

Oswald Hugh Baskett Darneley

The last massed Cavalry charge of the British Army

It is certain that the Darneley family have a long connection with Bradwell. The earliest mention of the name 'Darneley' can be found in the Hearth Tax returns for Derbyshire. The Hearth Tax (or "Chimney Money") was in place from 1662 to 1689, as a useful source of national revenue. People paid 2 shillings a year for each hearth assessed. It was paid in two equal instalments, on Ladyday (25th March) and Michaelmas (29th September), by the occupier of the property, or owner if it was vacant. It was an extremely unpopular tax and led to rioting in some parts of the country, but not in Derbyshire. In the early days of the tax, people tried to avoid the payments by blocking up their chimneys and claiming exemption certificates for them. For Wirksworth, for example, the records contain a list of 40 people whose wealth was 'not so fishant' for them to pay the tax. The Assessment lists are now very useful to Genealogists, giving lists of all householders, village by village, living in Derbyshire in the 1660s. In the Hearth Tax assessment for Bradwell in the seventeenth century Edw. Darnely is said to have had one hearth. Thereafter the name we now know as Darneley but first appeared as we see as Darnely changed slightly over the years for example adding and then dropping an extra 'l' in its spelling.

So if we move forward to 1754-1756 we find that Mary Darnally is a licensed victualler sponsored first by Martin Middleton and later by Edward Darnally, farmer. At that time it was only the person who was licensed not the premises so we don't know where Mary and Edward lived. Moving on to the nineteenth century we find that Alwin John Darneley (now with the modern spelling) was born in Bradwell in 1819 to parents John and Hannah (née Hallam) Darneley. In 1840 Alwin moved to Hull and in 1847 he married Sarah Baskett at Beverley. Despite his move to Hull and establishing the building company of A J Darneley and Son the evidence is that Dale End Cottage remained in the Darneley family and when he died in 1895 his address was given as Dale End, Bradwell. Seth Evans in *Bradwell Ancient and Modern* (BAM) tells of the tragic death of 30 year old John Edwy Darnley (Seth's spelling). John and friend Jonah Elliott were returning one evening from a Primitive Methodist prayer meeting and as they approached the 'Slag Works' (Dale End Lead Smelter) they noticed a commotion and discovered that William Mitchell and Joseph Hallam had been overcome by sulphurous fumes. At once the two passers-by rushed to help and were themselves overcome. All four men lost their lives. At that time John Edwy Darnley lived at Dale End (the proper name of the house not Swiss Cottage as some call it) with his widowed mother Hannah (her husband and father to John died in 1839). Seth says that John Edwy was a schoolmaster (whereas in the 1851 census he is shown as a miner but double tasking was not uncommon). His widowed mother Hannah was not in Bradwell on that census night because she was staying with her other son Alwin John in Hull. Hannah's two daughters Mary and Selina were with their brother John Edwy at Dale End. Mary was shown as a school mistress and Selina as a dressmaker. Thus by this time the Darneley family were established in Hull but they retained their house Dale End in Bradwell. The Bradwell members of the family appear to have conducted a private school in Dale End cottage around the end of the nineteenth century.

In 1888 Edwy Maltby Darneley (the son of Alwin John and Sarah Darneley) married Kate Lewis and assumed the running of the Hull family company. Edwy and Kate had seven children. As was their tradition the Darneley family met in Bradwell every year on the 4th August this being the birthday of son John. In 1914 two of the seven children were absent

from the photograph taken outside Dale End. The children present were Marian, Kate, Annette, Alwyn and Hilda. John was recently married and living in Hampshire and Oswald



The Darneley family at Dale End 1914. They are from left to right Marion, Kate, Edwy (father), Annette, Alwyn, Hilda and a friend with mother Kate in the deck chair.

had volunteered to join the East Riding Yeomanry (ERY) in 1913 aged 17. This was a part-time occupation running alongside his day job, rather like the present Army Reserve. By that time he had already attended Eton House School in Hull and then Hull Technical College. At the latter the curriculum had included cabinet making. He then joined the family business.



When Ossie joined the Yeomanry their role was to fight only if Great Britain was invaded (an early home guard). When war was declared his unit was assigned coast watching duties in Northumberland. It wasn't long before it was realised that fighting abroad would be necessary but the soldiers volunteered for such service on a personal basis, which Ossie quickly did. By July 1915 the ERY had arrived at Costessary in Norfolk for Cavalry training

at which they continued for 3 months. The decision was then taken to send them to Gallipoli. This meant that their horses were taken from them and they trained as infantry. But this order was rescinded and their horses were returned.



East Riding Yeomanry guarding the coast at Seaham Hall Northumberland. Ossie 3rd row on right

On the 27th October 1915 the ERY embarked from Southampton for Salonika situated in Greece on the Bulgarian border. Once more a change in plans intervened and they were re-routed to Alexandria in Egypt where they arrived on 19th November 1915. Their first posting was to the western frontier force tasked with the suppression of the Senussi uprising on the



Dueidar, Sinai Desert close to the Suez Canal. Ossie on right.

Libyan border. In the year they spent in this area 120 officers and men of the ERY were detached to serve under T E Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) but there is no evidence that Ossie was included in their number. By December 1916 the ERY had been moved to the Suez Canal zone to join the ANZAC mounted division taking part in the 1st Battle of Gaza on 26th March 1917 and the 2nd Battle of Gaza from 17-19th April. The 3rd Battle of Gaza (and Beersheba) fought on 31st October saw the ERY engaged again this time as part of the newly formed Yeomanry Mounted Division. The following month they participated in the last division-sized Cavalry charge of the British Army in the Battle of Mughar Ridge. Within days they were engaged in the Battle of Nebi Samwil, north of Jerusalem in which they fought as infantry in the Judean Hills. By the 27th-29th November they were busy repelling Turkish counter attacks during the capture of Jerusalem.



Original map carried by Ossie

In all Ossie spent 2 years and 77 days in Egypt and Palestine and was promoted to signaller corporal. During one of the Cavalry engagements Ossie sustained injuries to his arm and ribs when his horse was shot from under him. It was a fact that the horses were a much bigger target and suffered far greater casualties than humans in these battles. In one such charge 30 men lost their lives but 265 horses succumbed. In general conditions for the animals were harsh, fresh grass was not available whilst water and fodder were in short supply.

As the result of his injuries Ossie left Egypt on 12th January for England. This proved providential for both Ossie and his family. It was at this time 750,000 German soldiers were marching through France to confront the Allies on the Somme. Britain needed infantrymen to bolster numbers that threatened to be overwhelmed. The ERY was redeployed as infantrymen, their horses and position in Palestine was taken Indian troops. The ERY were shipped to Marseilles and then by train to the Somme.

On his return to England he spent some time recovering from his injuries. This led to his medical discharge on 29th March 1918 at Canterbury. He was issued with a blue serge jacket



Ossie in Serge uniform 1918

to show he was a returning injured soldier. These were worn to identify them clearly and thus avoid their getting white feathers that were commonly sent to men who were believed not to be doing their bit for the war. He was also issued with a silver badge to be worn when not in the blue jacket. The badge says 'For King and Empire, Services Rendered'.

Following his recuperation he re-joined the family business. In 1921 he met and two years later married Isabella Thomson Rickards of Edinburgh. They set up house in North Ferriby near Hull continuing in the family business. They had three children Jean, John and Alison. When WWII came the family removed to Bradwell and Dale End as Hull was suffering heavy bombing; their house in the city was badly damaged only days after they had left. In his early fifties and his family still in Bradwell Ossie contracted TB and died on 5th January 1947 aged 50. This was the year his mother Kate also died.

Until her move to Buxton towards the end of her life Alison continued to live in Bradwell as a well-respected member of the village. First with sister Jean and then after Jean's death on her own (but never alone). She kept a box of photographs and post cards her father collected during his service years along with his spurs, medals, discharge papers and maps.



Alison and sister Jean sale for church 1980s

I am very grateful to Alison's niece Helen Mason for giving her permission to use much of the information she had collected about her grandfather's war.