



John Joseph Duffy

1312519 Flight Sergeant, Royal Air Force

He died on 3rd June 1944, on the island of Fernando Po, Equatorial Guinea, aged 27

John was buried in Malabo Cemetery, Bioko, Equatorial Guinea



John Duffy was born in Lissummon Jerrettspass on the 27th November 1916, County Armagh, eldest of the four children of James and Bridget Duffy. Affectionately known as Jack, as a teenager he came to England from Northern Ireland to find work as a landscape gardener, eventually setting up his own business. He was contracted to lay out the tennis courts on the recreation ground in Harleston, and while lodging in the area, met and then married Dorothy Lily Dalliston on Boxing Day 1939.

Dorothy was the daughter of William Dalliston and Rosa Lily Dalliston nee Frost. William had taken the classic route out of poverty in Norfolk and, like his older brother, had enlisted in the army in 1904 much as his somewhat older brother [Edward Bly Dalliston](#) had some 14 years earlier. William Dalliston, then a 20-year-old from Wortwell was

working as a bricklayer for a Mr Hipperson in Harleston when he enlisted. Back in 1901, Willie (as he was known) was sharing a house with two of his unmarried older siblings by the Chapel farm. And yes, at age 17, he was a bricklayer's labourer, maybe for older brother George who was an actual bricklayer!

I am afraid Dorothy's Uncle George Dalliston slightly blotted his copybook the same year William joined up when, along with Ernest Cook, the older brother of [Charles Cook](#), (also commemorated on the Harleston Monument) and two other builders, he raided the cellar of the uninhabited building he was working on. Stealing 54 bottles of fine vintage wines over a period of several weeks they had a fine old time. Ernest Cook 'got off' due to testifying, George Dalliston and the other two inebriates got a month's hard labour each, a lenient sentence reflecting their previous good characters.

Edward' and George's younger brother William signed up for 6 years and, ironically bearing in mind George escapades above, joined (as many ex-soldiers did) the Police Force. Hence, we find William, fresh out of the Army in 1911, aged 27 as an unmarried Police Constable living, along with 162 other single policemen at the Ambrosden Section House in Westminster – handily next to the Salvation Army Hostel which was packed with 900 inmates on the night of the census! This impressive building, planned in 1887, has now been converted to flats. These section houses were often extremely basic and even up to the 60's could consist of head height open topped partitions housing a bed, some drawers and a place to hang your uniform. Washing facilities could be equally basic with shared sinks in long rows. It does appear that 163 residents were accommodated in 19 rooms, I believe the inspector and his 13 sergeants would have had their own rooms, or at most shared with one other officer, leaving the 149 constables to be accommodated in a series of dormitories.



Ambrosden Section House

William married Rosa Frost in Kensington in early 1914 with no idea of the war that was looming on the horizon. The honeymoon period would have been quite short as William, being a reservist, would have been in the first tranche to be mobilised except, they had to introduce special terms for Police Reservists. Due to the number of serving policeman being former military men, police forces were soon complaining about the depletion of their ranks, the type of man they employed being deemed perfect for the Army. The upshot of this was that the Police Constables (Naval and Military Service) Act, 1914 was passed in 1916 and as well as covering various

salary and accounting details stipulated that police men could not enlist without authorisation. So . . . it is debateable whether the well-spaced-out family (approximately 3 years between each child) reflected careful planning or the timing of military leave! It is also debateable whether their first child was a 'Honeymoon' baby or whether her imminent arrival precipitated the marriage!

Either way Rosa and William's first child, also named Rosa, was born in London, Charing Cross Road to be precise, the second, Dorothy L E, in Wortwell, their third Gordon TM back in London, also at Charing Cross Rd. There had been a large Police Station on Charing Cross Rd but by 1911 it had been converted to use as a section house where unmarried policemen lived in very spartan surroundings. The 1921 census reveals exactly whereabouts on Charing Cross the Dallistons were raising their family.

In this census William gives his employer as the newly appointed Commissioner Brigadier General Horwood and his address as the Sandringham Buildings, Charing Cross Road. These buildings, similar to the better-known Peabody Buildings, were built as a philanthropic enterprise in 1884 to house the respectable working class and as a policeman William Dalliston would certainly have ticked those boxes. Indeed, from their very inception, police families were living in these, then very modern, apartment homes. In September 1885 Police Superintendent J.H. Dunlap of St. James's Division referred to the "Improved Industrial Dwellings Company, called Sandringham-buildings, a



suite of erections of handsome elevation, with no appearance whatever of model buildings, having large shops on the ground floor, with the upper portion allotted in suites of two, three and four rooms. There is every possible accommodation and sanitary appliance. In these buildings, the Superintendent adds, he has sixty-seven police families, occupying 193 rooms."

Sandringham Buildings in 1964

Opened by Albert Prince of Wales and Princess Alexandra, their erection was prompted by the need to house those made homeless when the area was

redeveloped. The buildings consisted of shops at street level and four stories above – a report of 1966 was somewhat snippy about their style, but I am delighted to say that the flats re-entered a second renaissance when acquired and modernised in the 1980s

The architect was George Borer, probably of the firm of Borer and Dobb, architects and surveyors, of London Wall, and the estimated cost was between £65,000 and £70,000. Nine hundred persons were to be housed here, and most of the tenements consisted of three rooms. Sandringham Buildings were formally opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales in July 1884. They are designed in the sour Gothic style characteristic of artisans' dwellings, mixed with debased Renaissance motifs. Above the shops is a four storeyed face of yellow stock bricks, regularly patterned with single, paired, and three-light windows having flat Gothic arches of brick, now painted. The end blocks have another storey of the same character, but the intervening blocks are all finished with a steep mansard slope of red fishscale tiles, broken by Gothic gabled features flanked by pedimented dormers, the roof line being crested with a spiky ironwork railing.

Although the young couple married in Kensington, Rosa was a lass also local to Harleston, and compared with the outside toilets, well water and candle light that they would have grown up with I am sure these flats would have seemed most luxurious.

Rosa Dalliston nee Frost was the daughter of Giles Frost, for many years an employee of the Gawdy Hall estate. When she was born out in Starston in mid-1891 (although baptised at Redenhall), her father Giles gave his trade as labourer and that is the trade he also gave in the census of that year. By the 1901 census, when the family were living out at the working-class outpost of Lush Bush, Giles gave his trade as a 'Fowl Minder on Farm' – a chicken wrangler?

Bearing in mind how many of the Dalliston family had been involved in the bricklaying trade it is interesting that Giles himself came from a family of Brickmakers. Aged 3, he appears with his parents and 5 siblings out at Bakers Barn in 1861 – his father being Ambrose Frost, a brickmaker employing 3 men and a boy. To find out more about the Frost family, check out the biographies of [George Frost](#) and [William Frost](#). Young Giles, in the way of the time was set to work early and at the age of 12 was already working for his father as a brickmaker – alongside two older brothers.

In early 1876, young Giles married Rosa Nunn from Weybread – true to form, Rosa's father James was also described as a brickmaker. In earlier years he had been an Agricultural labourer, but with Rosa spending her childhood near the Ablett's Weybread Brick Kiln it is not too surprising that he too became involved in this trade.

5 years later the family were living on 'Norwich Broadway' in Starston -almost certainly the wider part of the main road near the bridge over the Beck and the couple had 3 children aged 4 and under being supported by Giles' work as a brick maker. The 1911 census reveals that the couple had 7 children in all, one of whom had not survived to that census. Slightly strangely on the night of the 1911 census, Giles and Rosa also had their son James and his 3 oldest children staying with them out at Lush Bush whilst their mother Laura stayed at home on Candler's Lane with their three youngest children.

Anyway, back to the father-in-law of our hero Jack Duffy, William Dalliston. Whether he served in the forces or remained as a police constable, William Dalliston survived the war and continued as a member of the London Police Force until his retirement in 1932. At this point William returned home and took over the Yew Tree in Redenhall. Sadly, within 4 years of the couple taking over the tenancy, his wife Rosa nee Frost became ill and died in 1937. William appears not to have had the heart to carry on and with his departure the Yew Tree's long history as a public house came to a close. I say a long history – back in 1761 it was even then described as an 'ancient and well accustomed publick house'.

By 1939, the widower was living with his middle child Dorothy Lily at the White House Needham whilst John Joseph Duffy was lodging in the Middle Row, on the Broad Street side somewhere between the Two Brewers and the Bond family, opposite the war memorial. His oldest daughter, Rosa Lily Lucy was living up in London but returned to town to marry Henry George Manfield then lodging in Stoke Holy Cross. I say lodging as the 1939 register has young Rosa, a millinery trimmer, living with her husband to be, his parents, another sibling and another lodger. Henry gave his trade as a Radio Engineer / Electrician, a trade that would be in demand in the modern war that was about to break out. I believe that Rosa and her family wound up in Worcester – reflecting the more mobile post war population.

Landscaper John Joseph Duffy was sharing his lodgings with a young man who was working in a shoe shop – this could be how he met his wife who also gave her employment as a shoe shop assistant in this 1939 register! Although they met and married in the Waveney Valley the couple set up their first home in in Rugby, Warwickshire. John enlisted in the RAF in December 1940 and trained as a wireless operator and air gunner before he was assigned to Coastal Command. It seems Dorothy returned to Harleston when she became pregnant as the young couple's son, Roger Edward G Duffy was baptised here, being born in February 1941; following his birth, Dorothy (known as Dorrie) and baby Roger moved to Ireland to live with John's mother Bridget Duffy.

Flight Sergeant Duffy took part in numerous missions in the Sunderland Flying boats and served in the Far East winning the Burma Star. In 1943, his plane came down in the sea off Portugal, possibly due to mechanical failure. Although injured, he and the rest of the crew were rescued and after a spell in hospital recovered to take to the skies once more.



Duffy, front right and his crew.

A second child, Marlene, was born in 1944 and Flt Sgt Duffy was granted compassionate leave to come back and spend some time with his family in Ireland.

The family were very relieved when John Duffy and his crew, who had flown together as a team for most of Duffy's period of service were posted to East Africa, this being a relatively safe posting. The crew were ordered to follow the west coast of Africa, south to Nigeria, then head east to Uganda. While crossing the Gulf of Guinea, they flew into a severe tropical storm, causing their plane to crash-

land in a remote part of the island of Fernando Po (now known as Bioko). Only one man survived the crash and that for only an hour or so. When John Duffy was recovered it was found that he had on him various religious items including a prayer book and a certificate of communion. John Duffy was indeed a religious man and a friend of his, Tom Savage, (mentioned in a letter John sent to his mother in Dec 1943 whilst he recovered from the crash near Portugal) became a priest and was able to discover details of the men's funeral in Bioko. This had been a very grand and formal affair conducted by a Roman Catholic priest and two Methodist Ministers to represent the Protestants (no C of E official) was available. A solemn cortege paraded from the cathedral to the burial ground that was ceded in perpetuity for the peaceful rest of the Airmen's remains.

The Funeral of The Sutherland Crew.

John Duffy's wedding ring was returned to his widow a few months after his death, doubtless to be treasured.

When the headstones (from an Ipswich Stone Mason's) were erected in the Santa Isabel Cemetery in August 1947, Duffy's stone had the following phrase engraved upon it "Not my will but Thine, Lord Jesus have mercy on him"





Dorrie Duffy nee Dalliston with Roger and Marlene Duffy

His widow, Dorothy Duffy nee Dalliston who was only 27 when she was bereaved, must have returned to England with her children after the end of the war as she was present (as a widow alongside [Mrs Love](#)) at the unveiling of the WW2 tablet on the Broad Street Memorial in November 1946. Dorothy went on to marry Cecil Jack Snowling from Wortwell in 1947, a young man 7 years her junior. From this marriage came the rather beautifully named Pearl, born in 1948 who, 19 years later, married John Stokes in Suffolk. Pearl had three sons, Pau, Johnny and Dean at least one of whom still lives locally and carries on the family tradition of building work. I believe her half-sister, Marlene Duffy, (who she regarded as her best friend as well as her sister) married Michael Knights, also in Suffolk and went on to have 2 children.

Old William Dalliston had remained at the White House for the rest of his years -apparently the

low-lying marshy land was ideal for growing tobacco, a hobby he thoroughly enjoyed, curing the leaves in Golden Syrup and having his bumper crop reported in the local paper in 1949. The old chap was suddenly taken ill in late May 1950 at a Harleston Whist Drive (he also enjoyed Bowls and Darts and been very involved in the Harleston Swimming Club) and died a few days later. His obituary revealed he had also been a crack shot having represented the Police at Bisley and various other events and his funeral was attended by his children and their spouses plus various other Dalliston and Frost relatives as well as a number of friends.

Sadly, Dorothy and her second husband Cecil were only to have 20 years together as Cecil died in Wortwell in early 1967, aged only 43. By then Dorothy was 50 but seems to have gone on to marry George Grand in 1972 and it was under the name of Dorothy Grand that this splendid lady was to be found in Malthouse Court in 2002, at the age of 85. Sadly, this was the year her son Roger died aged only 66 having, presumably been raised and living the majority of his life in Norfolk. In 1953 he rocked up for the village Cricket team – admittedly he scored a duck but he was just a young lad!



12 years old Roger Duffy in a group of other young Anglers. Roger is the second from the left.

In 1957 Roger and his skiffle band (very of its time) were providing the entertainment at the Wortwell Labour Club Social!

Duffy the goalkeeper

Harleston "A" ... 1 Wortwell ... 4

PERHAPS the most pleasing feature of this "friendly" match from the Harleston point of view, was the sound display given by lanky Roger Duffy in goal. Duffy has played in several different positions in the field, but it is now apparent that he would prove an able deputy should either of the regular 'keepers' not be available.

Having scored a Hat Trick for Wortwell FC in 1961, he then had a spell with Harleston before returning to Wortwell! Other reports of the time indicate that Roger was a very good player, proficient as a centre forward, as a goal keeper and most positions between! He was still playing for Wortwell in the early 80s when he was almost 40, and during the 70's was a very successful manager of the Harleston F.C. I am sure his Jack Duffy would have been very proud of his 'lanky' son!

The Wortwell FC team in 1972 – Roger Duffy is the tall chap in the right middle back row.



Wortwell F.C.'s team which entertained Drayton on Saturday. L to r: (back row) M. Wilkinson, D. Nunn, P. Collings, S. Bond, R. Duffy, D. Lockstone, D. Renaut, T. Leggett; (front row) M. Davies, K. Fenn, I. Pearce, R. Purland, D. Bicker, K. Huxtable.

We mentioned earlier that in 1939 Dorothy was working in a shoe shop – her brother Gordon Thomas Moore Dalliston married Olive in Stafford during the war but returned to Harleston, to raise a family. Living over as a manager of Sherwood's Shoe shop (roughly where Durrant's is now) he was very lucky to escape injury in 1954 when a runaway lorry rolled down Bullock Fair Close and crashed into the front of the shop, waking his children sleeping in the rooms over! After this exciting episode the family moved round to Broad Street. Sadly, the youngest of their 4 children, 3 years old Stephen died in early 1958.


Gordon and Olive went on to run a very successful small chain of local shoe shops, including one at 32 Thoroughfare – I believe now Cecil Amery's Opticians? These hit their peak in the 70s and early 80's and by 1983 Dalliston was living up on Station Road, complaining about the noise of Len Whurr's Haulage trucks!

Gordon Dalliston
FOOTWEAR SPECIALISTS
32 The Thoroughfare, Harleston, Norfolk
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NEXT STOP was to see Gordon and Olive Dalliston at their shoeshop in Harleston. Gordon told Sneh that he owns shops in Beccles and Bungay, all of which stock footwear for ladies, children and men from the ranges of Norvic, Whites, Morlands, Wearra, Lotus and K-Shoes.

He added that Summer holiday and beachwear was currently in demand as are the selection of handbags and footwear accessories.

While Sneh tried on the sandals with which she is pictured above, Olive told her that the stores offered a fast repair service — an unusual feature of modern-day shoe shops.



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