



## Frank Cecil Gardiner

200159 Corporal, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment

He was killed in action on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1918 in France, aged 22

Frank is commemorated at the Pozieres Memorial, Pozieres, Picardie, France



The Gardiners were a fairly prolific and, within the region, by the standards of the times, a slightly footloose family who tended to marry wives with slightly unusual surnames- helpful when tracking people down!

Our tale starts out in Dickleburgh where, way back in 1841, we find Frank's paternal great-grandfather, 40 years old John Gardiner, although to be fair he was born just a few miles down the road in Scole. John's wife, Maria née Prime came from Shelton, not far by modern standards! When the couple married in nearby Diss in 1827, neither John nor his wife able to sign their names. 14 years later, when the Gardiners appeared in the 1841 census, they already had 7 children aged between a few months old to 13 years; one born every other year for the duration of their marriage. In the next 7 years they

added four more children. James Snr, grandfather of Frank, was the youngest but one!

We do have a brief description of the Gardiner's home in 1855 when the estate of Mrs Aldis, deceased was being sold up.

**Lot 2. A substantial stone, brick, and tiled COTTAGE, in three tenements, with gardens, and the residue of the said piece of pasture land at the back thereof, pleasantly situate near the street and fronting the said public road to Harleston, now or late in the several occupations of William Barber, John Gardiner, the said John Garland, and —.**

There was a well-established Mill in Dickleburgh and our hero's grandfather James Gardiner Snr took up the trade of Milling; I am afraid to say that in 1866, he got into a spot of bother for poaching out in Billingford, resulting in 14 days hard labour and having to find sureties for his good behaviour for the next 12 months. Mind you, only 3 years previously his father, John, had hardly set a good

example, having been done for being drunk and riotous, I presume one stage worse than drunk and disorderly!

**was fined 1s., and costs 4s.—James Gardiner, of Dickleburgh, miller, charged by John Bartram, of Billingford, farmer, with poaching by night upon his farm, on the 14th inst., was committed for 14 days' hard labour, and to find sureties for twelve months.**

*Norfolk Chronicle*  
1 Dec 1866

Three years later and Frank's paternal grandfather (and part time poacher) James Gardiner Snr, married a Rosa(nna) nee Talbot from neighbouring Thelverton. Rose may have been raised in Thelverton but her father Elijah Talbot was born in Diss. His parents, William and Mary Talbot, both came from different parts of Norfolk and their other children had also been born in various parts of Norfolk too. Whilst the Talbots might have roamed Norfolk in the early years of their marriage, by 1851 this had all changed. Elijah Talbot and his wife Emily nee Rudd from Shimpling were happily ensconced in Thelverton, near to Thelverton Hall, whilst his parents, and *their* three youngest children, again from various parts of Norfolk, were all living next door to them. A fifth sibling to Elijah, Laura Talbot, was working at the big house. Thelverton was what was known as a closed Parish which meant that nearly all the land in the parish was owned by Thelverton Hall, who were doubtless the employers of the various Talbots in their various occupations. Descendants of the family continued working for Thelverton Hall for many years to come – it seems as if the Talbots had drifted about Norfolk doing the best they could do to support themselves until they finally had an opportunity to settle down which they firmly grabbed with both hands, rewarding their benefactor with good service.

Elijah's father William Talbot must have been working on one of the home farms and doing reasonably well; in 1851 he was violently attacked and a silver watch and 18s stolen from him. The perpetrator, William Smith, a young man of 22, was transported for seven years for this crime. Talbot was 61 at the time and having treated Smith and his companion Robert Boulter to ale in a pub in Harleston (when presumably they saw he had more money) he set off home between eleven and midnight. Fair old trek I would have thought, but maybe he was hoping to hitch a ride on a cart. The two younger men set off with him, part of the way home they knocked him down and robbed the old fellow. Smith, the taller of the two assailants, continued kicking William Talbot as he lay on the ground. Boulter shouted to Smith not to kill the old man, Smith swore and said he would. Boulter nobly ran away at this point, and I suspect Smith having got his prize and (with no audience to impress) desisted in his attack. For his part Boulter (who admitted helping spend part of the money) was given 6 months imprisonment; his colleague in this cowardly crime was sent to the colonies.

Rose's father Elijah Talbot worked hard, by 1881 he had become not just a labourer but a Bailiff at Blackthorn Farm, just outside of Diss, a post he was to hold for at least another 10 years. His daughter Harriet operated a dress making business from his premises.

**D**RESSMAKING.—Ladies requiring DRESS-MAKING, waited upon at their own homes, either by the day or week.—Apply H. Talbot, Blackthorn Farm, Diss.

Diss Express  
25 Nov 1887

In brief, Frank's paternal grandmother, Rose, was born in Thelverton, to parents from Diss and Shimpling and was raised next door to grandparents, aunts and uncles, all born in various other parts of Norfolk.

1862. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Ditchleburgh 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.
194	October 1st	James Gardner Rosa Talbot	fulbays 19	Bachelor Spinster	Miller ---	Ditchleburgh Ditchleburgh	John Gardner Elijah Talbot	Labourer Labourer
Married in the <u>Parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Evangelical Church after Banns</u> by me,								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		James Gardner Rosa Talbot			in the Presence of us,		Eustace Barrett Martha Houchens	
George Barrington Esq								

When comparing Rosa Talbot's marriage certificate with that of her parents it is interesting that in 1869, both bride and groom could clearly write their names. In 1847, Rosa's mother (Emily Rudd) and Aunt Louise (Elijah's sister) could just about write their names but neither her father (Elijah Talbot) nor her grandfather (William Rudd) could write at all. In agricultural areas it was more difficult to promote schooling for lads who could be sent out to earn money; a situation that continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

1847. Marriage solemnized <u>at the Church</u> in the <u>Town</u> of <u>The Weton</u> in the County of <u>Norfolk</u> .								
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.
11	Nov. 16 <sup>th</sup>	Elijah Talbot	22	Bachelor	Labourer.	The Weton	William Talbot	Labourer
		Emily Rudd.	20	Spinster		The Weton	William Rudd	Labourer
Married in the <u>Parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Church of England</u> by me, <u>R C Maul</u> Curate								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		<u>Elijah Talbot</u> + his mark <u>Emily Rudd</u>		in the Presence of us,		<u>William Rudd</u> + his mark <u>Louise Talbot</u>		

James Gardiner may be Dickleburgh born but, sometime between 1881 and 1891, the family had upped sticks from their home by the Ipswich Rd and moved to the Halfway cottages – halfway between Needham and Harleston. There, or more or less there, they stayed for at least the next 10 years. Due to a court case from 1891, we know that in 1891, at least, James Gardiner Snr was working for William Button at the Weybread mill. The Button family had a mill at Dickleburgh from at least the 1870's so I suspect that when they took over the Weybread Mill in 1887, they put in James Gardiner Snr, one of their tried and tested employees from Dickleburgh. James Snr and Rose Gardiner nee Talbot carried on quietly and steadily raising their family on the outskirts of Harleston. Oldest son, James Gardiner Jnr, chose not to follow his father in the milling trade but instead he trained as a carpenter.

When it was James Jnr's time to marry, he fell for a young lady by the name of Laura Thaine, born in Lowestoft but living in Beccles in 1881 with her mother a 36 years old widow Emma Thain(e). Thaine is a very unusual name in this country, deriving from the Scandinavian rank of Thane and appearing largely in Norfolk and the east coast of Scotland (lots of Viking Activity!). In 1881 widowed Emma Thaine was working as a char woman to support her 6 children aged between 16 and 8, including Laura, then 11. There had been seven children, but the youngest daughter Catherine, had not survived. The oldest daughter was then working at the printers, 10 years later two of the children, including Laura, had flown the nest; with all of the four children left at home now working (three at the printers, one as a dressmaker). With this extra money coming in, Emma was no longer

1881. Marriage solemnized at <u>the Parish Church</u> in the <u>Parish</u> of <u>Lowestoft</u> in the County of <u>Suffolk</u>								
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.
272	May 19 <sup>th</sup>	Charles Thain	20	Bachelor	Coal Painter	Lowestoft	Samuel Thain	Shipwright
		Emma Keeley	20	Spinster		Lowestoft	James Keeley	Labourer
Married in the <u>Parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by _____ or after <u>Wmms</u> by me <u>W. Hankman</u>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		<u>Charles Thain</u> <u>Emma Keeley</u>		in the Presence of us,		<u>William Thain</u> <u>Celia Thain</u>		

having to work and could instead focus on caring for her working children. All the children, Laura included, gave their birthplaces as Lowestoft, but the mother was Starston born. Checking the baptism records it transpires that their father was Charles a coach painter. This in turn led to the marriage entry showing that Charles Thain and Emma Keeley had married in 1864, when they were only 20, out in Lowestoft. Charles father, Samuel, was a shipwright and Emma's father (James Keeley) a labourer – but note, both Charles and Emma and the other Thain witnesses all wrote their names clearly and confidently.

And we do indeed find Emma Keeley, one of the middle of at least 8 children (in 1851) of James and Harriet Keeley out in Starston. I was interested to see that in 1847, when an Eliza Keeley was baptised in Starston, the cleric noted that 'Caley' was an alternative rendition of the name. By 1861, Emma Keeley was working in service in Lowestoft, housemaid to a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons no less, whilst the 1871 census reveals Charles to have also been Norfolk born, in Reedham. Tracking back, it transpires his parents came from Gorleston, whilst various of his siblings had been born in Reedham, Gorleston and in Yarmouth. However, by 1851, Charles' boat builder father, Samuel, and his family were up by the Old Market in Lowestoft.

One of Charles' slightly older brothers, Robert, his senior by 6 years got himself into some trouble in the late 1850's. At this time, Sundays were the only full day off work and, once church attendance was got out of the way, young men in particular were determined to make the most of their time of freedom. Unfortunately, the landowners in and around Lowestoft were being so plagued by the depredations of lads hunting for bird eggs and causing damage to fences with their general high spirits and tom-foolery, that they posted men to watch out for offenders on Sundays. One of three 'big boys' caught so doing was Robert Thaine. Despite his protestations he had caused no damage, just going through holes in the hedge that already existed, it did not help that one of the magistrates had been particularly prey to similar intrusion. Not able to pay the 10s fine he was sent to Beccles for 10 days with hard labour.

However, it was one of Charles' many nephews who was to shock the nation in a notorious crime in 1913. This nephew was Louis Thaine, one of the youngest sons of Charles' oldest brother, William Firman Thaine, a perfectly respectable basket maker with a family of at least 9 children, all being raised in Lowestoft. Although young Louis had studied at the Lowestoft school of art from the age of 15, he seemed all set to follow one of a variety of skilled trades open to the steady working classes in a busy town at the turn of the last century. In 1901, living with his parents, a married sister and a niece, Louis was then a 28 years old Carpenter and joiner, but was also branching out into watercolour portraits,<sup>1</sup> quite likely based on photographs.

In 1902 there was a decent review of a portrait that Thain had presented to mark the departure of Mr Heppell, the outgoing chaplain to the Lowestoft Seaman's Mission – would love to see that but I suspect under the circumstances, detailed further below, it may no longer be in existence!

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<sup>1</sup>Lowestoft Journal 30 Mar 1901

At this point Mrs. A. G. LUCAS unveiled a portrait of Mr. Heppell, excellently painted by Mr. Louis Thain, a promising Lowestoft artist, who also presented it to the Institute.

The CHAIRMAN said he considered that Mr. Thain had done his work well; the portrait was a splendid specimen of that gentleman's skill, and a faithful likeness.

His obituary reveals that his older children were really doing rather well. This obituary describes not only how William Snr was held in the highest esteem but goes on to detail the prominent positions that Louis' older siblings held in the town and elsewhere:

Edward – member of Lowestoft Town Council

William Jnr – one of the most active spirits of the Regatta Committee

Frederick – auditor for the Great Eastern Railway

Samuel – in New York, America<sup>2</sup>

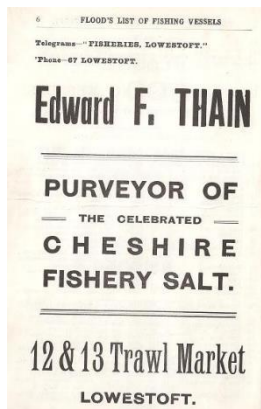
Louis and Ernest – yet to make their mark, although Louis was working at this painting and Ernest occasionally got up on his hind legs to sing at trade dinners.

Three sisters got (as was the way) a mention in passing!

*Lowestoft Journal*  
26 Apr 1902

William Firman Thain suffered a stroke some years previously to his death in 1905 and had never really recovered but his

Even through William Snr's widow followed him to the grave barely 5 months later, both were of a good age when they died. Following William Snr's elaborate and ostentatious funeral, his oldest son (William Jnr) who had followed in his father's footsteps as a basket maker, took over the well-established business at Willow House, Clapham Road Lowestoft where his mother had spent her last months.



*Edward's stall c1905.*

The second oldest son, Edward Thain, also continued to prosper. It could be that Louis inherited at least a small amount of money from his father's estate, giving him that extra push to follow his dream of being an artist and off he headed for the Eastern suburbs of London, Snaresbrook to be precise.<sup>3</sup> There he advertised that, for the not inconsiderable sum of a guinea, he would produce a chalk portrait from a photograph. A lot of money at the time and perhaps he was less than successful,

<sup>2</sup> I do hope not the Samuel Thain of New York who committed suicide in 1911 by shooting himself in a hotel room. At the time of his death he had \$1,200 in his pocket and a note requesting the money be used for church works,

<sup>3</sup> Eastern Mercury London, 31 May 1904

returning to Lowestoft not long after to trade in fish at 6 Trawl Market, not far from his brother's stall. I don't think this really satisfied Louis' ambitions so, having given up carpentry, failed as an artist and now reduced (in his mind at least) to selling fish at the local market, he came up with another plan as many personable young men have over the years.

It was in Lowestoft Registry Office, a bare few weeks after his mother's death, that artist Louis pressed on with his wedding, albeit more modestly than might have been otherwise. This was to a

**On Tuesday, a wedding, in which some local interest was manifested, as the bridegroom is well known, took place at Lowestoft, the contracting parties being Mr. Louis Thain (son of the late Mr. W. F. Thain, of Clapham Road, Lowestoft), and Mrs. Giannella, widow of Mr. Joseph Giannella, of Acquarossa, Switzerland, and London, and third daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ford, of Wells, Norfolk. The bridegroom carries on business on the Trawl market at Lowestoft, and had some repute locally as an artist. Owing to the recent deaths of his father and mother, the wedding was of a quiet character, but nevertheless there were numerous wedding gifts. The bride wore a grey travelling costume and a black chiffon hat, and the happy pair having visited the residence of the bride, Mattishall Villas, Kirkley, left later in the day for London.**

slightly older lady of rather greater means than himself, the widow of 'Jospeh Gianella of Acquarossa of Switzerland and London' who had been led to believe that her new husband was a successful fish merchant.

Evening Star Suffolk  
21 Mar 1906

Now I am not sure what the (not so young) couple got up to in the succeeding three years, but Louis was not the highly successful Fish dealer he claimed to be

when wooing his fiancée. By 1909, Louis was the landlord of the Ffolkes Arms in Hillington. According to the most excellent Norfolk Pubs website

The Lynn Advertiser of 6th August 1909 reported that the house was being upgraded from public house to hotel.

On the 20th August 1909, proprietor Louis Thain advertised that the house had been Redecorated and Furnished throughout, and Visitors would find it one of the most comfortable in the district.

First Class Catering. Moderate Charges., Good Stabling and Motor Accommodation.

Louis seems to have been determined to upgrade not only the hotel but the clientele; on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1909 (barely having got his metaphorical foot in the door) he had a run in with some locals. One of these, Borley, opened his drinking session by ordering a half gallon (4pts) of beer, his chums then joined him, ordered more drink, made threats, caused disturbances, used bad language and took a deal of removal. When the case got to court, the lead magistrate was Sir William Ffolkes (yup as in Ffolkes Arms). The local wild boys were very happy both to plead guilty and have Sir William determine the case. Not so daft, as Sir William dealt very leniently with them, fined them a mere 7s inclusive of costs and left Louis Thain with egg on his face!

Until now this has been a fairly normal story of a hardworking bourgeoisie family contributing to society and hauling themselves from the working class into the lower echelons of the middle class. However, by 1910, we get the first hint of some instability in the family when William Jnr was

discovered, by his son, Leonard William Thaine, hanging from a beam on the premises, presumably in the workshop, that he had inherited (along with the business) from his father – this does make it a little more likely that the Samuel Thain who committed suicide in New York less than a year later was another of the brothers.<sup>4</sup> William Jnr's son, a member of the Suffolk Yeomanry, went on to acquit himself well in WW1. Travelling up from the ranks he served in the Balkans and attained a commission before being demobbed.

Louis Thain's venture into the hotel trade was not going well either; less than 18 months after the move to Hillington Mr and Mrs Louis Thain were back in Lowestoft with Mrs Thain having lost £300 of her money in this venture and worn herself out whilst her husband swanned around the countryside extravagantly spending money. At this point the tale starts getting very dark<sup>5</sup>. In January 1911, "Emily Rudd, aged 26, domestic servant in Mr Thain's employ' gave birth to a male child whose newborn body "was found in a coal scuttle in a shed at the rear of a house in Cleveland Road (occupied by Mr Louis Thain)". Emily had since been an inmate in the Oulton Workhouse and was fortunate in so far as it could not be proven the baby had been born alive and she was merely 'severely admonished'. Emily gave birth alone and unaided and either was unable or unaware of how to safely tend to the newborn baby (unlikely in times of large families with few babies being delivered professionally), or the baby was born alive and was left to die or hastened to its death, or the fully formed full term child died of natural causes. We will not now know the exact circumstances and probably should not rush to judge this unfortunate woman and her doomed child.

Perhaps what we might wonder was the paternity of the child; house servants were particularly vulnerable to the attentions of the master of the house although they could of course also get up to mischief on their precious afternoons off as well.

This occurred in 1910, by 1913 Louis Thain's wife had had enough, moved out of the home and applied for a separation order on grounds of cruelty. This was a sort of halfway house on the way to the almost unaffordable (and for women almost unachievable) divorce, whereby the husband would no longer have control over, or liability for his spouse, and she could be granted some maintenance without having to tolerate him. During the court proceedings, Louis was reported as having behaved very excitedly, constantly interrupting his wife even though she was not asking for any maintenance, just freedom from her husband.

In contrast Louis' nephew, the only son of Edward Thain, successful fish and ice merchant had just tied the knot with his own beloved, literally a few weeks before, how galling!

By this time the household at Cleveland Road had disintegrated with Fanny heading for Denmark Road with the Bewleys whilst Louis was residing in Old Nelson Street. The Court hearing revealed that when the couple had met in 1904, the widowed Fanny had an income that would have been cut by a third if she married. In addition to this, she also had easily converted assets in the form of furniture and jewellery. For the first four months after they married, Louis (posing as a successful fish merchant) allowed Fanny £1 per week housekeeping. After that Fanny had to find him money for "clothes, food and pocket money".

Having put £300 of her own money into the hotel at Hillington, which rapidly lost any interest in, they

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<sup>4</sup> Haverhill Echo 4 Jun 1910

<sup>5</sup> Diss Express 17 Feb 1911

cut their losses within 2 years and returned to Lowestoft in Oct 1910. This was only 3 months before their servant delivered and hid a baby on their premises. Would Fanny have failed to notice she was employing a heavily pregnant woman or had she been coerced to do so by her husband?

During their time at Cleveland Road Louis' drinking continued to escalate as did both his physical and psychological abuse of his wife to the point that, following a serious assault and threats of murder, she refused to share a room with him. The police were constant visitors to Cleveland Road, Louis even assaulted his wife by throwing a bottle at her during one of the Police visits although later in court he claimed it was her who had the drinking problem!

Whilst Louis showed very little if any affection to his wife, like many before or since he did not appreciate his former subject's bid for physical and financial independence - it had been her who had been financially propping him up for much of their marriage. Louis was to be described later as a 'black and white artist' indicating he gave up on the portrait painting and the water colours and instead concentrated on the much more commercial pen and ink drawings that could easily be converted to engravings or lithographs, much in demand before photographic reproduction was easily affordable.

In the time between Fanny fleeing the family home and the court hearing, Louis had been drinking increasingly heavily and making spurious allegations against his wife, Mrs Thain, her friend Miss Bewley (with whom she was staying) and Mr Davis, the Thain's former lodger (although a lodger that only stuck it out in the Thain's collapsing household for 6 months. It has to be said the Bewley's household was slightly irregular, but in a time when Divorce was almost unattainable for all but the wealthiest, not as unusual as you might think.

In 1901, Mrs Thain's friend, Miss (*Elizabeth*) Ethel Bewley, had been living with her 34 years old mother Elizabeth Bewley née Brown, two older brothers, and a 17 years old lodger in Gateshead (their home town) whilst their fish auctioneer father was living in nearby Tynemouth with Jane (aka Jenny) who had taken on her paramour's name of Bewley. By 1911, Ethel and one brother, had joined their unwed stepmother's 6 room household in Lowestoft; stepmother Jenny was still going under the name of Mrs Bewley – we may well never know what her true name was. The Bewleys were doing well in Lowestoft – this was the time of King Herring and Bewley was one of the foremost traders in the town at the time – first appearing as 'Willie Bewley' at a social in 1905. His respectability continued, leading a charity auction in 1915. Meanwhile, Ethel's mother had set up as housekeeper (a common euphemism at the time) in a three-room home with her former lodger (who had been exactly half her age in the 1901 census) and had proceeded to have two more children with this young man, said children flying under Mrs Bewley's maiden name of Brown! Love will find a way . . . . .

The various parties left the Lowestoft court after the granting of the separation order. In light of Thain's behaviour in court, Davis had offered to escort the ladies safely to the Bewleys home at 170 Denmark Rd, only for the party to be ambushed in a residential passage between two main streets by Louis brandishing a large revolver. With this he shot his wife twice at point blank range through the bridge of her nose and her forehead. The unfortunate Miss Bewley received a bullet, apparently aimed at her (step) mother who had given evidence against Thain, in the back of her head whilst Mr Davis was luckily to not even receive a graze as a bullet passed through the shoulder of his jacket.





*Studio portrait of Louis Thane*

At this stage Louis attempted to flee the scene but, not surprisingly, the shots and hullabaloo, had attracted the attention of the residents of Junction Passage where this all took place. One of these residents, a fisherman by the name of Myhill, leapt from his supper and without boots (and rather less surprisingly to modern folks) without cap, bravely pursued and caught Thain. A witness claimed that Thain shouted to Myhill "out of my way, don't interfere or I will shoot" Thain spun round and took aim at Myhill who, not surprisingly released him,

turned and ran, only for Thain to try to shoot him in the back. This shot missed but as Myhill turned to face the artist/turned assassin, Thain fired again - this time shooting Myhill in the mouth. Myhill took a few steps and crumpled to the ground, suffocating in blood from injuries to his lungs which led to his death shortly after. All this devastation was wreaked in less than 2 minutes and now people were tumbling out of shops and houses all round, the one or two men who attempted to dash at Thain being held off as he brandished his revolver.



*Mrs Thain and fisherman  
Arthur Myhill*

At this point Thain had fired at least 6 times and reloaded his weapon showing both a certain amount of preparation and coolness. Later, a will was produced indicating that he might well have already planned to shoot himself as well as his wife preferring to take his own life rather than suffering a protracted court case and dying at the end of a hangman's noose. With the last of his ammunition, he turned his weapon upon himself, fired and dropped into the gutter with a wound in his temple. Another local, Harry Pemberton retrieved the revolver and, bringing the 2 or 3 minutes of violent chaos to an end, handed it to a policeman attracted by the furore.

Myhill died on the way to the hospital, Thain an hour and a half later, Miss Bewley lingered on 'with her brains 'partly protruding' and almost blind although other reports claimed that, in spite of having a bullet 5" in her brain, was doing remarkably well and had regained consciousness whilst his wife, the object of all the anger and hatred, unbelievably survived. I have read, uncorroborated, that extraordinary as it sounds, Miss Ethel Bewley also survived. Whilst we know her brother, William Bewley Jnr, married and had at least one child locally, I have found no further records of Ethel.

Not surprisingly, when the coroner's court convened a mere 4 days later, it found Louis Thaine guilty of the murder of Arthur Myhill and *felo de se*, or suicide (at the time, and for many years after, a crime in itself). Thain had already been speedily and secretly buried at the Lowestoft Cemetery with only the Curate and the undertakers in attendance – it appears the numerous Thains in the town had disowned Louis or been persuaded not to attend. More surprisingly a letter from Thain to the Coroner was produced making further wild allegations, universally agreed to be unfounded, against his wife that clearly indicating his planned intention to murder her.

When Thain's effects were gone through it transpired that he had sent a telegram to his wife (but purporting to be from his wife's brother) to lure her to the Lowestoft station that morning, presumably to kill her before she would be able to get the separation order. As it happened, the telegram arrived late and Mrs Thain missed the train, only for her husband to later ambush her. It was during these investigations it was confirmed that not only had his older brother William Thain Jnr hung himself in 1910, but that it had indeed been another older brother, Samuel Thain who had shot himself in America in 1911.

There is no excuse for Thain's actions, but he was the tail end Charley of an overachieving family. When the parents, pushy or otherwise, both died within 6 months of each other the family seems to have fallen apart. He had been described as being always of a spiteful disposition – not that unusual for the baby of a family alternatively spoilt then mocked for not being able to keep up with older siblings. Two of his brothers, including the oldest and the direct linear heir, committed suicide within a year of each other. Already, in many ways a failure, Louis' decision to own a pub was probably not the best move for a man already struggling with drink, he was at the inquest described as a constant and heavy drinker this having escalated in the month before his death. He had no children with his wife; was it his son whose body was found discarded in a coal scuttle at the back of his house? For a man of his time to then be rejected by that wife and, with no real prospects of success, emotional or financial ahead of him, it would not have been too surprising for him to have become the third of the 6 brothers to commit suicide. How terrible he took two other people with him whilst the central target of his blind animosity survived physically, if mentally scarred, for the rest of her life.

Arthur Myhill, who had bravely rushed out from his dining table to intervene, left a widow and orphans behind – the good people of Lowestoft donated over £136 to this family who had lost their husband, father and wage earner. At least they would not land in the workhouse or the street as many widows did at that time. Indeed, as well as the weekly 10s that was allowed the widow from the Lowestoft fund raising trust, an additional 10s stipend was provided by the Carnegie Hero Fund Trust, in recognition of Arthur's heroism.



*Mrs Myhill, Arthur's widow*

Much coverage was made of this case at the time with a vociferous lobby pushing for stricter firearms control, it being pointed out that in the relatively safe well-ordered 20thC, there was no need to be toting firearms for protection as there had been in Georgian times.

Skipping back to Louis Thain's uncle Charles Thaine, brother of Robert, husband of Emma and father of various little Thaines including Laura, he died aged only 35 in 1878, by which time the family were already in the Beccles area, when Emma's youngest child would have been just 5, or less if young Catherine was still alive at that point.

So, Frank's mother, Laura Thain, was the cousin of the murderous Louis Thain, a cause celebre at the time that was covered all over the United Kingdom. She herself had been born in Lowestoft to a father from Reedham, with Gorleston roots, and a mother from Starston, and then was largely raised in Beccles! Laura would have been very aware that as well as the cousin who murdered two people, tried to murder two more and then went on to kill himself, another two of her cousins had also

committed suicide. At the time the theory of 'tainted blood' and insanity running in families was widely held to overarch all other factors and I suspect that Laura would have downplayed her connection to that branch of the family.

By 1901, Carpenter James Gardiner, born in Dickleburgh but largely raised at the Halfway cottages between Needham and Harleston, and his Lowestoft born but Beccles raised wife Laura nee Thaine were raising their young family on the Harleston Common: - Frank Cecil aged 3 and his 3 sisters, all of whom had been born in Harleston.

Was this the James Gardiner who was suspended from the Harleston Oddfellows in 1890 for 3 months for working whilst in receipt of Sick pay? Tricky to say and probably unlikely; there were a lot of James Gardiners in and around the area at the time and a fairly fit young man like Frank's father would not be likely to try and swing the lead!



*To the centre of this snap is the double cottage, demolished and replaced just after the Second World War in which Gardiners had been living.*

*Note the covered well in the foreground.<sup>6</sup>*

The young family were living in the left-hand side of a double cottage that was demolished and replaced by a more modern building just after the second world war. Miss Olive Puttock, former mid-wife, who lived in her family home on the common for most of her very long life remembered other Gardiners living in this house during the interwar period - possibly siblings of James Jnr or even his parents.

Presumably in search of work, James Jnr and family moved away from Harleston, winding up in Wickam Hall, Bishop's Stortford – this ancient house and farm employed James Jnr for his carpentry skills. By 1911, his son Frank was following in his father's footsteps, and they were both estate carpenters, a safe distance from the horrific actions of Louis Thaine. Maybe it was whilst working for the big house, full of servants from all over the country, that Frank met the Darlington lass, Mabel nee Jones, whom he married only 6 months before he died in the carnage of WW1.



*The Jones sisters in 1960, from a family collection. Mabel Woodcock formerly Gardiner nee Jones is to the far left. All the ladies have lovely smiles.*

17 years after the death of her young husband, Mabel Gardiner married John Woodcock in Darlington in 1935

The following piece is from a posting made by AA Midcalf, who married the

daughter of the son Frank never met but was named James (III) after his paternal grandfather and great grandfather.

<http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/thosewhoserved/g-gw.php?pagenum=3>

Frank Gardiner was my wife's grandfather who never got to see his son. He was the son of James and Laura Gardiner of Wickham Hall, Bishops Stortford, and Herts. husband of Mabel Gardiner, of 20, Holmwood Grove, Harrowgate Hill, Darlington.

He served with the 2nd Bn., Bedfordshire Regiment and was killed age 22 on 28 March 1918, remembered with honour on the Pozieres Memorial, Commemorated in perpetuity by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

My records show that Frank was born in Harleston, Norfolk but lived in Middleton St George in Durham when he enlisted, which he did from Bedford. .... He still had his Territorial Army number when he fell, which tells me he was not in the 2nd Btn for long. That seems to fit in with his marriage too; so Mabel was only married 6 months before becoming a widow.....

When he went abroad into the 2nd Btn he spent a week from 21st March 1918 until his death in a horrific battle. On the opening day of battle, they were in the 2nd lines behind a Btn of Manchesters who were wiped out ... but only retired when it transpired the Germans were behind them and on both open flanks ... They spent a week fighting hard, constantly retiring at the last .., then turning round again and stopping the attacking Germans in their tracks before repeating the retirement. Their battle started near St Quentin and after 4 days .., they found themselves many miles further back... with their lines straddling the Biverchy Bridge, as the remnants of the British Fifth Army passed through them.

By the morning of the 25th March the Germans massed for another attack on the opposite side of the Canal du Nord.... Despite their best attempts... the Germans could not break... the British defenders, many... continuous fighting since the 21st. However,.. at 6pm, the Battalion were ordered to withdraw once again.

By route marches and bus rides, the Bedfords were transported some 25km due west to Arvillers, where they billeted for the night – the first night they had spent under cover since the 20th. Following Gough's famous order that the "Fifth Army must hold at all costs", they did just ... The Bedford's spent the 26th and 27th holding the enemy back around Le Quesnoy .., as the remnants of the Fifth Army stood fast. The Third Army to the north and French Army to the south fell back some six miles,.. The 26th was quiet... night patrols were sent towards the German lines. ....The front line listened to German artillery rolling into and through the village all night. The following morning saw the artillery open up along their frontage and several infantry assaults were brought to a bloody halt before they came close to the British lines. Noon on the 27th saw the Germans...forcing them to withdraw... and once they had dug into their new positions they laid low. .. heavy shelling which further reduced the size of the battalion, ..

.. French relief did not happen and no food or rations were brought up,.. settled down for what turned out to be a quiet night ... The following morning (the 28th) saw ... another determined attack that took the Germans to within 100 yards of their positions ... 2.30pm, they were ordered to withdraw under heavy Machine Gun and shell fire, 9km along the Amiens road to Mezieres, where they were finally fed. From this point, the 2nd Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment were moved into reserve.

Due to the efforts of the husband of Frank Gardiner's granddaughter, the daughter of Frank's son James III who was unborn at the time of his father's death, we now know much of Frank Gardiner's final months and how he and his family had left Harleston in the years before the first World War. One small query about the information above; Frank Gardiner enlisted in Bedford, but gave his home address as Durham. For a young wife, pregnant and far from home when her husband went off to war, it would be normal for her to return to her family and I think this is exactly what Mable Gardiner nee Jones did and where all correspondence would have been sent. Before the final fatal engagement, Frank Gardiner had previously been injured severely enough to be returned home for treatment and convalescence – we know this as he was awarded a wound stripe.

As a brief side note, Frank Gardiner's great uncle (Rose Talbot's younger brother Charles Talbot) went on to become the Parish Clerk at Thelverton, worked for the estate into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and had a very late born son appropriately named Benjamin. Pte. Benjamin Richard Talbot, born 1883 was one of the older men enlisted from the Mile End Rd where he appeared as a married brewer's drayman in 1911. He married Dickleburgh born lass Susannah Saunders in 1908, in London. Having started in the Royal Scots Fusiliers I suspect his age told against him, 31 at the start of the war; by the time of his death, he had been transferred to the Labour Corps. He died on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1918, also in Flanders and is one of 8 related Talbots from Thelverton who served in WW1, Redvers Walton Talbot, also on the Thelverton memorial, buried at Scole, died of pneumonia aged 18 on the 6th November 1918.

  
 TO THE  
 GLORY OF GOD,  
 AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
 THE MEN OF THIS PARISH  
 WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE  
 GREAT WAR, 1914-1918.

DANIEL BANHAM	P <sup>TE</sup>	EAST SURSEX REGIMENT
GEORGE BUCK		DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY
JESSE OLIVER FOREMAN		WILTSHIRE REGIMENT
ARTHUR LEEDER		NORFOLK
FRANK LEEDER	SERJ	NORFOLK
LEONARD LEEDER	P <sup>TE</sup>	NORFOLK
CHARLES JULIAN MANN	L	60 <sup>TH</sup> HUSSARS
GEORGE MEADOWS	L <sup>TC</sup>	LONDON REGIMENT
BENJAMIN MULLENOER	P <sup>TE</sup>	WORCESTER
CHARLES POPE		HAMPSHIRE
GEORGE POPE		NORFOLK
EDWARDS WALTER TALBOT		RIFLE BRIGADE
BENJAMIN RICHARD TALBOT		SCOTLAND RIFLES

"Greater love hath no man  
 than this, that a man lay  
 down his life for his friends."

St. John. 15. 13.