

This is the Sixty-seventh of an occasional series of articles by David Stone about incidents in the history of Swanton Morley and its church

SOME MORE ON THE FAMILY OF HERBERT WALTER BEEVIS

Introduction

This article is perhaps a rather strange mishmash as I have jumped from topic to topic, but I hope that you will find something of interest.

You may remember that in the June 2017 edition of Link Up I presented my 66th article, which was about the death of Herbert Walter Beevis on 18 October 1916, and I included a few notes on his family. I reproduce some of these below.

Herbert was born in Swanton Morley in the last quarter of 1891. In the census records we first find him in 1901, aged 9, the son of Alfred Beevis (an agricultural labourer, aged 38) and Ellen Beevis (aged 34), living in Town Street, Swanton Morley, together with his three brothers, Claude Harold (7), Frederick (5) and William (3), and his sister Ella (1).

The next census (1911) shows Herbert Walter as a farm labourer, aged 19, together with Claude aged 17 (also a farm labourer), Frederick aged 15, William James aged 13, Ella aged 11, Daisy, aged 8, and Benjamin aged 5. They are all shown as living in Greengate, Swanton Morley.

Since then, I have been shown a couple of letters that Miss Daphne Beevis sent to Daphne Palmer.

The first letter is a comment on the siblings of Herbert Walter Beevis

Daphne Beevis simply says that “three brothers went to war that day” (presumably the day when Herbert Walter enlisted). She also says that “Claude came back wounded and died shortly afterwards.” This statement confuses me because the Parish Records say that Claude Harold Beevis did not die until 25 September 1943, aged 49 (i.e. born in 1894, which is consistent with him being Herbert’s brother).

At first sight the third brother would seem likely to have been Frederick, but Miss Beevis says – using the terminology of the time - that he was ‘crippled’ and in a wheelchair. In fact it would seem to have been William who enlisted, for I later found a record of his enlistment in the Norfolk Regiment in 1916 aged 19 (Regimental Number 26824). Miss Beevis says that he later went to Australia on a £10 assisted passage, so he certainly survived the war. I found a record of his passage in the P&O liner *Berrima* which left London for Melbourne on 28 Dec 1922 (when William was 25).

Now, Miss Beevis also says that Fred, Ben and Ella were all disabled and were all in wheelchairs, but each of them had to earn his or her keep. Fred became a shoemaker, Ben became a cycle mender, and Ella and Daisy became dressmakers together. I assume that it was this Daisy Beevis who later (1936) married Herbert P D Rayner and who wrote about her childhood in Swanton Morley in her amusing little book “Our knickers were interesting.” She died in 1984.

The family later moved to Greengate and lived in “one of the two cottages” until the neighbours moved out. They were then able to buy “the other cottage” using “war money”.

The second letter talks briefly about the Branch of the Salvation Army which was started in Swanton Morley in 1888

They held some of their early meetings in the pit of the old school. However, after about five years, the branch had become too big and they marched to Dereham, where the branch remains today.

Miss Beevis notes that Albert Beevis was an early member of the branch, as was John Craske. Now Craske seems to have had little direct connection with Swanton Morley, but Miss Beevis specifically mentions him so I thought that it was worthwhile saying a little about him. He was a fisherman who was later to become both a fishmonger and an artist. Some of you may remember that Craske had the fishmonger's shop on the corner of Norwich Street and High Street, in Dereham.

The strange life of John Craske

John Craske's story is an odd one, which you can find in an internet article dated March 2015 by Julia Blackburn: *Life on the wave: how fisherman turned artist John Craske was saved by the sea*.

He was born in Sheringham in 1881 and he initially followed the family tradition by going to sea, but he was never strong and over the years he had various mental problems. It was while he was recuperating from one such problem, and living in a cottage near the Blakeney Estuary with his wife Laura, that he first began to paint – and he continued to paint when he returned to Dereham. The poet, Valentine Ackland, first came across one of his works when he and Laura were living in Hemsby and she bought it. She later bought several more of his paintings and embroideries, and she included some of them in an exhibition at the Warren Gallery in August 1929, where they were well received. However, at that time his reputation was never established beyond a small circle of admirers.

It was only quite recently (2015) that there was an exhibition devoted to Craske which brought together paintings from several different lenders across the eastern region, as well as some from London. This was co-curated by Norwich University of the Arts and Aldeburgh Music. The exhibition coincided with the publication of Julia Blackburn's book: *Threads: the delicate life of John Craske*.



Craske's embroidery of the Evacuation of Dunkirk (Norfolk Museums Service)