

## Edith Copley Davies, governess at Townhead

Edith Copley Davies was the fourth child of schoolmaster **Samuel Bevan Davies** and his wife **Elizabeth Copley Gimson**, one of seven sisters and three brothers. Samuel's mother, **Charlotte Elizabeth Berry** was from Dublin. Her family were from Eglis Castle, County Offaly, built in the 16th century. The Berry family lived at the castle from 1776-1876. The family have a large stone-built burial enclosure within the Eglis Churchyard. Sadly, the castle is now derelict but was painted before its decline [ph1].



Samuel married Elizabeth, a farmer's daughter, in 1865 in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire having become an assistant schoolmaster in the area. They moved to Altrincham, Cheshire to run a school in Barrington Road straight after their wedding. At the time of each census they lived with their ever expanding family, tutors, servants and up to 20 pupils. It was not surprising that some of their children should find a career in education.

Edith found her way to Settle to work as a governess at Townhead. The post of governess was the preferred, most ladylike choice of employment for single women of middle class backgrounds, especially as no qualifications were required. When recruiting a governess their family and upbringing was more important than education and intellect. The ability to teach music and fashionable languages such as French and Italian was an advantage – Edith was a music specialist. Edith would have been educating the children of **Dr James Walker Edgar** and **Susanna Isabella Clayton** who had recently taken over the running of the Townhead estate in Settle. At the time of Edith's premature death, probably from disease, **Maurice Clayton Edgar** was eight and **Mona Jane Edgar** was five.



**Edith Copley Davies, aged 24, Died Nov. 9, 1894, Old C65**

Edith's eldest sister **Mary Letitia Davies** died in infancy and several sisters remained spinsters. Sister **Charlotte Elizabeth Kirby Bevan Davies** continued to run the school in Barrington Road. She lived to the age of 92. Sister **Gertrude Alice Davies** became an art teacher and spent some of her time in Canada with her sister **Ethel**. Sister **Dora Beatrice Davies** spent some time in Germany. Edith's eldest brother **Arthur Evan Davies** made a good living as a manufacturer of bamboo canes, based in London. Brother **Hugh Myddleton Berry Davies** became a bank manager in Denbighshire, Wales.

Youngest brother **Bernard Lovell Davies** became an oil and gas engineer and emigrated to Melbourne, Australia straight after marrying. So far, so good.

Youngest sister **Ethel Winifred Norbury Davies** became the second wife of **Walter Hawthorn**, a most interesting character. Walter [ph2], the son of **Elwin Hawthorn**, a 'lighterman and barge owner' became a master mariner at the age of 21, in 1891. Walter, his father and brother **Elwin Hawthorn (Jnr)** traded as ship owners, brokers and managers. In 1903 they were declared bankrupt with liabilities of £53,805, equivalent to over £5million, today's value [1]. During the hearing it was said that 'the Bankrupts' trading had been of a reckless character, and amounted

to rash and hazardous speculation.' Walter had also 'made a misrepresentation with the view of obtaining credit from the solicitor's bankers.' Oh dear. Walter received a four year suspended sentence. Dad Elwin had previously had his finances taken into administration in 1882. Perhaps he didn't run the tightest ship, literally?

Walter married Ethel Winifred straight after the sentence had finished in 1907. A few years later, in 1910, Walter, Ethel and four children (from both his marriages) faced disaster in the perilous waters off Newfoundland [ph2]. Walter, now a merchant captain, was in command of a new ship, which he owned, and struck an iceberg. Fortunately, all were saved after what was described as a 'trying experience'. Don't you just love old newspapers?!

**WRICK OF THE NORMANDY.**  
**CREW'S TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE**  
**AFFECTING SCENE BETWEEN**  
**CAPTAIN AND FAMILY.**

After this the family settled into a life in Canada with Walter working as a farmer and store-keeper. After a life of adventure at sea was this ever going to work?? Reports say that when war was declared Walter 'instantly cabled the British Admiralty the offer of his services for any work of a hazardous nature'[ph2]. Clearly, he had itchy feet and liked living on the edge but what did Ethel Winifred think of all this? Allegedly, Walter was given command of a boat within a day of setting foot in Liverpool. He engaged in 'work of the most hazardous description, mine laying and dredging, scouting and escorting light craft' between Scotland and Belgium.

Unfortunately, our Lieutenant Commander Walter's luck ran out when his ship, HMS Columbia, an armed trawler, was sunk by two German Torpedo boats in the North Sea off the coast of the Netherlands in May 1915 [ph3]. Walter was 45. The ship, built in 1887, had

**COURT OF BANKRUPTCY.**  
**(Before Mr. Registrar Holt.)**  
**DISCHARGES SUSPENDED.**  
**MR HAWTHORN BROTHERS AND CO.**—The adjudication in this case was made in December, 1901, and the case was now heard upon the Bankrupts' application for their discharge. The partners were Elwin Hawthorn, sen., Walter Hawthorn, Elwin Hawthorn, jun., and Maurice Barclay, and they traded as ship-owners, brokers, and managers at 51, Great Tower-street, E.C. The joint liabilities were returned at £34,305 18s. 3d., and it is stated that the dividend

Mr. H. L. Burgess attended as Assistant Receiver, and reported, in connection with certain speculations in wool and other commodities, that the Bankrupts' trading had been of a reckless character, and amounted to rash and hazardous speculation. Mr. Hansell also submitted, on behalf of the Trustee, that Walter Hawthorn had made a misrepresentation with the view of obtaining extended credit from the firm's bankers.

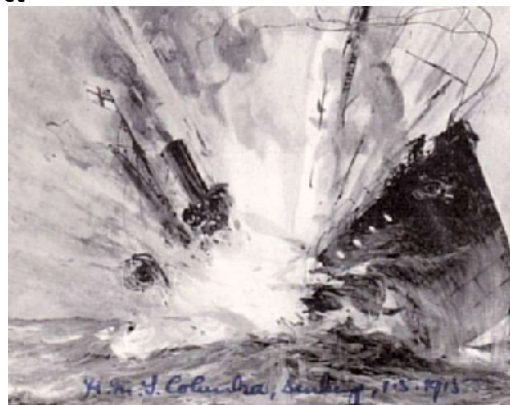


whilst his ship was refitting. He was a merchant captain, and whilst in command of a new ship he owned, had the misfortune to strike an iceberg off the coast of Newfoundland on her first voyage, his wife and family being on board. All were saved after a trying experience, and disappointed with his bad luck Captain Hawthorne retired to a farm in Canada where he resided with his wife and family until the "Call to Arms" reached him.

He instantly cabled the British Admiralty the offer of his services for any work of hazardous nature. Prompt acceptance reached him and he at once sailed for England arriving in Liverpool on the morning of the day, the evening of which found him in command of his boat and crew with the rank of lieutenant-commander.

During the terrible winter he "thrashed the green" of the North Sea from Scotland to Belgium, engaged upon work of the most hazardous description, mine-laying and dredging, scouting, escorting light craft to Belgium, and on any and every kind of dangerous work the Admiralty entrusted to him. I spent a most interesting evening with him in February, whilst he was on leave, and learned something of the strenuous life through the winter. Asking him what sort of time he had had, his reply was "the time of my life!" Such was the temperament of this hero—the temperament of a courageous, courteous gentleman, calm and gentle, and patriotic to a degree.

previously been used for fishing but was converted to become a mine sweeper. Some reports say that Lt Hawthorn and two other crew were taken as prisoners of war by one of the German Torpedo boats, however both Torpedo boats were later sunk by the British killing them as well. Obviously, this was regarded as a great sacrifice, for the greater good.



I have been much amongst sailors in many seas, and have a natural liking for them: I can truthfully say that I never met a truer gentleman of the sea than Captain Hawthorne, nor a manner so modest and unassuming, in one whose work for his country during the past eight months stamped him a "Lion of the Sea." He was, I am sure, died the death he would have preferred, and I feel that he met it like a hero calmly and with fortitude, doing his duty to the end.

England is poorer for the loss of this gallant sailor; but what shall we say of the brave wife and five children, who have patiently awaited his return, through the long winter in their far away Canadian home, but who will never see him again? Theirs is the poignant sorrow in which we who recognized his worth may blend our deepest sympathy.

**"A LION OF THE SEA."**  
**ALTRINCHAM TRIBUTE TO BRAVE  
COMMANDER.**

Walter died doing what he loved, having *'the time of my life'* and described as having *'the temperament of a courageous, courteous gentleman, calm and gentle and patriotic to a degree'*. Unsurprisingly Walter merited a glowing obituary as *'the Lion of the Sea'* although it could be argued he had been very lucky to have survived so long. Walter's life is commemorated on Chatham Naval memorial. Walter's son Geoffrey, by his first marriage, also had a career on the seas.



Walter's estate was worth just £300. Poor Ethel Winifred was just 34 when Walter drowned. She was pictured in about 1912 with her two children and step-children **Ralph** and **Phyllis Hawthorne** from Walter's first marriage [ph2]. Ethel Winifred stayed in Canada until 1938 when she returned to Cheshire with Phyllis who had married a manufacturer, **Robert Baker**. Ethel Winifred died in a care home at 8 Battlefield Road, St Albans at the age of 91 and 78 years after the death of her sister Edith in Settle.



*This account has been compiled by Sarah Lister as part of the Settle Graveyard Project which has recorded gravestone inscriptions, updated church records and researched the lives of those buried. It has been written in good faith with no offence intended. If I have inadvertently included errors or breached any copyright I apologise and would welcome corrections.*

*Life stories can be found on [dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle-graveyard-project](http://dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle-graveyard-project). The 'Old Settle' family tree on [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk) includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on [settlerearch@gmail.com](mailto:settlerearch@gmail.com). Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.*

*Settle Graveyard Project*

*Illustrations kindly provided by Teresa Gordon. The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project.*

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