

## **The Wesley Family: An Everyday Story of Woodhouse Eaves Folk**

### **Introduction**

Eileen Mary Wesley lived all of her life at the same address in Woodhouse Eaves. She was born there in 1924 and died in 2013 aged 89. If I remember rightly this fact qualifies her to be called a 'Woodhouse Crow' – a traditional title given to girls actually born in the village. She was a family friend and near neighbour of ours for many years and is also my inspiration for this contribution to St Paul's Church Heritage Project.

We had many conversations about her family and childhood and how daily life was when she was growing up and some of what I remembered has formed the basis of this research. It was clear that her forebears had their roots in the village and had been associated with St Paul's Church and the local school for several generations. This connection to the Church began soon after it was consecrated in 1837. Since that time these particular Wesleys have played a significant part in community life and evidence of this can still be seen today.



*Eileen Mary Wesley*

### **Key Players in this family saga and their relationship to Eileen**

**Father** – Leonard – born 1882 died 1945

**Mother** – Ellen (née Parry) – born in Anglesey North Wales in 1888 died 1976

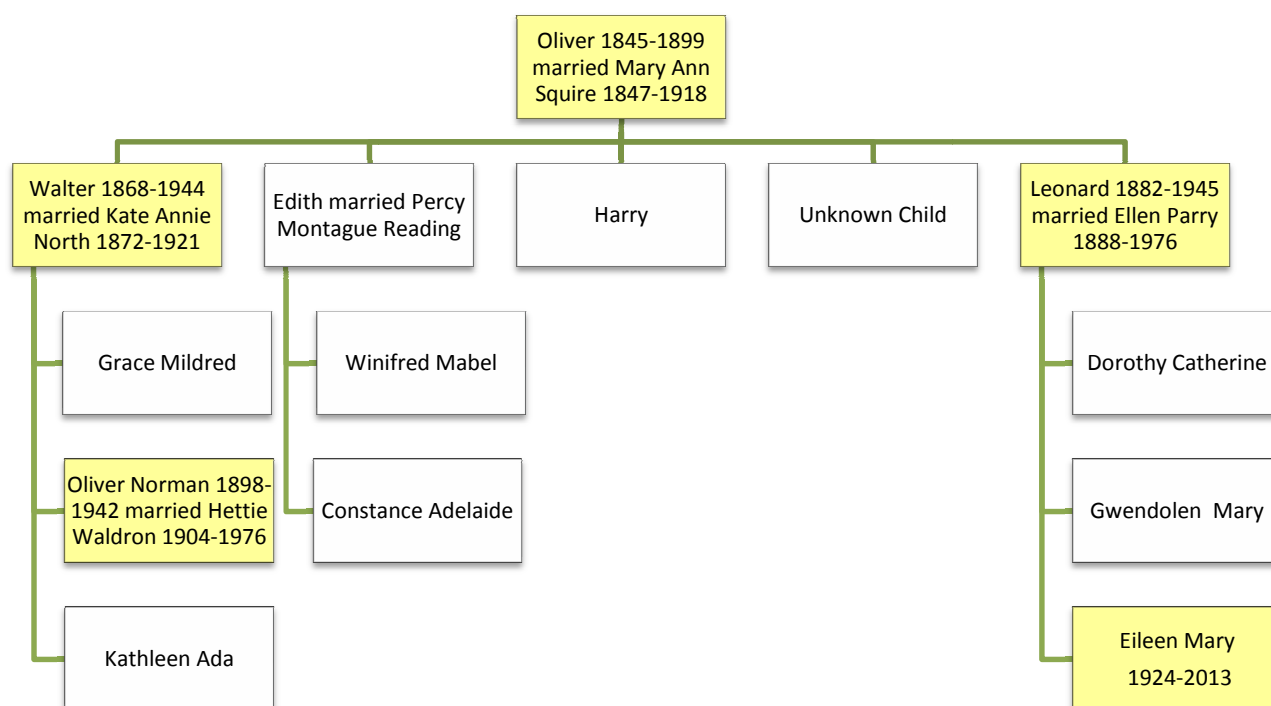
**Uncle** - Walter – born 1868 died 1944

**Cousin** – Oliver Norman born 1898 died 1942

**Grandfather** – Oliver – born 1845 died 1899

**Grandmother** – Mary Ann (née Squire) – born 1847 died 1918

## Outline Family Tree for three generations of the Wesleys in Woodhouse Eaves



**Several other of Eileen's closest relatives from the Wesley side of the family include the following people by their relationship to her: -**

### **Sisters**

Dorothy Catherine

Gwendolen Mary – died aged 15 months in 1916

### **Uncles**

Harry

Percy by marriage

### **Aunts**

Edith

Kate by marriage

### **Cousins**

Grace

Kathleen

Winifred

Constance

**Eileen also had relatives in Anglesey North Wales from the Parry side of her family with whom she maintained close contact throughout her life particularly the children and families of her Mother's cousins.**

### **Background about Eileen's life and her hobbies and activities**

This family history of the Wesleys for me starts and ends with Eileen. She and her elder sister Dorothy lived in their house at the top of Maplewell Road for all of their lives. Father Leonard worked for the family firm of builders and their Mother Ellen originated from Anglesey. This Welsh connection and bond was a major influence on the family during their lives in Woodhouse Eaves.

Both Sisters were well educated and held responsible jobs. Eileen for many years was Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive and to the Mayor and Mayoress of Charnwood. She was always known affectionately at Southfields as 'Wes'.



Eileen was very sociable enjoyed gardening and was a keen driver and always happy to take her friends on outings – often for meals in the countryside. She travelled widely in Britain as well as enjoying foreign holidays. She attended evening classes for yoga and when she retired took up golf at Lingdale Golf Club and continued to support the Charnwood Retired Members' Club.

**Snippets of Wesley family history learned from Eileen from our various conversations which led to this recent research included for example:**

- The Wesleys ran a local building firm which had constructed several houses in the village
- Latterly the family house had been at 73 Maplewell Road in Woodhouse Eaves
- The building firm went into a decline and ceased trading round about the end of World War 2 (any explanation for this?)
- Quite often when in the midst of singing a hymn by Charles Wesley during a service at St Paul's Church I would receive a dig in the ribs and a knowing look from Eileen ("really – you're related?")

**The main Wesley connections to St Paul's Church and to Woodhouse Eaves**

- Construction and building repair work including alterations to St Paul's Church which took place in 1894
- Bell Tower Survey in 1904
- Donation towards the peal of bells in memory of Queen Victoria in 1904

- Memorials to the lives of the Wesley family in the churchyard. The latest being the one dedicated to Eileen Mary Wesley which contains the inscription in Welsh **HEDD PERFFAITH HEDD** translated as Peace Perfect Peace. The English version of this phrase can also be seen on the gravestone of Leonard Wesley nearby
- The Village War Memorial adjacent to St Paul's Church erected in 1920
- Stainless steel bowl insert in the Font dedicated in 2014



*Font bowl, dedicated in memory of Eileen (By Beth Walsh)*



*Font, St Paul's Church (by Beth Walsh)*

**Now back to 1845 when our Wesley family history starts not long after St Paul's Church was finished and consecrated in 1837.**

### **Oliver Wesley – Grandfather**

Oliver was born in Woodhouse Eaves in 1845 into the branch of the Wesley family headed by his grandfather William Wesley. On the 1841 and 1851 UK Census records William's occupation was noted as frame worker knitter. A trade carried on at home by many in the village at that time. Oliver age 6 in 1851 was described as a scholar. In 1849 Oliver's mother Hannah married again to Stephen Preston a local widower who already had two daughters and he and Hannah went on to have several more children – Oliver's half brothers and sisters.

Oliver initially continued to live with his grandfather William but by 1861 he was established as part of the Preston family although retaining his Wesley surname. Perhaps his move came about because in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century it became increasingly difficult to make a living as a frame work knitter. This trade was then declining as agriculture in this area came to the fore.

Stephen Preston's occupation on Census Returns at that time was described as bricklayer. By 1861 this was also Oliver's recorded occupation whilst his half brother Adam aged 11 was noted as an agricultural labourer. The remaining 3 children up to the age of 9 were scholars with the newest arrival Harriet still a toddler. So it could be assumed that Oliver showed an aptitude for construction work and was possibly apprenticed to Stephen Preston thus carrying on his step-father's trade at which he became very successful. In 1870 Stephen Preston died leaving Oliver to continue alone.

In 1868 Oliver had married village girl Mary Ann Squire in St Paul's Church. Mary's family also came from Woodhouse Eaves and at age 14 she was described in the 1861 UK Census as a Nurse Girl. They went on to have 4 surviving children and 1 which probably died soon after birth.

This fact was discovered on the 1911 UK Census Return completed in Mary Ann's own hand but little more is known of the circumstances surrounding this missing child. Their surviving children were:

Walter born in 1868

Edith born in 1872

Harry born in 1873

Leonard born in 1882

Towards the end of the century Oliver seems to have taken advantage of the increasing tourism boom for visitors to Woodhouse Eaves by offering an apartment for overnight accommodation in the village.

This apartment could also have been used for lodgers on a longer term basis. Wright's Directory of Leicestershire published in 1892 shows some of the village businesses and notable residents at that time including Oliver Wesley:



Henry Thomas Allen (Colonel) Heygate William Howley Beaumont (Capt.), The Chase, Wdhse Brand Johnson Thomas, joiner and builder Kirk Isaac, land agt's clk and care- taker at parish room and coffee hse Millington Miss Ellen Jn, Pine cttg Millington Rev. Thomas Street, St. Paul's Vicarage Murrell Miss Jane, Maplewell road Parker Mr. Christopher Theophilus Pettitt Wm, master National school Preston Josiah, drill owner Preston Timothy, bricklyr and bldr Pritchard Thomas, general dealer Salt Sir Wm. Hy, Bart, Maplewell Sarson Mrs. Hannah Stubbs Jesse, sub-postmaster Squire Timothy, plumber, &c. Wade Mr. George Hayward Wainwright John Henry, tailor Wainwright (Mrs. Hannah) & Son (William), coal dealers Walker Misses Fanny and Emma, Maplewell road Wesley Oliver, bricklayer Woodford Francis, asstnt overar and cottager, Rock villa, Beacon road	Johnson Thomas Lester Thomas, <i>Fountain</i> , Beacon rd McDowall Thomas, Main street Mee Jas, West view, Maplewell rd Preston Arthur Preston Henry, Maplewell road Preston John, Main street Preston Philip   Preston Timothy Sills Edw, Grotto Cottage gardens Simpson Stephen, and butcher Smith Samuel, Maplewell road Squire Daniel   Squire Rbt, Main st Stubbs Joseph, Maplewell road Taylor William, and carrier Upton Job   Wainwright William Wesley Oliver, and bricklayer Woodford Frs, Rock villa, Beacon rd	Keetley Marshall, h <i>Woodthorpe</i> Poole John, bailiff Simpson Stephen, and butcher Upton Job, Thorntree cottage Wainwright Rd, bluff, Black Hill farm
APARTMENTS. Argile George, and farmer Bonshor Mrs. Mary Ann Chell Mrs. Sarah Chell Wm. Hy, & whlwr, Beacon rd Choppin John, and p.c, Beacon rd Faulkner John, Maplewell road Foulds Tom, Main street Harriman James, Main street Hunt William, and v. <i>Anchor Hotel</i>	BOOTMAKERS. Burton Edn.   Hicklin Jno. Bentley Thompson Henry   Thompson Jph. COTTAGERS AND COWKEEPERS. Broughton William Stubbs Jesse & Son (Joseph) Woodford Francis, and asst overseer	GRAZIERS. Hallam Joseph Hardy Joseph, and carrier Reeves George, and v, <i>Bull's Head</i> Squire Robert, and gardener Wainwright Mrs. Hannah & Son
	DRESSMAKERS. Foulds Miss May   Hives Mrs. Rhoda Johnson Miss Lucy Palmer Mrs. Isabella Squire Mrs. Kate Sykes Mrs. Carrie, Brand Wainwright Miss Matilda	PUBLICANS. Bakewell Mrs. Elzh, bhs, <i>Pear Tree</i> Clarke Wm, bhs, <i>Wheat Sheaf</i> , Brand Hunt Wm, shopr & v, <i>Anchor Hotel</i> Kirby Mrs. Sarah, bhs, <i>Forest Rock</i> Reeves Geo, grzr & v, <i>Bull's Head</i>
	FARMERS AND GRAZIERS. Argile George Clarke John, Bawdon Cottage farm Dolman James, West Beacon lodge Foulds William, bailiff Hillyard George, Mill farm Hodgett John. Alderman's haw	SHOPKEEPERS. Bonshor Mrs. My, Ann, Maplewell rd Braunson George, Maplewell road Foulds Tom, and news agent Hardy Mrs. Harriet, Main street Hunt William, and v, <i>Anchor Hotel</i> Squire Charles, and baker Vestey Samuel, and greengrocer Wesley Thomas, and general dealer
		CARRIERS. Hardy Joseph, to Leicester W. & S. Preston Charles Arthur, to Le'ster W. & S. ; Loughborough Th Preston Henry, to Leicester W.S. ; Loughborough Th Taylor William, to Leicester W.S. ; Loughborough Th Whatnall Richard to Loughborough Tu. Th and S.

Mary Hodge, *St Paul's Church, Woodhouse Eaves. A Guide to the Church (Leicester: 2006) p. 6:*

*'In 1894 an organ chamber was built in St Paul's Church as an extension of the south transept and extra seating was created for forty people. At the same time it seems alterations were made to the windows in the south transept in that they were enlarged. All the alterations were carried out at a cost of £200 and the money was raised by public subscription. The architect was again Euan Christian but this time the builder was Oliver Wesley of Woodhouse Eaves.'*

His firm's selection is an indication that Wesleys Builders led by Oliver had become a well-regarded business in the village and was the preferred choice to undertake the extension and alteration work to the Church in 1894.

Five years later Oliver died in 1899 at the age of 54 and his eldest son Walter assumed control of the family business.

### Leonard Wesley – Father

Leonard was the youngest child of Oliver and Mary Ann. He was born in 1882 some 14 years after big brother Walter. Before Leonard was himself old enough to be at work the UK Census of 1891 shows him at age 9 still a scholar whilst Walter's occupation is recorded as bricklayer but not Harry's who was by then 18.

Later Census Returns commencing in 1901 also have Leonard's occupation as bricklayer. However, I know from my observations in the Wesley home that he was also a skilled carpenter and joiner.

Following Oliver's death in 1899 and according to the UK Census of 1901 both Harry and Leonard continued as bricklayers and were living at home in Maplewell Road with their widowed mother Mary Ann. This was a different property situated in the same road close to that of Walter and his wife and family. Ten years later there was a similar situation other than Harry was now described as a retired bricklayer at the early age of 38.

Later that year in 1911 Leonard must have met his future wife Ellen Parry from Anglesey North Wales. How exactly when and where their paths crossed is not known but their romance blossomed and in 1912 they were married in St Paul's Church and then in 1913 their first child – a daughter - Dorothy Catherine was born.

A second daughter Gwendolen Mary arrived in 1915 but sadly she died the following year aged just 15 months. Eileen Mary followed some years later in 1924. The Electoral Roll from 1923 records Leonard and Ellen Wesley as the householders at 131 Maplewell Road. This confirms the address at which Eileen Mary lived all of her life.

SPRING REGISTER, 1923.				
MELTON PARLIAMENTARY DIVISION OF THE COUNTY OF LEICESTER.				
Polling District of <b>WOODHOUSE EAVES (BL)</b>				
QUORNDON ELECTORAL DIVISION.				
Parish of <b>WOODHOUSE EAVES.</b>				
REGISTRATION UNIT, WOODHOUSE EAVES. POST TOWN, LOUGHBOROUGH.				
FORM OF REGISTER.				
The Register contains the names in Alphabetical order of all persons entitled to vote as parliamentary and as local government electors.				
The Index letters in columns 2 (a) headed "Parliamentary," or 2 (b) headed "Local Govt." of the Register (see first page), show the nature of the qualification of an elector as follows:—				
	R.	=	Residence qualification.	
	B.P.	=	Business premises qualification.	
	O.	=	Occupation qualification.	
	H.O.	=	Qualification through husband's occupation.	
	N.M.	=	Naval or Military voter.	

768	O	O	Wesley, Ruth	Brand Cottages
769	R	O	Wesley, Joseph	Empitts Lodge
770	H O	H O	Wesley, Alice	Do.
771	O	O	Wesley, Harriet	Main Street
772	R	O	Wesley, Henry	30 Maplewell Road
773	H O	H O	Wesley, Sarah	30 Do.
774	R	—	Wesley, Fred	30 Maplewell Road
775	R	O	Wesley, Walter—J	Overdale Do.
776	R	—	Wesley, Oliver Norman	Overdale, Maplewell Road
777	R	O	Wesley, Leonard	131 Do.
778	H O	H O	Wesley, Ellen	131 Do.
779	R	O	Wesley, William	99 Do
780	R	O	Wesley, John	Quorn Fields
781	H O	H O	Wesley, Sarah Maria	Do.

***All of the Wesleys in Woodhouse Eaves who were entitled to vote in the spring of 1923 - Leonard and Ellen are at numbers 777 and 778.***

In the UK Census of 1939 5 people were registered at this address. The extra one is named as Joyce Curtis born in 1926 and still at school. I have no recollection of Eileen ever mentioning this and have been unable to find any family connection or explanation as to how Joyce came to be visiting or living there at that time.

Leonard died in the Leicester Royal Infirmary in 1945 aged 63.

## **Ellen Parry Wesley – Mother**

Ellen was born in 1888 in Llanerchymedd Anglesey North Wales. Her father Edward was a platelayer for the London and North Western Railway (LNWR). The Census Returns of the time invariably showed that the family which included Ellen and her brother and sister spoke only the Welsh language.

In the UK Census for 1911 Ellen's occupation was shown as **GWNIADWRAIG** which translates from the Welsh as seamstress or needlewoman when she was still living with her parents in Anglesey. Her reason for being in Leicestershire shortly afterwards has not yet been discovered. Originally it was thought that she might have come here to be in service but this suggestion has not been verified.

As in Leonard's case there is no record of how they met but in 1912 they married and settled down to raise a family. Ellen kept in close contact with her Welsh relatives visiting often and this family link was inherited by both her daughters. Perhaps she never forgot the home sickness and difficulties she may have faced being a stranger in a foreign land. It appears that she reciprocated the kindness shown to her by later inviting 2 students who were studying at Loughborough University with rooms in Quorn to join the family on several occasions for a home cooked meal.

This must have been during the 1950's and the Wesleys became firm friends with the 2 boys from Pakistan who greatly appreciated this kind gesture. One especially maintained contact and every 2 years or so when he and his wife came over to attend a Loughborough University reunion they would always get back in touch.

Eventually in time there was only Eileen left but I do know she continued to receive large and fabulously elaborate birthday and Christmas cards. Another quote of hers made in this connection was "The Secret Service has opened my post!" and she showed me the envelope which was clearly marked that the contents had been interrogated. Apparently this regular correspondence had not gone unnoticed.

After Ellen was widowed in 1945 it was just her and her 2 daughters (who were by this time out at work) left in the family home. She died in 1964 aged 76 and is buried in St Paul's churchyard alongside Leonard where a joint memorial stone marks their grave.

## **Walter Wesley – Uncle**

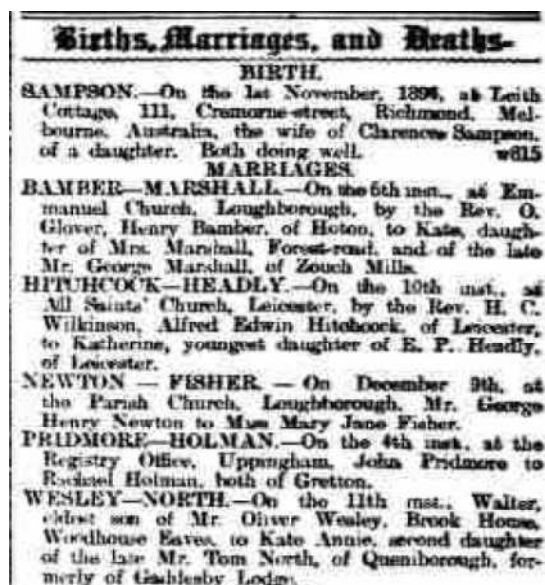
Walter born in June 1868 was the eldest child of Oliver and Mary. Like his father before him he was baptised in St Paul's Church. His birth is first recorded in the UK Census of 1871 aged 2 when the family was shown as living at Eaves Street, Woodhouse, Barrow upon Soar together with his newborn baby sister Edith. In 1881 Walter aged 12 is still at school by which time the family have an address in Main Street, Woodhouse.



Ten years later in 1891 Walter's occupation is shown as bricklayer with Oliver as head of the family now described as Builder and Contractor. By this time the family of Oliver Mary Walter Edith Harry and Leonard had moved to Brook House, Maplewell Road, Woodhouse further indicating the success of the business. It is likely that Walter also worked on the alterations to St Paul's Church alongside his father in 1894 and this experience was to stand him in good stead.

The same year in December 1894 Walter married Kate Annie North from Gaddesby. Her father Tom North was a grazier occupying 23 acres. Unfortunately, he had died in 1886 not living long enough to see his second daughter married. Would our heritage tour of Gaddesby Church planned for March 2018 reveal anything more about this family?

In 1891 Kate Annie then aged 19 is shown in the UK Census as a domestic help resident at The Bulls Head Main Street Woodhouse which may indicate where she and Walter met. The following announcement appeared in the local paper – *The Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury* on Saturday December 15 1894:



Walter and Kate Annie had 3 children: Grace Mildred born in 1896 Oliver Norman born in 1899 and Kathleen Ada born in 1906. These 3 children were the much older local cousins of Eileen Mary Wesley.

The UK Census of 1901 reveals that their address was now on Maplewell Road, Woodhouse Eaves, Woodhouse, Barrow upon Soar. Walter's father Oliver had died in 1899 and his widowed mother Mary together with Harry (28) and Leonard (19) now both shown as bricklayers also had a similar address on Maplewell Road. Unfortunately, no house numbers are shown on the Census Return but it does appear that these properties were next door to each other.

Wesley Builders led by Walter prospered and was a local employer with a workforce which included his brothers Harry and Leonard and later his son Oliver Norman. In 1904 Walter was approached by the Church Warden of St Paul's to excavate and inspect the foundations

of the tower to establish whether or not they were able to support the planned new peal of bells.

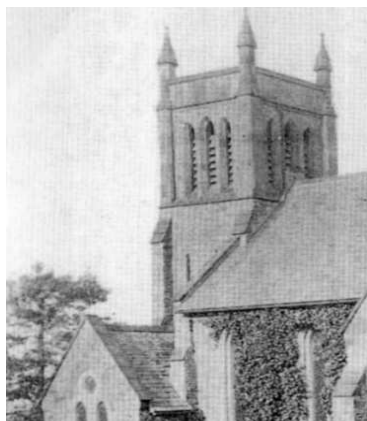
Whatever was found by Walter must have been unsettling as Stockdale Harrison the Leicester architect who eventually oversaw the project submitted a report on the tower's strength and stability resulting in remedial work taking place. It is not known if the Wesleys were involved in the actual alterations after the fact finding exercise.

**Mary Hodge. *St Paul's Church, Woodhouse Eaves. A Guide to the Church (Leicester: 2006) pp. 6-7:***

*Yet more work was to be undertaken in the following years. In 1904 three years after the death of Queen Victoria the tower was made stronger and the upper part entirely rebuilt in order to house the six new bells which were hung to commemorate the life and reign of the late Queen.*

The result was that the tower was heightened by several rows of slates which must have been a feat of great ingenuity.

### St Paul's Church pre 1904






Note:  
The respective level of the main roof in comparison to the tower wall

### St Paul's Church post 1904



Below is a copy of Walter Wesley's receipt for 8 shillings for the excavation work done and also his donation of £1 towards the fundraising for the cost of the new bells.


 The Warden of St Paul's Church  
 Woodhouse Eaves  
 Dr. to **WALTER WESLEY,**  
**Builder, Contractor & Decorator,**  
 WOODHOUSE EAVES near LOUGHBOROUGH.  


 ESTIMATES GIVEN FOR EVERY DESCRIPTION OF HOUSE REPAIRS.

July 29 to getting out ground for supporting  
 foundations to tower & making good  
 again  
 balance 1st of 8 shillings  
 Rec<sup>d</sup> Mel<sup>l</sup> 1st 1904  
 W. Wesley

8

Woodhouse Eaves Memorial to Queen Victoria.

I shall be pleased to support the proposed Scheme, and willing to  
 contribute 8/8 Pounds 0 Shillings, and  
0 Pence towards the cost of the Memorial.  
 I should prefer Scheme No. 1

REMARKS:

(NAME) Walter Wesley  
 (ADDRESS) Brook House  
 DATE 10/14/04

Walter's family appeared in the 1911 UK Census living at 'Overdale' Maplewell Road in Woodhouse Eaves. This property consisted of 7 rooms at that time. The room count excluded any scullery laundry lobby closet bathroom and various outbuildings.

World War 1 broke out in 1914. Son Oliver Norman was the only member of this Wesley family to have served in World War 1 which he survived and returned home.

The impact of this war on the village and loss of life was marked in 1920 by the erection of a War Memorial on a rocky outcrop adjacent to St Paul's Church. The names of the Fallen were recorded for posterity and later the names of the local servicemen killed in World War 2 were added. Walter Wesley is on record for all time as the builder of this Memorial.



*Woodhouse Eaves War Memorial (By Beth Walsh)*

The following inscriptions are taken from the plaques on the Memorial:

**Designed by: Howard Henry Thompson FRIBA, Leicester**

**Listing Status: Not Individually Listed**

**District: Charnwood**

**Made by: Stone- Walter Wesley Builder;**

**Slate and lettering- The Plasmatic Company**

**Parish: Woodhouse**

Large Mountsorrel granite cross at top of hill, with memorial of granite set into bedrock beneath bearing plaques of Swithland slate with gold inscription (WW1 larger and above WW2).

Associated sign on blue background at bottom of hill.

Unveiled Sunday 28th November 1920 by Major General Sir AR Hosking KCB CMG DSO; dedicated by Rural Dean Rev Arthur King.

Site donated by William Curzon-Herrick; Memorial cost c.450 pounds.

## THE INSCRIPTION READS

**PLAQUES:** THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE IN HONOURED MEMORY OF THE MEN OF WOODHOUSE EAVES WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR COUNTRY IN THE GREAT WAR 1914-1919 [NAMES]

AND OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE WORLD WAR 1939-1945 [NAMES]

**BOARD:** THE PEOPLE OF WOODHOUSE EAVES BEG THOSE WHO MAY VISIT THIS PLACE TO BEAR IN MIND THAT THE WAR MEMORIAL IS SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED TO DEFEND THEIR COUNTRY AND UPHOLD THE RIGHT IT IS HOPED THAT ALL WHO COME WILL TREAT THE MEMORIAL WITH THE REVERENCE WHICH IS DUE TO THE FALLEN.

REST ETERNAL GRANT TO THEM O LORD MAY LIGHT PERPETUAL SHINE UPON THEM

One of the houses built in Woodhouse Eaves in 1937 by Walter Wesley Builders was number 6 Hill Rise. This fact is mentioned in an article in the Roundabout Magazine from July/August 2014 beginning on page 21 in a feature about the couple who by 1997 had lived there for over 60 years Frank and Gwen Hives. Below is an extract from page 22:

*Frank and his friends including Claude Preston and Tony Kent liked to play cricket at the bottom of Victoria Road chalking stumps on the wall of Wesley's brickyard. The Wesley firm built 6 Hill Rise renting it to the Hives for 12s 6d (67½p) a week.*

Walter was predeceased by his wife Kate Annie who died in 1921 and also by his younger brother Harry who died in 1918 at age 45. Harry appears not to have been so fortunate in life and is shown on the 1911 UK Census as a retired bricklayer aged 38.

The 1939 UK Census records Walter aged 71 widowed and living at 73 Maplewell Road Woodhouse Eaves. The household then also included Oliver Norman and his wife Hettie. Walter finally died 5 years later in 1944 outliving his son by 2 years.

### **Oliver Norman Wesley – Cousin**

Oliver Norman was the second child and only son of Walter and Kate Annie born in 1898. He is shown in the school records as having attended the National School, Woodhouse Eaves (Elementary) – later renamed as St Paul's Church of England Primary School - in its original location on Church Hill. This was until the age of 10 when he moved to Quorn Grammar School (Rawlins) for 5 years leaving at the end of 1913. The official reason for leaving noted in the records was to become a builder (helping father) - Walt Wesley Builder and Contractor proprietor. His apprenticeship was cut short the following year.

In 1914 Oliver Norman was 15 and he went to war. His service record reveals little - only that he served as a Gunner in the Royal Garrison Artillery Regiment from 1914 to 1920 as Soldier no. 197387. He was awarded both the Victory and British medals and returned home



safely. Oliver Norman's name is commemorated along with all of the village service personnel on the Triptych in St George's Chapel inside St Paul's Church.



*Triptych, St George's Chapel (By Beth Walsh)*

After his discharge and return in 1922 Oliver Norman married Hettie Elizabeth Waldron from Shepshed. Her father was a frame work knitter and the UK Census of 1911 when Hettie was age 6 revealed she had 11 brothers and sisters ranging in age from 23 to 1 living at home. The eldest 5 were all engaged in the local hosiery trade from age 14 onwards. The others including Hettie except for the 2 youngest were at school.

By 1922 Oliver Norman was already living at 'Overdale' on Maplewell Road with his parents. It appears that after his marriage and following the death of his mother in 1921 Hettie moved in to run the 'domestic duties'. Again the Electoral Roll from 1923 confirms that only Walter (the property owner) and Oliver Norman were qualified to vote.

**SPRING REGISTER, 1923.**

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**MELTON PARLIAMENTARY DIVISION  
OF THE  
COUNTY OF LEICESTER.**

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**Polling District of WOODHOUSE EAVES (BL)**

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**QUORNDON ELECTORAL DIVISION.**

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**Parish of WOODHOUSE EAVES.**  
REGISTRATION UNIT, WOODHOUSE EAVES.  
POST TOWN, LOUGHBOROUGH.

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770	H O	H O	Wesley, Alice	Do.
771	O	O	Wesley, Harriet	Main Street
772	R	O	Wesley, Henry	30 Maplewell Road
773	H O	H O	Wesley, Sarah	30 Do.
774	R	—	Wesley, Fred	30 Maplewell Road
775	R	O	Wesley, Walter— <b>J</b>	Overdale Do.
776	R	—	Wesley, Oliver Norman	Overdale, Maplewell Road
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779	R	O	Wesley, William	99 Do
780	R	O	Wesley, John	Quorn Fields
781	H O	H O	Wesley, Sarah Maria	Do.

*All of the Wesleys in Woodhouse Eaves who were entitled to vote in the spring of 1923 - Walter and Oliver Norman are at numbers 775 and 776. The **J** following Walter's name indicates that he was qualified to serve as a Juror*

No records were found to confirm whether or not there any children from Oliver Norman's and Hettie's marriage so this seems unlikely. Presumably Oliver Norman continued his career as a bricklayer with the family firm involved in construction projects such as building a row of traditional pre-war houses faced with local stone on Hill Rise.

Oliver Norman and Hettie are shown in the UK Census of 1939 as continuing to live under Walter's roof. Oliver Norman died in 1942 aged 44 years and is buried in St Paul's churchyard. Hettie was to marry again in 1945 and moved away from the village.

**Page 58**

BURIALS in the Parish of <i>Woodhouse Eaves</i> in the				
County of <i>Leicester</i> in the Year One thousand				
<i>nine hundred and forty-two and - three</i>				
Name.	Abode.	When Buried.	Age.	By whom the Ceremony was Performed.
<i>Oliver Norman Wesley</i>	<i>Maplewell Rd.</i>	<i>27<sup>th</sup> November 1942</i>	<i>44 years</i>	<i>St. Margaret's Vicar</i>

No. 457

### The Wesley Family – their local addresses

One of the interesting outcomes causing some difficulty in tracking the movements of the Wesley family was the variation in village addresses taken from different Census Returns to compare to the locations which can be identified today. The following table shows their recorded addresses from 1841 to 1939 – some of which have now ceased to exist in that form:

<b>Census Date</b>	<b>Head of Family and Occupants</b>	<b>Address taken from the Transcription of the Census Records</b>
<b>1841</b>	William Wesley (Oliver's Grandfather)	Woodhouse Eaves, Barrow upon Soar, Leicestershire, England
<b>1851</b>	William Wesley (Oliver's Grandfather)	Maplewell Road, Barrow upon Soar, Leicestershire, England
	Stephen Preston (Oliver's Stepfather)	School Lane, Barrow upon Soar, Leicestershire, England
<b>1861</b>	Stephen Preston (Oliver's Stepfather) Wife Hannah children Oliver 2 half brothers and 3 half sisters	Nether Town, Woodhouse, Barrow upon Soar, Leicestershire, England
<b>1871</b>	Oliver wife Mary Ann children Walter and Edith	Eaves Street, Woodhouse, Barrow upon Soar, Leicestershire, England
<b>1881</b>	Oliver wife Mary Ann children Walter Edith and Harry	Main Street, Woodhouse, Barrow upon Soar, Leicestershire, England
<b>1891</b>	Oliver wife Mary Ann children Walter Edith Harry and Leonard Also Lodger	Brook House, Maplewell Road, Woodhouse, Barrow upon Soar, Leicestershire, England
<b>1901</b>	Walter wife Kate Annie children Grace and Oliver Norman	Maplewell Road, Woodhouse Eaves, Woodhouse, Leicestershire, England
	Mary Ann (Oliver's widow) children Harry and Leonard	Maplewell Road, Woodhouse Eaves, Woodhouse, Leicestershire, England
<b>1911</b>	Walter wife Kate Annie children Grace Oliver Norman and Kathleen	Overdale Maplewell Road Woodhouse Eaves, Woodhouse, Leicestershire, England
	Mary Ann (Oliver's widow) children Harry and Leonard	Brook House Maplewell Road Woodhouse Eaves, Woodhouse, Leicestershire, England
<b>1939</b>	Walter Son Oliver Norman Daughter-in-Law Hettie	73 Maplewell Road Woodhouse Eaves, Woodhouse, Leicestershire, England
	Leonard Wife Ellen daughters Dorothy and Eileen Lodger/Visitor Joyce	131 Maplewell Road Woodhouse Eaves, Woodhouse, Leicestershire, England

For Census purposes Woodhouse was shown as the Civil Parish which included Woodhouse Eaves and Barrow upon Soar was the Registration District. This definition has changed over time. Eaves Street - was this the original name for Main Street? There seems to have been a significant number of dwellings located along this thoroughfare according to the 1871 UK

Census. This point is particularly relevant to the Wesleys as Brook House and Overdale were both located on Maplewell Road. Perhaps one of these properties was later known as number 73 on the corner of Victoria Road?

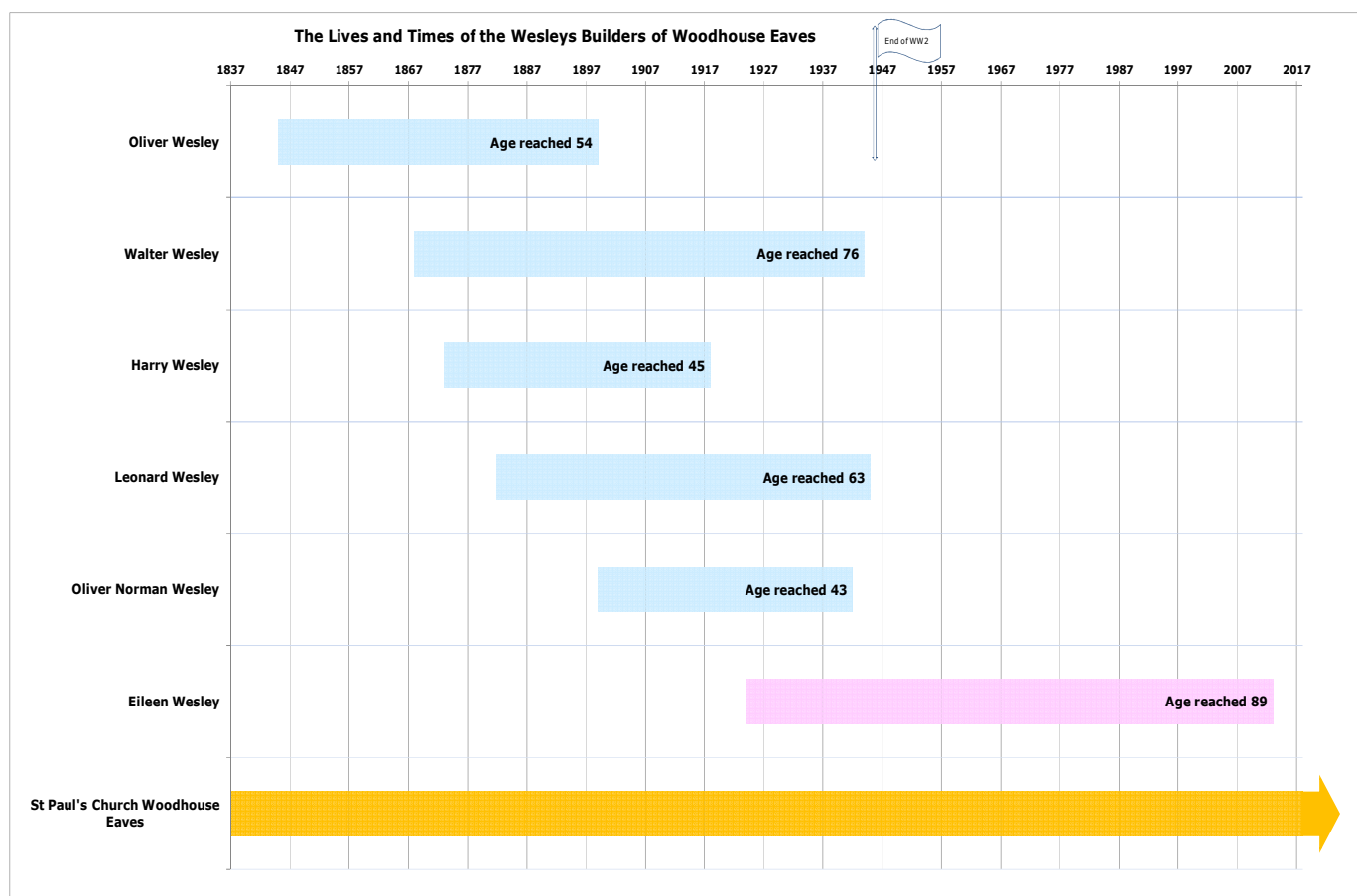
### Reflections on the heritage research

It has proved to be a very worthwhile and thought provoking exercise. Certainly some interesting and amazing facts have emerged about the lives and times of the Wesleys from the limited research completed to date leaving plenty of scope for more investigations to gain further insights and understanding. By following the clues left by Eileen this has resulted in additional unsolved mysteries to solve.

As always it is advisable to listen better when discussing past events and to find the answers whilst the individuals are still around to ask. It would be relevant to add that Reverend Canon Carol Evans who took the funeral service for both Eileen and her sister Dorothy was the daughter of their Mother's cousin from Conwy in North Wales.

The main unanswered question outstanding is of any family relationship to Charles or John Wesley from the Methodist movement. It is known that they visited the Charnwood area to preach. Any connection seems to be doubtful but not conclusive either way.

One answer to the demise of the firm of Wesley Builders can be found in the chart below. Simply all of the skilled craftsmen in the family had died before the end of World War 2.



In reaching this point more than a few stumbling blocks dead ends and blind alleys were encountered. Some of the St Paul's Church old original records and registers had suffered damage from damp before they were lodged in the Leicestershire Records Office. It meant that in places the ink had faded or was erased. This was known anecdotally and proven to be correct on inspection.

Another challenge was to find the right connections from recurring popular local surnames of long established village families many of which remain today. In the past there were several Wesley families in the village and some members with the identical first names and similar dates of birth. This was also the case for the Anglesey links.

There were also instances of dates particularly birth years varying between documents either attributed down to failing memories wishful thinking or misinterpretation in the official transcriptions. This also applies to addresses and the inability to locate the properties previously lived in by some of the Wesleys as mentioned above.

### **Acknowledgements and references**

**Leicestershire Records Office in Wigston** – archived parish registers from St Paul's Church and online information using Find My Past for access to:

- Births Marriages and Deaths and Parish Records including minutes of meetings
- Census Returns and Electoral Rolls – Woodhouse Eaves in 1920's
- Military records – service records
- Newspapers – publication of births deaths and marriages and local news

**Mary Hodge, *St Paul's Church, Woodhouse Eaves. A Guide to the Church* (Leicester: 2006)** – pages 6 and 7

1894 – alterations to St Paul's Church

1904 – necessary work to the tower before installing the new peal of bells

**Roundabout Magazine** – various editions containing local history information

Definition of a Woodhouse Crow – issue July/August 2011 - page 9

Hill Rise house building – issue July/August 2014 – pages 21 and 22

**University of Leicester Special Collections**

Wright's Directory of Leicestershire 1892

**Leicestershire County Council War Memorials**

[www.leicestershirewarmemorials.co.uk](http://www.leicestershirewarmemorials.co.uk)

**Quorn Village On-Line Museum** - [www.quornmuseum.com](http://www.quornmuseum.com)

Oliver Norman Wesley's school records

**Beth Walsh – Professional Photographer**

Thanks to other Heritage Volunteers for providing documents and exchanging relevant information to further this research. Lastly but not least to **Eileen Mary Wesley** herself:

**On holiday in Portugal**



*Friend Barbara, Eileen and Sister Dorothy*