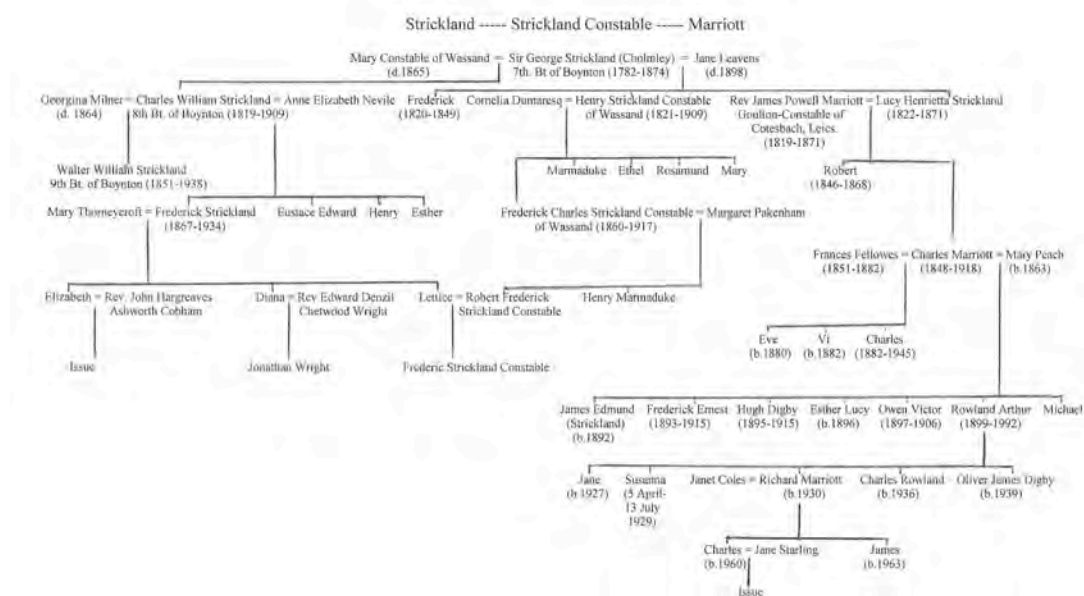


## *The Extended Family At War*

‘E and the little boys and Father went down to a meeting in the town hall to celebrate the anniversary of the beginning of the war a thing we should try to forget’. Eve Marriott’s diary entry from 2 August 1915 documents the first anniversary of the beginning of World War I.<sup>1</sup> At this point in time Eve was nursing wounded soldiers at Wycliffe Memorial Methodist Church in Lutterworth near her family home at Cotesbach, Leicestershire. Eve’s feelings that ‘we should try to forget’ the beginning of the war contrast dramatically with Rudyard Kipling’s poetic phrase ‘Lest we forget’ which has become a poignant epitaph of the conflict. Eve was the aunt of Richard Marriott who now owns Boynton Hall. Eve’s grandfather, Richard’s great-grandfather, the Reverend James Powell Marriott married Lucy Henrietta Strickland in December 1844 joining the Marriotts of Cotesbach Hall in Leicestershire with the Stricklands of Boynton Hall in East Yorkshire. Lucy Henrietta’s father, Sir George Strickland married into the Constable family of Wassand Hall, East Yorkshire, in 1818 when he wed Mary Constable. This alliance created the Strickland Constable branch of the family, and they, along with the Stricklands and the Marriotts, all have vast archives including fascinating documents concerning the families during WWI.



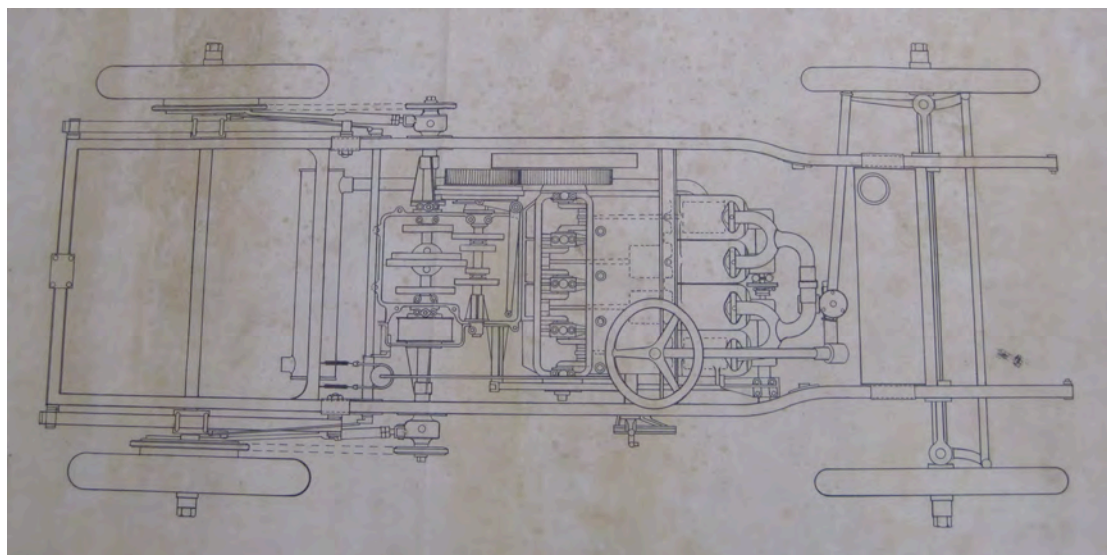
**Figure 1: Family Tree showing the connections between the Strickland, Strickland Constable, and Marriott families.**

Frederick Strickland, who lived at Boynton Hall from 1924 until his death in 1934, served in the Department of Transport during the war. The Census of 1901 recorded that Fred (aged 33) was living in Putney, a boarder in the house of Mary Neville, and was working as an engineer.<sup>2</sup> Strickland was a partner in the engineering firm

<sup>1</sup> My thanks are due to Sophy Newton, Honorary Heritage Manager of the Cotesbach Educational Trust, for giving me access to the Marriott diaries. For more information on Eve Marriott see Kathryn Thomas, ‘All about Eve: The diaries of a gentlewoman, 1893 – 1915’, (Unpublished MA Dissertation: University of Leicester, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> The National Archives (TNA), RG 13/491.

Simpson, Strickland & Co., and in 1907 he published a book entitled *A Manual of Petrol Motors and Motor Cars*, which contained useful information for the growing number of car owners. Fred's engineering background stood him in good stead for his service throughout the war. Whilst in France Fred had a long standing correspondence with his wife's brother, John Thorneycroft, a previous colleague and fellow engineer. Fred sent many proposals for tank designs to Thorneycroft and despite the fact Fred's letters do not survive, Thorneycroft's letters in response to Fred's give a clear picture of Fred's ideas.<sup>3</sup> Fred's preferences were wheels over tracks, and a locomotive engine. His suggestions, however, were not without their problems. Thorneycroft informed Fred that he had passed his drawings to Sir Eustace Tennyson D'Eyncourt, at this point Principal Technical Adviser on the Tank Committee, and that 'Mr D'Eyncourt said that his objection to the design was its large size, making it such an easy target, and as it could not cross rivers or bridges, it would necessarily have to be put together within 10 or 15 miles of the Front, and he was convinced the Military authorities would object to this.'<sup>4</sup> Thorneycroft worked tirelessly in putting forward Fred's ideas but admitted to him that 'it is very difficult to know how best to urge a thing nowadays, as it so often happens that things which people push at home are said not to be wanted by the people at the Front, and the requirements of people at the Front sent home are not acquiesced in or pushed forward by the departments here.'<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 2: A diagram of a car by Frederick Strickland, similar to the drawings in his book '*A Manual of Petrol Motors and Motor Cars*'.**<sup>6</sup>

Whether Fred's ideas influenced tank design is difficult to determine but it seems, from various sources, that he was more involved with the maintenance of the tanks once they were deployed rather than the initial design phases. This was probably due

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<sup>3</sup> The correspondence of Frederick Strickland, including the Thorneycroft letters and Fred's letters to his daughter Diana, is now held at Boynton Hall after Jonathan Wright, Fred's grandson, gave the material to Richard Marriott in 2013. I would like to give special thanks to Richard Marriott for allowing me unlimited access to these documents as well as the extensive collection of Strickland papers he owns and also for all his advice and help throughout my research.

<sup>4</sup> Letter dated 30 November 1916.

<sup>5</sup> Letter dated 17 November 1916.

<sup>6</sup> My thanks to Frederic Strickland Constable for allowing me to view these drawings.

to the fact he was stationed in France when the English government were considering the possibility of using tanks at the Front. Albert Gerald Stern, who became head of the Mechanical Warfare Supply Department, recorded in his Log Book the whole process of the introduction of tanks into warfare from the first concepts of design, through construction and trials, to deployment onto the battlefield.<sup>7</sup> Nowhere in this account is Fred Strickland mentioned. However, Fred was given a model tank signed by his colleagues so must have had some impact on the use of tanks in WWI. The silver hall-mark on the plaque reveals it was made by the firm Walker & Hall of Sheffield and dates it to circa 1918-19, suggesting he was probably given it on leaving the Department of Transport at the end of the war.



**Figure 3: Model of a Tank given to Frederick Strickland, c.1918-19.<sup>8</sup>**

It is clear from John Thorneycroft's letter to Fred dated 18 December 1916 that Fred was ill at the time: 'I hope you are getting rid of the Trench Fever. I do not know what it is like, but I hear that it is something like rather bad Influenza, with high temperature, which it is difficult to get rid of. In any case it must require rest at home.' Fred did not come home to recuperate, unlike his nephew the famous war poet Siegfried Sassoon who in the summer of 1916 records coming home to recover from Trench Fever, 'Think I deserve a holiday, but feel rotten at forsaking the Battalion, when I could have been fit for work in three or four weeks. But fate is kind to me as usual.'<sup>9</sup> Illness in the trenches was common and lice, in particular, were a large factor

<sup>7</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Albert G. Stern, *Tanks 1914-1918: The Log-Book of a Pioneer*, Hodder and Stroughton: London, (1919).

<sup>8</sup> My thanks to Frederic Strickland Constable for allowing me to photograph the model.

<sup>9</sup> *Siegfried Sassoon, Diaries 1915-1918*, edited and introduction by Rupert Hart-Davis, Faber & Faber: London, (1983), p. 100. Fred's wife Mary (nee Thorneycroft) had a sister called Georgiana Theresa

in spreading disease. An advertisement in *The "Snapper", The Monthly Journal of the East Yorkshire Regiment* (Vol. XI, No. 7) from July 1916, encouraged people to 'send your pals "out yonder" some tins of Harrison's Nursery Pomade' to kill insects.<sup>10</sup>

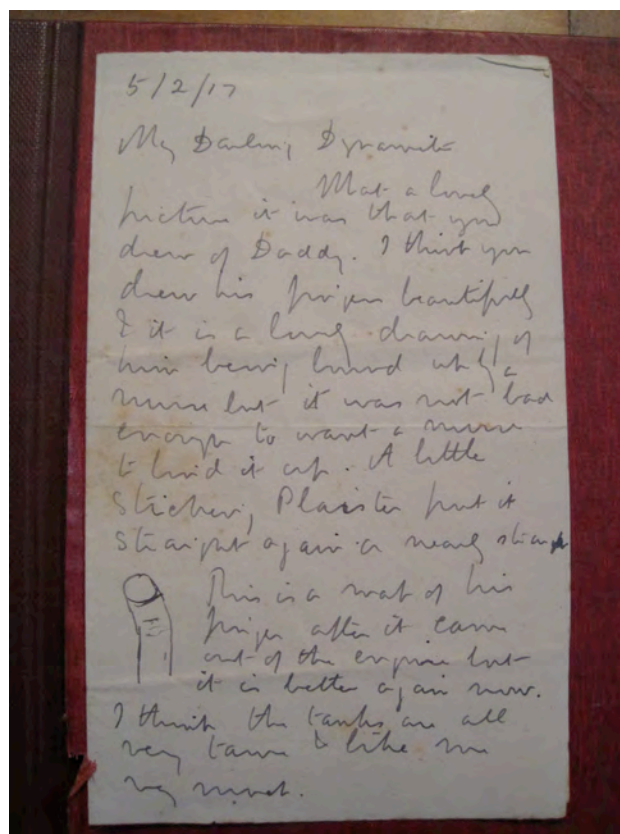
Letters that Fred wrote to his daughter, Diana, or 'My Dear Dynamite' as he termed her, during the war reveal what life was like for him living in France and for her living in Malton, North Yorkshire. The census of 1911 records that Fred (aged 43) resided at Derwent Mount, Malton, with his wife Mary (aged 35), daughter Elizabeth (aged 6), and three female servants.<sup>11</sup> Diana was born after 1911 and, therefore, would have been very young when she received her father's letters from the Front. This is apparent in Fred's letter of 5 November 1916 when he wrote, 'My darling Dynamite, It is Guy Fawkes day today! I wonder what you know about Guy Fawkes? Well it won't be a regular 5th of November as you can't have any bonfires & we don't have any out here.' Diana was obviously too young to have experienced the fun of Bonfire Night prior to the war and was now unable to because of the Defence of the Realm Act of 1914 which, among many other things, forbade the lighting of bonfires or fireworks, as they could attract the attention of enemy Zeppelins. Fred's repeated mention of an elephant Diana made for his birthday in 1914 highlights how important reminders of home were to soldiers. In 1916 Fred wrote to his daughter 'Do you know I have the elephant ... that you sent me for a birthday present ever so long ago. Perhaps he will come with me all through the war!' Fred's work with machines caused injury, just as fighting on the front line did, although to a much lesser extent as the letter below shows. Fred clearly wrote to Diana telling him of the injury to his hand whilst he was fixing an engine and was touched by her response, 'What a lovely picture it was that you drew of Daddy. I think you drew his picture beautifully & it is a lovely drawing of him being bound up by a nurse but it was not bad enough to want a nurse to bind it up. A little sticking plaster put it straight again or nearly straight.'

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who married the sculptor Alfred Ezra Sassoon, Siegfried was their second son. (ODNB, Siegfried Sassoon).

<sup>10</sup> East Riding of Yorkshire Archives and Records Service (ERYARS), DDST/1/9/2/1.

<sup>11</sup> TNA.



*Figure 4: Frederick Strickland's letter to his daughter, Diana, undated.*

It was not until after the war that Fred and his family moved to Boynton Hall, following a long drawn out process of determining inheritance due to the fact his older step brother Walter showed no interest in the Strickland estates and lived abroad. Fred, in his own words, understood 'the difficulties of dealing with Walter'. During the war, therefore, Boynton Hall was largely shut up with no permanent residents. Despite this, the fabric of the house does still contain one poignant reminder of the power war had to tear families apart. On the lead roof the initials R. A. M. and the date of 1915 are clearly visible and record the visit of Rowland Arthur Marriott to Boynton to see his relatives who were staying there at the time, including his uncle H P Marriott, who was the agent at Boynton but lived nearby at Malton. Rowland was sixteen years old and had lost two of his brothers earlier that year, Frederick Ernest and Hugh Digby, both killed in action. Rowland's step-sister Eve recorded both deaths in her diary, of Fred's she wrote 'Of course I always knew it must come but it doesn't make it any better', whereas of the day she heard of Digby's death she wrote 'One of the worst days of my life which is saying a good deal. ... I cannot even realise it yet.'<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Eve Marriott's Diary, 3 August 1915 and 13 October 1915.



*Figure 5: The initials of Rowland Arthur Marriott inscribed in the lead roof of Boynton Hall.<sup>13</sup>*

Fred's cousin, Frederick Strickland Constable, also served during the First World War, despite being in his mid fifties. Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Strickland Constable appealed to be sent to the Front, and was eventually granted permission to go to France. The warrant that sanctioned this included a list of provisions to be taken but made clear that 'no servants may be taken.'<sup>14</sup> Frederick owned Wassand Hall, near Hornsea, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, and had many servants who were necessary for the running of his estate. In 1916 he successfully gained exemption for his Estate Foreman, George Arthur Atkinson, reasoning that Atkinson's services were essential to the running of the estate as he was 'in sole charge of more than 7000 acres including 29 farms 89 cottages and small holdings 180 acres grassland and 150 woodland (in my own hands)...' Frederick supported his case by arguing that he had already lost eleven of his servants to the Colours.<sup>15</sup> Frederick's wife, Margaret, also aided the war effort by helping to procure provisions for the 3rd Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment of which her husband commanded. Postcards were sent out requesting shirts, socks, pants, mitts, mufflers, woollen caps or helmets, cardigans, and blankets, or funds to purchase such items. Margaret, in a letter to her son Robert of 29 September 1914, expressed her appreciation of the generosity displayed within the community, 'I am so busy collecting warm things for Dada's soldiers – I have got 200 blankets, 150 shirts, and 250 pairs of socks already ... People are so kind in giving things when they know that the soldiers want them ....'<sup>16</sup> Margaret did more than just

<sup>13</sup> Photograph courtesy of Edward Waterson.

<sup>14</sup> ERYARS, DDST/1/9/2/1.

<sup>15</sup> ERYARS, DDWS/9/3/1/4 1907-1916.

<sup>16</sup> My thanks are due to Gerardine Mulcahy-Parker, Art Gallery Curator at The Treasure House Beverley, for giving me access to copies of research material relating to the Heritage Lottery funded 'Blood, Thunder & High Society' access and research project, which included an exhibition, which Dr Mulcahy-Parker curated at Wassand Hall and the Treasure House in 2007.

collect supplies, however, and went on to join the Voluntary Aid Detachment and served as a nurse throughout the war, just as Eve Marriott did.

Living at Wassand Hall, the Strickland Constable family were not far from Hull and consequently they witnessed from afar the German air raids on the town. The first attack by German Zeppelins was in June 1915, which caused devastation and left civilians terrified and hysterical. Margaret recorded in her diary how she heard the Zeppelins over Wassand Hall on their approach to Hull and then watched from her home as she saw 'an ominous red light in the sky' and noted that '[i]t was dreadful to sit listening to the 20 bombs being dropped ... and to know that each meant death to so many, without the smallest possibility of defence.'<sup>17</sup> It was not only enemy planes flying over Wassand though as Hornsea Mere, part of the Wassand estate, was used as a Seaplane Base of The Royal Air Service. Despite the fact Hornsea Mere is the largest freshwater lake in Yorkshire, being two miles long and three-quarters of a mile wide, it appears it was not big enough for some pilots. In a letter to Frederick, dated 21 July 1916, J. H. Coles remarked 'I trust the Flying Corps at Beverley have not been trying to kill any more of you men at Wassand. I should think if they miss the Lake they could do better to practice out at Sea!'<sup>18</sup>

English planes flying over Boynton were not quite as dangerous as those over Wassand but they were something of an annoyance, affecting a day's shooting for the Marriott and Willoughby families. The Boynton Game book recorded on 24 October 1918 that 'Airships and aeroplanes so numerous & noisy we could not hear partridges coming.' Despite the noise the shooting party managed a reasonable haul of 59 partridges, along with 4 pheasants, 16 hares, and 3 rabbits. Shooting parties at Cotesbach in Leicestershire began to involve Eve Marriott's patients who went out with her father as a way of lifting their spirits. Eve recorded in her diary on 7 June 1915 that three soldiers who she had been nursing at Lutterworth came home with her and that one soldier in particular, Hannan, who Eve thought was 'far too miserable' had 'enjoyed himself very much.' Shooting birds in the fields of Leicestershire must have been a very different experience for these men who not so long ago were shooting men in the muddy fields of France and Belgium.

The war had differing effects on the three families. The Marriotts lost Fred and Digby in gallant battle, the grief of which affected their father greatly who died in 1919. The Marriott women worked tirelessly as VAD nurses during the war, Eve's step-mother Mary received medals for her efforts, and Eve herself went to Egypt for six months to nurse at the Military Hospital in Alexandria. Margaret Strickland Constable also gave her time and energy to nursing, whilst her husband Frederick Strickland Constable was a victim of the horrors of war. Despite campaigning to go to the Front, after his service there in 1917 he was invalided home and died shortly afterwards. Armistice Day, therefore, was not a cause for celebration for Frederick's wife. Margaret wrote in her diary that on 14 November she went to London where there was much rejoicing in the streets but that she 'felt terribly sad all Armistice Day, thinking it might have been a year ago, and all would have been different.'<sup>19</sup> The Stricklands, however, fared rather better. Fred arranged for the family to move to Boynton and it appears that they

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<sup>17</sup> Mulcahy-Parker, 'Blood, Thunder & High Society' access and research project material, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> ERYARS, DDWS/9/3/1/4 1907-1916.

<sup>19</sup> Mulcahy-Parker, 'Blood, Thunder & High Society' access and research project material, 2007.

settled in very well there. Fred played a large part in the local community, serving as Justice of the Peace in 1925 and being a key member of the Buckrose Conservative and Unionist Association. After his death in 1934, he was lovingly remembered in many Newspaper obituaries. John Humber, writing for the Hull Daily Mail on 13 June 1934, reminisced on how Fred's 'spacious grounds were put at the disposal of the village cricket club, his daughters frequently appearing in the various matches. Then when Christmastide came round a canister of tea and a rabbit for each household from the fairy godfather of the village further cemented an exceedingly happy relationship between Major Strickland and the residents of the village.'