at the Norwich Military Hospital but his body was sent North to be buried at the Leeds General Cemetery where he has a military marker. He is also commemorated, not only on our local monument but also at the memorial at Lawns Wood Cemetery, Leeds. If he had stayed in Wortwell, it is far less likely that he would have contracted TB; this disease (then and now) was more a disease of the overcrowded cities. His wife was left with neither husband nor child to hold to herself at the end of their 7 years of marriage. She did at least get a pension, unlike soldiers wives in times gone by although I suspect that was little consolation.

A Mary J Vasey married a Percy Bannister in Yorkshire in 1921; I hope this was Clare's widow. The Bannister/Vasey union produced two sons; Mary deserved a little happiness.

Clare's older brother, Peter, stayed local and in 1939 was living up at Jay's Green with his wife Clara and three children. He had gone from being a cattle drover (even in 1911) this was a dying trade and had gone on to become a butcher – logical progression really!