



## Frederick Samuel Farrow

5771737 Private, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal Norfolk Regiment

Frederick was killed at Dunkirk on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1940, age 22

He is Remembered with Honour at The Dunkirk Memorial in France

Frederick Samuel Farrow was born into that phenomenon started in the Victorian Era – a railway family!

Born in Wicklewood in 1920, Frederick was the son of William George and Edith Isabella nee Cousins who had various Suffolk postings before they and their family wound up in Wortwell.

However, his family had its roots deep in the village of Claxton, a few miles south-east of Norwich. One of the earliest records we have there is of Thomas Farrow (Snr) marrying Deborah Wigg in the parish church in late 1799: she could write her name, he could not! A census in 1851 reveals that he had been born in nearby Yelverton and it was largely his and Deborah's many descendants who filled this small village in the following years. They were a **very** fertile crew! Whilst Thomas might have been born in a neighbouring parish, Deborah was true Claxton having been born there in 1779 (ish) to Edward and Martha (nee Denmark) Wigg. Deborah's mother Martha may have come from Thorpe but her husband Edward had been the Clerk of Claxton Parish and was one of many Wiggs who lived in the village over the years although he actually died in Bergh Apton!

By 1841 old Thomas Snr and Deborah nee Wigg were sharing a three-generation household including their son Thomas jnr, his wife Phoebe nee Warn, their oldest son then just a few months old and John and Sarah Dawson aged 13 and 3 respectively. These two youngsters were Thomas and Deborah's grandchildren arising from the marriage of Christmas Dawson and their daughter Deborah Jnr in 1826.

36 years old Deborah jnr died only 3 months after the 1841 census was taken, presumably it was her ill health that led to 2 of her children being at the grandparents for this census whilst Brewer Christmas Dawson, wife Deborah and the two middle children were still in Thurton!

Before our modern social services, family was heavily relied on for support in hard times.

born 24 <sup>th</sup> Sept 1827 No. 62.	John Snr of	Christmas & Deborah	Dawson	(Claxton	Husband	Thomas Farrow Clerk (Wortwell)
---	-------------------	---------------------------	--------	----------	---------	--------------------------------------

Next door to Thomas Snr was another family of Farrow's headed by another of Thomas Snr's sons William, wife Mary and 6 children – this was a fertile family who liked to flock together!

Talking of flocking together, by 1851, widowed 76 years old Thomas Farrow Snr appeared to have been heading a **four**-generation household consisting of a 40 years old son David, a 22 years old Sarah Farrow from Oulton labelled as a granddaughter, young grand-daughter Sarah Dawson, now 13 and also a 7 months old great granddaughter Deborah Farrow! This is actually the recording of a very confused census taker – later records reveal that 22 years old Sarah Farrow was actually David Farrow's wife which would make her Thomas Snr's daughter in law not granddaughter; admittedly Sarah was almost 20 years younger than her husband but still! The so called great-grand-daughter Deborah was actually Thomas Snr's grand-daughter and when she was finally and rather belatedly baptised at the age of 20, it was revealed her father David was an Army Pensioner – whilst he merely claimed to be a shoemaker in 1851! Double checking in 1861 and yes –we find 50 years old David Farrow (Chelsea Pensioner) with his wife Sarah Farrow (31 from Oulton) and four children with Deborah, aged 10, being the oldest!

Our census records are a marvellous resource but cannot always be relied on! Mind you old Thomas Farrow Snr lived a remarkably long life, dying aged 90 in 1910 at Mere Farm Bergh Apton having outlived his wife Phoebe by some 20 years!

**FARROW. – On the 6th inst., Phoebe, the dearly beloved wife of Thomas Farrow, of Claxton, aged 67.**

*Norwich Mercury*  
17 Dec 1890

Meanwhile by 1851, Thomas Farrow jnr and his wife Phoebe had achieved their own household and had 9 children at home – almost one per year of their marriage and it is to the parents' credit that they had all survived to this point; an extraordinary achievement. It is also a testament to the stamina of mother Phoebe that she too had survived! Things did slow down a bit after this and in 1861 only another 3 children had been added, the oldest of whom was young Arthur, then 8, our hero's grandfather. You may remember the surname Dawson from 1841? Well in 1861, appearing in Thomas Jnr's household was a 1-year-old Eveline Dawson – a 'nurse child'. What the relationship was between Thomas Jnr and this child is a bit vague but I think we can assume she was some relation of Thomas's deceased Aunt Deborah Dawson nee Farrow

10 years on and it appears that between 1861 and 1871 Thomas and Phoebe had still been churning out more babies, 3 more having been added to the family – yup, that makes 15 children raised on the wages of an agricultural labourer. By now Phoebe was 50 and her child-bearing years should have been over! Reappearing in the household was young Miss Dawson although now going under the name of Angelina and described as Thomas' grandniece! We have already mentioned the ubiquity of Farrows in Claxton; next to Thomas and Phoebe were his much older brother David and family, next door to him yet another family of Farrows and next door but one to that family, a fourth family of Farrows!

Eveline/Angelina is a bit of a mystery child – I can find no record of her birth (although it has to be said the Farrows were quite dilatory when it came to baptising their numerous offspring) so it is difficult to trace her parentage. It also proves very difficult to trace her through the censuses. She might have been the 21 years old Livinia Dawson from Thurton working at the Shortland Tavern in Kent in 1881, she is almost certainly the Evlina working as a laundress in Bromley Kent in 1891 (claiming Yarmouth birth) , she then disappears for another 20 years until she pops up on the South Coast, in Havant, still unmarried but having had four children. Once again, she was a laundress, tough unskilled badly paid work undertaken by the desperate and the disadvantaged; I think we can assume her life and that of her children had been hard and she had fallen through the cracks of society.

Hopping back to Arthur Farrow, Grand-father of our hero, and 7 years old when Nurse child Evangelina was born; he married Elizabeth née Blake when they were both only 18 years of age.

They went on to produce 11 children in their 40 years of marriage, all but 2 of whom were still alive in 1911. This marriage which took place in Arthur's home village of Claxton must have been given approval by both sets of parents as the protagonists were (at the age of 18) correctly described in the register as being 'both underage' (of consent). The vicar would have faced heavy fines if he had not checked that the parents had given their consent and there, we have Arthur's father Thomas and his older sister Harriet Farrow witnessing the marriage. Elizabeth from neighbouring Rockland St Mary must have also provided proof of her parent's consent.

Arthur came from a family that was struggling to make a living on the land; in 1870, when he was 8 years old, his parents had, as described above, a family of 8 to support. Whilst their oldest daughter was still, at the age of 14, described as a scholar, the three oldest boys (aged between 11 and 17) were all out at work. The parent(s) of 1 year old 'Nurse Child' Eveline Dawson might have been contributing some money for this informal paid fostering but equally (being relatives) they may have not been paying anything at all. This census was taken at the beginning of a quarter century agricultural depression with the British arable market being undercut by grain imported from the newly exploited American Prairies.

Arthur, a mere agricultural labourer, did well to marry Elizabeth Blake who was the daughter of a small butcher, Benjamin Blake, whose wife also did the markets. It was in the Blake's household that the couple set up home, appearing there in 1871 with a child whose birth followed hard on the heels of their marriage, some 6 months previously! Sometime between the 1871 census and the 1881 census, Arthur left the land and by 1881 he appeared at the Worlingham Gatehouse where he and his wife were to bring the rest of their 11 children into the world, 9 of whom were still alive in 1911. The railway had tempted Arthur away from the family that had long clung to a small cluster of villages in the damp lands around the River Yare. At this stage Arthur was the Gate Keeper and Pointsman, a job he was to delegate to his wife within 10 years!

By 1891 Arthur was then a Plate Layer and it was his wife who was not only the Gate Keeper but also in charge of the points – a very responsible job! These gate houses were not large and in 1891 (as well as the parents) there were 8 children squeezed in the house; I say children but as 5 were aged 10 or above, not all small children! The father of our hero, William George Farrow, was then an 8-month-old baby. The 1901 census reveals that the Gate House was a 4-room cottage although by then there were only(!) the parents and 4 children at home.

By 1911 the family were in an even smaller (3 room) cottage near Attleborough; fortunately, at this stage it was just the parents, William and a younger sister who were still at home. Both William and his father, Arthur, were then labourers on the Railway. Arthur, bless him, had very carefully filled out his census form in extremely carefully formed writing that probably had not changed since he left school sometime in the 1870 – either that or his daughter had filled it out for him; a lapse of concentration at the end of completing his census led to a mis-spelling of the head of the household's first name which was rendered as Aruthur!

Later that year (1911) William and Edith Cousins, who already a two-year-old son, William George (Cousins), married in Carlton Forehoe. In the custom of the time, the naming of this son unofficially and firmly ascribed his paternity to the man she was later to marry! When they married the next son, Albert John was himself quite imminent so one can only guess why they had not wed earlier. And my best guess is triggered by the clue that, when they did eventually marry, William Farrow had just turned 21 – until 1970, under that age you needed your parent's consent to wed. Perhaps William's parents did not approve of this young lady with whom he was to have a long (and productive) marriage! However, William's sister, J Maud Farrow was one of the witnesses so even if his parents might not have approved at least William had some family support! Which again raises the question why Arthur's son William did not marry his paramour when she became pregnant at roughly the same age as his own mother had!

In this 1911 census, Edith Cousins and her son William George were living with her parents and a younger brother in a 3-room cottage in Carlton Forehoe. Her father was a labourer and I suspect William Farrow with his steady job on the Railway would have been an attractive prospect. Whilst Edith was one of only 3 children, it has to be said that William and Edith followed the Farrow tradition of large families!

Our hero Frederick was more or less the middle child: -

William George (Cousins) b 1909

Albert J b. 1911

Arthur C b 1913

Isabel M M b 1914

James R b 1917

Frederick S. Farrow b 1920

Hilda M Farrow b 1922

Lillian Farrow b 1925

Elsie A Farrow b 1927

Dennis B Farrow b 1929

Only the last two births were registered Depwade, all the others in Forehoe so we might think we could accurately date the family's arrival to somewhere between 1927 and 1929. In 1921 William Farrow was a Plate Layer for the Great Eastern Railway in Wicklewood near Wymondham but by 1938 the family were living at the Gatehouse, Wortwell – or at least that was their address when young Dennis Benjamin joined the Yarmouth Independent's Children's Corner, a feature of the local newspaper that was very popular attracting quite a number of the Harleston children.

Dennis lived to a ripe old age, I remember him carefully tending the garden of a plot he owned on the Common; it having previously been the site of a double dwelling, he still had hopes of building a small cottage there. He also told me some scurrilous tales about his mother (and of course the mother of our Hero Frederick Samuel Farrow) who apparently was quite cheerfully free with her favours whilst his father did not mind so long as she still came home and had time for him too! Well, who would have thought!

In the meantime, with all those siblings, it would be surprising if there were not still a few relatives in and around Harleston who might have heard of our Hero Frederick Farrow.