

Dear Phyllis,



Cover photograph – James Luke Wenborn and Phyllis, circa 1925

“Dear Phyllis”

Foreword

“The history of the world is not complete, until your story is told” – Unknown.

June 2022. My father, Luke Gibbon was unfortunately in hospital. One day when I was visiting, he told me I would find some letters in an old brown crocodile bag at his house in Bedford. So, I followed his wishes and collected the bag and took it home with me. I remember seeing this bag when I was younger, and I was excited at the prospect of getting to read through the contents of the letters.



The letters in question were correspondence between my Grandma Phyllis and her Father, James Wenborn. They were sent during World War II when Phyllis was living in Stratford-upon-Avon, and James in Highbury, London. My evenings were spent reading through these letters, and my thoughts turned to what it must have been like living and working in war-torn London.

A month or so later, Emma Liddell, a friend of mine visited and having already investigated her family history began reading through some of the letters. I had already decided the letters needed to be scanned and archived, but she suggested making a book. Immediately I started searching for a local genealogist and that is where I met Ian.

Ian visited one evening and I showed him the letters. His eyes lit up. We sat drinking coffee and discussing the letters and what I knew about the family history for over two hours and a plan started to form. The idea of just creating a book of scanned letters was long gone but it did allow for a title – Dear Phyllis.

I chose to work with Ian as first of all he had the interest and bought in to the story. I also knew that he was a graduate of the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies in Canterbury, having completed their Diploma course and is now an Associate of the trade body, AGRA, (Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives). What I didn't realise was his skills in research and finding information. That was incredible!

Over the past year or so, I have worked with Ian to create this book focussing on four key characters – James Luke Wenborn, Phyllis Wenborn, Frank Gibbon and Stanley Gibbon. I wanted to know where our name came from. I wanted to learn more about James Luke and his eccentric ways and I wanted to find out more about my Grandma and Grandad, who they were and what life was like in their younger days. I wanted to know everything I could about my family history and what makes me who I am today.

I never realised until I started this process how many people had memories and stories to share about the individuals in this book. My Aunts Vicky and Sarah and Uncle Puncle (Mark), my sisters Michelle and Charlotte, cousins, second cousins, and of course my Father, Luke, have all imparted knowledge along the way. Creating this book has also taken me to the other side of the world, to Australia, to learn about my Great Uncle Bernard, with help from his son Fred Gibbon, and his wife Gillian.

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I could not have written this book without the help of all these people. But most importantly, I could not have started this incredible journey without my Father. I am pleased to say he is now in good health and enjoying his retirement in Egypt. I will be handing the first copy of this book to him on his 65th Birthday on 22nd September 2023.

Writing this book has been a labour of love and hopefully it will stand the test of time and serve as a fitting tribute to our many ancestors, to ensure they will not be forgotten.

I would like to dedicate this book to my Father, **James Luke Wenborn Gibbon**.



You know him as Luke. I know him as my hero.

I know him as Popsy.

Happy Birthday Popsy!

Alex Gibbon – July 2023

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Acknowledgements

There are many people to thank for their support in bringing about this book, however special mention, in no order of importance, should be made to the following people.

Peter Jones, Senior Archivist at International Bomber Command Centre, Lincoln, who provided invaluable insights to the challenges and dangers faced by the servicemen who served in Bomber Command during the Second World War.

Les Spicer, (son-in-law to Stanley Gibbon), who has meticulously documented Stan's service career in Bomber Command and subsequently interviewed him shortly before he died in 1994. Both were immeasurably invaluable in the writing of this book.

Gillian Gibbon, (Bernard Gibbon's daughter-in-law), in Australia for making available the letters between Frank Gibbon and Bernard, his son, and photographs of them both.

The Gibbon family for having the foresight in keeping and preserving the letters between James Luke Wenborn and his daughter Phyllis along with so many family certificates, photographs and associated heirlooms.

The small team of proof readers who have independently and collectively kept me on the straight and narrow, their guidance and advice has been of great support.

Finally and not least, Alex Gibbon, whose idea this all was and thanks to his own personal time, enthusiasm and drive, this story has now been able to be told.

Ian Newton
Dip.Gen

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Introduction

The idea for the project started after reading letters written by James Luke Wenborn to his youngest daughter, Phyllis, who had been evacuated from North London to Stratford-upon-Avon in order to protect her from the German bombs that were being dropped on London. The letters portrayed life in London during this period and it was felt that their story should be told.

Interwoven to this was the 'family business', the source of much interest, not least, what exactly did they do? Introduce a WW2 Bomber Command hero, DFC and Bar, the quest for a better understanding of both the Gibbon and Wenborn family background and the idea to bring this all together in a book started to germinate.

There were many gaps in our collective knowledge of the family history. There were also many stories that had been passed down that either needed substantiating or correcting. Then it all needed to be pulled together in a coherent form to make sense of it all.

Contact was made in early October 2022 with a professional genealogist, based near Lincoln who quickly appreciated the task at hand and started to fully engage with the story itself. Following an initial meeting, it was agreed that the project should be taken in two stages.

Firstly was the genealogical research and production of a documented family tree, taking the Gibbon and Wenborn families back five generations to the start of the 19th century. Within the family tree, there were four ancestors 'of interest' that were to be researched further, Frank Gibbon and his son, Stanley and James Luke Wenborn and his daughter Phyllis. There was also the small matter of scanning and cataloguing over 200 hundred letters and various documents in order to preserve the originals and ensure they were more easily accessible to future generations.

The second stage of the project was dependent upon what was found during the research stage. Obviously, if there was nothing of interest to write about then it would be a very short book. Fortunately during the research process, which involved reaching out to folk on the other side of the world, meeting with the archivist at the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln, reviewing hundreds of pages of old newspapers and following many other avenues of information, a story started to emerge of two families from very different backgrounds who came together in London after WW2 when Stanley Gibbon married Phyllis Wenborn.

I hope you take as much pleasure from reading the story of the Gibbon and Wenborn families as we have had in researching and bringing it all together. A number of preconceptions that were long held have since been corrected with an improved understanding of who we are and the events that have shaped our family.

Alex Gibbon

July 2023

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Background

As was touched upon in the introduction, this book will follow the journey of two families from very differing backgrounds which culminated in the marriage of Stanley Gibbon and Phyllis Wenborn. The lives and challenges faced by the various individuals of both families will be considered in the following pages.

In doing so it is important to remember that events, no matter how small or large, do not occur in a vacuum. There will always be other happenings occurring at the same time, either domestically, locally or nationally that have shaped the initial event being considered. It is therefore necessary to appreciate the historical context and prevailing environment in which we view our ancestors lives through.

Personal choices, decisions made, thoughts expressed over a century or more may well be viewed as strange with the benefit of our 21st century gift of hindsight. This is why understanding the wider context to the lives our ancestors lived is important in order to appreciate why they made those decisions or expressed those thoughts.

Such context will be introduced as we follow the journey of both families. Novelist and writer, LP Hartley, probably summarised the challenge of making sense and understanding the actions of bygone times through the prism of today's viewer when he said *"...the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there..."*.

Accordingly, there will be no attempt in this book to either re-write history or interpret and judge it through today's values. Naturally all events will be taken separately and considered sensitively in order to understand our family's story better. It is hoped in doing so, it allows the reader to come to their own considered conclusions and what course of action they may have taken if placed in the same position and time.

The decision to trace the lineage back to the late 18th–early 19th century was taken in order to focus on and understand the backgrounds and upbringings of the four named earlier in the introduction, (Frank, Stanley, James Luke and Phyllis). Taking the research further back would not have added much more value to understanding the lives and backgrounds to their stories.

At a later date it may be of interest to follow the origins of particularly the Wenborn family. There are suggestions that this indeed was an old and ancient family with it's roots firmly in the South East of England, (Kent and Sussex). For the time being, this falls outside the scope of bringing together the more 'immediate' family story, from which there is already much to relay and discuss.

Finally, before the story of the Gibbon and Wenborn starts, it is worth a few words on the layout of the book and how the story itself will be told. It has been taken over two periods in time, with the ending of WW2 marking the end of Part One and the beginning of Part Two.

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The rationale in doing so is simply that to tell the story of one family from start to finish, before introducing subsequent family members, will be to have told the story of those who followed in the book before introducing them.

We start with the (Fitz)Gibbon family and follow their fortunes from Cork, Ireland, in the early 19th century to the East End of London in the late 1930's via Dover, Kent. The Wenborn family are then followed as they establish themselves in Islington, North London, particularly the Clerkenwell and Highbury areas.

Having followed both families to the end of WW2 in 1945 and having taken the lives of Frank, Stanley, James Luke and Phyllis up to that point in time, Part Two then looks at how their respective lives unfolded in post-war Britain.

During the telling of the story, additional families will be introduced such as the Masters family, originally from Somerset, who married into the Wenborn family and the Green family from Wiltshire and later on Essex, who married into the Gibbon family. It is not within the scope of this book to follow these branches in any great detail other than to acknowledge that we as a family carry forward their DNA and they form part of who we are. There are a number of Family Tree diagrams and Pedigree Charts within the appendices that help illustrate how these wider families all relate to the main Gibbon and Wenborn lines.

Also, should you wish to explore both families further, including wider siblings and their marriages and children, there is a well-documented Family Tree on the *Ancestry* website¹. Source documents such as Census returns, Birth, Marriage and Death Register entries along with various Military records, entries on the Electoral Register and Probate entries and much more can be found, relating not only to the two families covered in this book but also to the ancillary branches as well. At the time of writing, you do not require a subscription to view this Tree online.

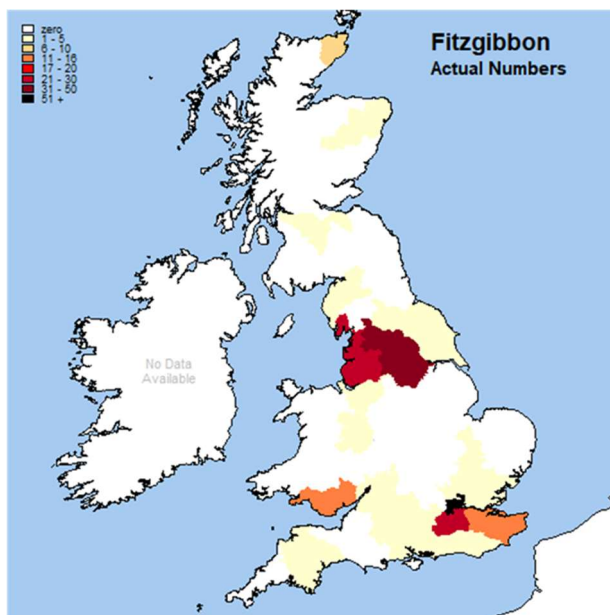
¹ Ancestry.co.uk website, Gibbon Family Tree, <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/tree/185473937/family?cfpid=372425605441>, accessed 2 March 2023

PART ONE

1. Gibbon – Surname background and origins

In the contents page under Part One, you may have noticed a reference to Frank (Fitz)Gibbon. For reasons that will be addressed later on, Frank, at some point around 1904, anglicised his given surname of FitzGibbon and shortened it to Gibbon. The surname therefore needs to be traced back to the origins of the FitzGibbons of Ireland.

Recorded in many forms, including the Norman–Irish Fitzgibbon, this surname has several possible origins. For this particular spelling it may have originated from the 6th century Germanic personal name Gebwine, from "geba" a gift, and "wine" a friend, and hence "good friend". The Irish Fitzgibbons, originally of Norman stock, gradually took over leadership of the rebellion against British rule in the 18th century. The head of the family was known as The White Knight of Desmond and they were based in County Limerick with another branch in County Cork².



Taking the 1881 census data³ for England, Wales and Scotland⁴, the FitzGibbon surname can be found predominantly in three locations in Britain, London and the South East, Lancashire and West Yorkshire and South Wales.

Having accepted the true origin of the surname is Southern Ireland, (Limerick and Cork), the distribution shown in 1881 represents where emigrants from Ireland have settled.

That they have focussed on the closest centres of industry served by major ports

accessible from the likes of Dublin and Cork should not be of any great surprise. The absolute numbers are relatively small. Of the 363 people captured on the 1881 census, 230 FitzGibbons could be found either in London or the South East, 73 in Lancashire and Yorkshire and 29 in South Wales. To place this into perspective, nearly 30m people were enumerated on the night of the 1881 census.

² Surname Database website, www.surnamedb.com/Surname/Fitzgibbon, accessed 2 March 2023

³ 1881 is often used to locate the origins of surnames as this was prior to when families had access to cheaper forms of transport such as the railways and the distribution of surnames became more thinly spread.

⁴ The British 19th Century Surname Atlas, v1.20, Archer Software

2. Cork, Ireland, early 19th century

Towards the end of the 18th century, Ireland, politically and economically, was in turmoil. Earlier settlers from England and Scotland controlled over 80% of the land, many were absentee landlords. The greatest majority of the Irish population were excluded from land ownership and positions of Office under various Penal Laws. During the mid-18th century, whilst the Landowners exported beef, pork and dairy products to England and the Americas, hundreds of thousands of Irish died of starvation. An indigenous Southern-Irish Catholic in the late 18th and early 19th century was very much a second class citizen.

The disparity was amplified when comparing the relatively prosperous North and East of Ireland, populated by the families of early settlers with the South and West of the Country, populated predominantly by the Catholic majority surviving on a diet of potato and wheat based crops.

The hardship was experienced as much as anywhere in and around the town of Cork in the South of Ireland. Despite the prosperity of Cork, the city, itself, with its grand neo-classical Georgian buildings and booming port-side activities, those who worked the land in the immediate vicinity were living hand to mouth.

This was illustrated during the 1830's Tithe Wars, a campaign of mainly non-violent civil disobedience, punctuated by sporadic violent episodes, in reaction to the enforcement of tithes on the Catholic majority for the upkeep of the established Protestant state church, the Church of Ireland. Tithes were payable in cash or kind, (produce or livestock), and payment was compulsory, irrespective of an individual's religious adherence. During the aforementioned Tithe Wars, in December 1834, nine young men from Carrigtohill were shot dead for failure to pay Tithes.

It is in this setting that John FitzGibbon was baptised⁵ in Carrigtohill, Cork, on the 19th July 1840 to parents, John FitzGibbon and Ellen Finton. The parish of Carrigtohill sits to the East of Cork, lying amongst gentle hills sloping towards the sea and Cork harbour.

3. Famine Years and Emigration

Unlike the decennial census records that have survived pretty much in tact for England, Wales and Scotland, the Irish census records were lost in a fire during the Irish Civil War in 1922. Fortunately both Tithe Applotment records, (1823–1837) and Griffiths Valuation Survey records, (1848–1864), have survived. Both surveys were taken to determine how much tax should be levied for Tithes and Poor Law contribution and the levy was based on land and buildings occupied, (not necessarily owned).

⁵ Nat. Library of Ireland, Dublin, Irish Catholic Parish Registers, Microfilm no. 04989/02

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It is from these records⁶ we can pinpoint the land that John and Ellen rented, circa 1848. It was some 20 acres at a rent of £7–10s per annum from a Mr John Atkins.

In today's terms, that would represent less than £1,000 per annum, however the economic environment in

Ireland at the time was dire. The Irish Potato Famine, 1845–52, saw over 1m die of starvation and estimates of over 2.2m emigrated to escape the alternative of near certain death. The South and West of Ireland was hardest hit. Cobh Island was the main departure port for those fleeing the Famine. Carrigtohill was in the eye of the storm and the FitzGibbon family would have experienced and witnessed some of the most harrowing scenes in Irish history.



Famine Memorial, Custom Quay House, Dublin

The Great Famine was one of the blackest periods in Irish history. While Carrigtohill may not have suffered as acutely as some parts, considerable hardship was experienced. A large house overlooking the village was used as a hospital for the victims of the famine.

In 1846 soup establishments, provision stores and bread shops were attacked by raging mobs at Carrigtohill⁷. It is therefore no surprise that John and Ellen emigrated to Victoria, Australia. We don't know how they lived or the occupations they took up 'Down Under', however we do know that they enjoyed a further 20 years together before Ellen passed away in 1875. A significantly longer life expectancy than had they stayed in Carrigtohill.

Their son, John, didn't follow them to Australia but signed up for the Royal Navy as soon as he was 16 years old in 1856. We shall now follow John FitzGibbon's career in the Royal Navy.

⁶ Griffiths Valuation, [Griffith's Valuation Viewer \(askaboutireland.ie\)](http://Griffith's Valuation Viewer (askaboutireland.ie)), accessed 03 March 2023

⁷ Carrigtohill Parish History, Parish History – Carrigtohill Parish, accessed 3 March 2023

4. John FitzGibbon

4.1 Service in the Royal Navy, 1856–80

John FitzGibbon signed up with the Royal Navy on 21st November 1856⁸, shortly after his 16th birthday, Rating Boy–Second Class. After two years and upon reaching the age of 18 in 1858, he signed up for a further ten years service.

His first ship was *La Hogue* which had just returned from the Baltic, serving in the Russian (Crimean) War alongside French allies. Their task had been to blockade Riga and other Russian ports in the Gulf of Finland. Morale could not have been high onboard ship as upon its return to Plymouth, and shortly after John had joined the ship, *The Times* ran a report of a Seaman Stephenson who had been sentenced to 50 lashes and imprisonment for inciting the crew to mutiny. The report⁹ continues in much detail of the punishment carried out, including the man screaming as the punishment was administered which must have left an impression on a young boy. This early experience may explain why his service record over 22 years was continually peppered with ‘character – Very Good’.

John’s next ship in 1859 was *HMS Nile*, the flagship of Rear Admiral Ducie which ironically didn’t venture beyond Queenstown, Ireland, (now Cobh Island, Cork). His third ship, 1859–62, was the newly launched, 2,500 tonne, wooden hulled *HMS Doris*. It must have been of some size as its personnel numbered nearly 500 officers and sailors. The *Doris* patrolled the Mediterranean.

The 1861 census, taken on the night of Sunday 7th of April, was the first census to record British sailors aboard ship, irrespective of where the ship was at the time. John is recorded as being on board the *Doris* in the Mediterranean along with 487 other officers and ratings¹⁰.

By contrast, in December 1862, John was transferred to the 40 year old *HMS Hawke*, which again patrolled the Irish coastline on coastguard duty around Cork. It was broken up in 1865 so it must have been on its last legs when John served on it.

⁸ TNA, RN Seamen Service records, ADM-139-125-32420

⁹ The Victorian Royal Navy, 1840–1880, [HMS Hogue \(pdavis.nl\)](https://pdavis.nl), accessed 04 March 2023

¹⁰ 1861 Census of England and Wales, RG9-4439 Folio 57, page 11

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HMS Constance 1846–75

Between 1865–68 John served on *HMS Constance*. She was the first Royal Naval ship to be fitted with a compound steam engine, and won a race against two frigates from Plymouth to Madeira in 1865. John will have been aboard the *Constance* for this race. Shortly after, as part of the Channel Fleet, it honoured Napoleon III on his birthday at Cherbourg, along with over thirty other Royal Navy ships¹¹.

It then made two journeys to the Americas and Indies. The second voyage almost ending in disaster as her crew and officers were quarantined aboard whilst berthed at Port Royal, Jamaica, on 26th October 1867 during an outbreak of Yellow Fever.

From 1869 until John retired in 1880, his time aboard ship was on coastguard duty, patrolling around Sheerness, Southampton and Cork. *HMS Penelope*, where he served between 1869–73 was the largest twin-screw frigate in the Navy, an armoured iron frigate, newly built in 1867, it would have been the first armoured ship John had served on.

His final ship was the *HMS Hector* where he was from 1873 until he retired in 1880. The *Hector* patrolled Southampton Waters and acted as Queen Victoria’s guardship every summer while she holidayed on the Isle of Wight. Later on, after John had left the service, the *Hector* became the first British warship to have wireless telegraphy installed when she conducted the first trials of the new equipment for the Royal Navy.

John FitzGibbon retired from service in the Royal Navy on 22nd March 1880, aged 39, and he had accrued 21 years and 124 days as pensionable service, (his first two years not qualifying). It was not until 1859 that pensions for service were granted automatically to all ratings who had served for 20 consecutive years in the Royal Navy. Up to 1859 there was no guarantee that a rating would receive a pension for service, they were rarely awarded to ratings unless they had been wounded or killed in action or on duty.

John retired as senior Boatswain, a warrant officer position onboard ship. The boatswain, (bo’sun), worked in a ship’s deck department as the foreman of deck crew. Sometimes, the boatswain is also a third or fourth mate. He must be highly skilled in all matters of seamanship and is distinguished from other able seamen by the supervisory roles: planning, scheduling, and assigning work. (See *Appendix 4* for his complete service record).

¹¹ The Victorian Royal Navy 1840–1880, [The Channel Squadron visit to Cherbourg in 1865 \(pdavis.nl\)](http://pdavis.nl), accessed 4 March 2023

4.2 Dover, Kent

During his time in the Coastguards, in 1869, John married Fanny Jessie Nay in Witham, Essex. Fanny was the daughter of Patrick Nay, a Royal Navy Coastguard from Galway, Ireland, so it was very likely that John had met Patrick whilst working in the Navy and struck up a friendship with his daughter.

Fanny was 18 when they married, John was 30, and by time John had retired from the Navy in 1880 they had a family of five, three sons, (John, Frank and Charles) and two daughters, (Mary and Flora). By 1881, John and Fanny were running the *Eight Bells* Public House in the centre



of Dover, on New Street, (now a Wetherspoons Pub, left). Including their own family, there were 45 people enumerated as staying there on census night, Sunday 3rd April, 1881. Quite a large undertaking for your first shot at running a pub. Having the experience of over 20 years at sea would have helped in maintaining order in this busy city centre establishment.

The pub was close to the church of St Mary's which housed eight bells in its tower, giving the Pub it's name.

John had a good reputation in Dover for being an upright and honest man as illustrated when a case was brought against him in June 1894 for the alleged detention of pension papers belonging to John Regan, a pensioner. Regan had stayed for a few weeks at the *Eight Bells* and owed money before he then moved to the 'Union', (workhouse). Regan didn't want the Union to know he had means to money so asked John to look after his papers. When he left the Union and went to gather his papers, John went with him to collect his pension to pay for the outstanding earlier accommodation at the *Eight Bells*.

The Chairman summed up by saying that the defendant, (John), had been the landlord of the *Eight Bells* for 14 years and bore good character, as well as having served in the Navy for 24 years and eight of those as a Petty Officer. The case was dismissed¹².

papers with the landlord. The defendant was only holding the money as custodian. The defendant had been the landlord of the "Eight Bells" for 14 years, and during that time he bore a good character. For twenty-four years he had been in the Navy, and nine years of that time he was a petty officer, so that he was also a pensioner himself. He would call the defendant to give evidence.
The Chairman said there was no need for evidence to be given in defence, the Bench considered there was no case proved, and dismissed the case.

John and Fanny had two more sons, (Frederick and George) and were still successfully running the *Eight Bells* after over twenty years in 1901, declaring over 30 residents staying there on

¹² British Newspaper Archive, Dover and County Chronicle, 9 June 1894, accessed 29 April 2023

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census night, 31st March, 1901¹³. By this time, only Flora and George were still living with them, their other children, including Frank, had left home.

Soon after, John and Fanny moved to Park Street, Luton, Bedfordshire, to run another pub, where John died in 1910, aged 71. Fanny continued running the business with her son, Charles, assisting.

5. Frank Joseph Gibbon, (Francis Daniel FitzGibbon)

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BAPTISMS solemnized in the Garrison of *Shorncliffe Camp*
Kent England in the Year 1877.

Date of Birth of the Child	When Baptized	Child's Christian Name	Parent's Name		Sponsor	Quality, Trade, or Profession	By whom the Ceremony was performed
			Christian	Surname			
14 th of June 1877. Nov. 1875	1 st July 1877	Francis Daniel	John	FitzGibbon	Patrick Nay Mary FitzGibbon	Sailor H. My's Service	Rev. Thos Molony
22 nd of Oct	2 nd Nov						

Frank was born on 14th June 1877 to John FitzGibbon and Fanny (Frances) Nay. He was baptised two weeks later at a Roman Catholic service in Shorncliffe Military Camp,

near Hythe, Kent as Francis Daniel FitzGibbon¹⁴. His maternal Grandfather, Patrick Nay, was one of his sponsors. His father, John, was still a serving sailor in Her Majesty's Royal Navy.

It is not clear where Frank was living in 1891, age 14, although his four elder siblings were all at 21 New Street, Dover and his two younger siblings were at the *Eight Bells*, 25 New Street, Dover with their parents, John and Fanny.

By 1901, Frank had left Dover for London, or more specifically, Canning Town in East London.

5.1 East London, Family and Marriage

At the start of the 20th century, in 1901, Frank is living in Wilton Street, Canning Town. The district is located to the north of the Royal Victoria Dock, and has been described as the "Child of the Victoria Docks" as the timing and nature of its urbanisation was largely due to the creation of the dock. The area was part of the ancient parish of West Ham. On the 1901 census¹⁵ he is clearly 'Francis FitzGibbon', a dock labourer, born Hythe, Kent age 23, which all fits with what we know.

¹³ 1901 Census of England and Wales, RG13-841 Folio 20, page 31

¹⁴ British Armed Forces Roman Catholic Registers, Ref BF 1/2/7

¹⁵ 1901 Census of England and Wales, RG13-1578 Folio 13, page 17

“Dear Phyllis”

This area of London was booming as the Royal Albert Docks had recently been commissioned and over the next few decades became London’s principal dock, specialising in unloading and loading foodstuff with rows of giant granaries and refrigerated warehouses alongside the quays. For a young man coming to London, looking for work, this must have been an obvious place to start. The Royal Group of Docks, (including Victoria and George V Docks), were the largest enclosed docks in the world, a major hub of activity.

From a report in the *Dover and County Chronicle*¹⁶ of a wedding between Charles FitzGibbon and Agnes Seaman on 8th November 1902, the list of attendees includes the bridegroom’s brother, Frank, who gives the newly-weds a set of Japanese ornaments as a wedding present. Despite moving away from his family in Dover at a young age, Frank remains in close touch with them.

Fast forward nine years to the 1911 census¹⁷. The 1911 census was the first to be completed showing one household per page and so allowed for greater detail to be given. It also provides the signature of the head of the household at the foot of the form, (not shown on the image below).

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family.	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX.	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE.	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards.	BIRTHPLACE of every person.	MA of
Person, whether Member of Family, Visitor, Boarder, or Servant, who died the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in this dwelling and was alive at midnight, or lived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday, April 3rd, not having been enumerated elsewhere, else must be included. (For entering names see Examples on back of Schedule.)	State whether "Head," "Wife," "Son," "Daughter," or other Relative, "Visitor," "Boarder," or "Servant."	For Infants under one year state the age in months as "under one month," "one month," etc. Ages of Infants under one year	Write "Single," "Married," "Widower," or "Widow," or "None" in Column 7. Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7). Total Children Born Alive. Children still Living. Children who have Died.	Personal Occupation. The reply should show the precise branch of Profession, Trade, Manufacture, &c. If engaged in any Trade or Manufacture, the particular kind of work done, and the Article made or Material worked or dealt in should be clearly indicated. (See Instructions 1 to 6 and Examples on back of Schedule.)	(1) If born in the United Kingdom, write the name of the County, and Town or Parish. (2) If born in any other part of the British Empire, write the name of the Dependency, Colony, etc., and of the Province or State. (3) If born in a Foreign Country, write the name of the Country. (4) If born at sea, write "At Sea." NOTE.—In the case of persons born elsewhere than in England or Wales, state whether "Resident" or "Visitor" in this Country.	Whether Employed, Worker, or Working on Own Account. Whether Working at Home. Write the words "At Home" opposite the name of each person carrying on Trade or Industry at home. (2) "Worker" (that is working for an employer), or (3) "Own Account" (that is neither employing others nor working for a trade employer).
Frank Gibbon	Head	33	Married	Dock labourer	Holloway London	
Minnie Gibbon	Wife	29			Grays Essex	
Ada Gibbon	Daughter	3			Mans Park Essex	

The Francis FitzGibbon from Hythe, Kent has morphed into Frank Gibbon from Holloway, London. Still a Dock Labourer and now ten years older, he has been ‘married’ to Minnie for six years and between them have had three children, one which died in infancy.

There is a sad backstory to the simple numbers, 3 children, two alive, one died. Irene Dorothy Gibbon was born to Frank and Minnie on 11th November 1905, West Ham, London. She was immediately put out for adoption and taken in by the Hill family of Great Waltham¹⁸, Essex.

¹⁶ British Newspaper Archives, Dover and County Chronicle, 8 November 1902, accessed 29 April 2023

¹⁷ 1911 Census of England and Wales, RG14-9589 Folio 188, page 302

¹⁸ 1911 Census of England and Wales, RG14-10069 Folio 23, page 47

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Vera May Gibbon, (right, with Minnie, circa 1910), was born 9th May 1908, baptised 1st August 1909 in Felsted, Holy Cross, some distance from where they were living, and was with her parents in 1911. However, by 1921 she was a patient at Queen Mary’s Hospital, Carshalton, a Children’s Asylum and later in 1939 she had been transferred to Leavesden Hospital, also under the care of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, described at the time as a place for “quiet and harmless imbeciles”.



Their third child, also a daughter, Minnie, was born May 1910 and died within a few weeks. Three daughters, one put out for adoption, one mentally disabled and one died in infancy. The pain and sadness must have weighed heavily on Frank and Minnie’s relationship. Two years later, they have a son, Bernard, born 10th November 1913, the birth was registered in Willesden.

Despite what was declared on the 1911 census, Frank and Minnie didn’t actually get married until 8th June 1913, (*see Appendix 5 for copy of Marriage Certificate*), in Willesden, North London although they had been together since at least 1905.

On the Marriage certificate, Frank gives his occupation as Warehouseman and his father’s name as Frank Gibbon, not John FitzGibbon. Minnie has her occupation as a Nurse, both living at 36 Cambridge Avenue, Kilburn.

Returning back to the change in name between the two census returns, 1901 and 1911. As earlier noted, Frank was baptised *Francis Daniel FitzGibbon*, a name which he continued to use until at least 1901. The first time we see it change is when his first daughter is born in 1905 and her name is registered as Irene Dorothy Gibbon. The catalyst would appear to be when he met Minnie, (1904–05).

The prefix to a surname of ‘Fitz’ simply means ‘son of’, as found in Scotland with ‘Mac’ or Wales with ‘ap’ or other parts of Ireland with ‘O’. In England a suffix was applied, John–son, William–son etc. This type of surname is termed ‘Patronymic’, deriving from the father’s name.

A degree of confusion arose in the late 17th century when Charles II named one of his illegitimate sons, ‘Fitz–Roy’, which literally translated means ‘son of the King’, (*Roi* is French for King). William IV, when Duke of Clarence, also named ten of his illegitimate children with the actress Dorothea Bland, Fitz–Clarence, (son of Clarence). It is easy to see how a misconception arose over the prefix ‘Fitz’. The fact remains however, that it denotes ‘son of’ and no more than that.

It may be that Minnie carried similar thoughts and teased Frank to the point where he decided to change his name. Most likely will be the attempt at ‘anglicising’ his surname away from the predominant Irish spelling. In doing so Frank may have thought that better job opportunities, housing and social standing would be preferred upon someone with a less Irish sounding

name. This happened a lot in the Northern towns of England where Scottish immigrants would drop the ‘Mac’ from their names, say from MacDonald and adopt a more English sounding name as ‘Donald’ in order to assimilate better and avoid prejudicial treatment.

Contrary to popular belief, it has always been possible to change your name without having to register the change with the government or any other official body. It is still perfectly legal for anyone over the age of 16 to start using a new name at any time, as long as they are not doing so for a fraudulent or illegal reason¹⁹.

None of which explains the change in his middle name from Daniel to Joseph. This may just be a personal preference, a dislike of his given name, Daniel, or a nod to his Catholic upbringing.

The events of the following year would cast a shadow across the whole of Europe for the next four years and also significantly change the course of both Frank’s, Minnie’s and ultimately Bernard’s lives.

5.2 WW1 Service, Alexandria and Salonika

By 1914, Frank and Minnie had moved to Elgin Avenue, Maida Vale, sandwiched between Kensington and Hampstead, an upmarket move from the East London Docks and Canning Town. Frank describes himself as an ‘Agent’ on his attestation forms, we don’t know exactly what he was an ‘agent’ in, although it infers a step up from his previous occupation of dock labourer.

The final few days of June 1914 saw Europe at War, Germany and Austria were facing off against France and Russia in what was to become the bloodiest conflict the World had seen. Britain entered the War on 4th August 1914 alongside France and Russia,

Britain had a standing Army of 250,000 Officers and Soldiers, by September 1914 another 500,000 had volunteered. This was far in excess of what Kitchener had asked Parliament for.

It is not clear what prompted Frank to volunteer, what his motives or thinking were. From the letters he wrote in the 1930’s, (which will be considered later), we know he was a patriot and a royalist who took a keen interest in the history and heritage of his Country. By 1915, the War was deeply embedded in France, the Allies were taking major casualties in Gallipoli and Italy had just entered the War, siding with Germany. The War wasn’t going well for the Allies and this would have been reported as such in the newspapers.

Frank volunteered to serve his Country on 31st August 1915 at Scotland Yard, London, aged 38, although he gives his age as 40 and place of birth as Islington, Middlesex.

From his Attestation form, completed when he enlisted, we learn that Frank is 5’4” tall, married Minnie Louisa on 8th June 1913, they have two children, Vera May, born 9th May 1908

¹⁹ The National Archives, [Changes of name – The National Archives](#), accessed 6 March 2023

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and Bernard, born 10th November 1913, (Stanley is manually added later to his record during his time in service).

He was assigned to 338 Company of the Army Service Corps which supplied and serviced the front line with mechanical transport. Each Division of the Army had a certain amount of motorised transport allocated to it, although not directly under its own command. The Divisional Supply Column Companies were responsible for the supply of goods, equipment and ammunition to the forward units. A Company initially comprised 5 officers and 337 other ranks, looking after 45 3-ton lorries, 16 30-CWT lorries, 7 motor cycles, 2 cars and 4 assorted trucks²⁰. Frank's Company was newly formed in April 1915 and supported the 10th Irish Division.

Frank's service record is included in *Appendix 6.1* and his full war record can be found on *Ancestry*²¹. A transcription of the 'Statement of Services' is reproduced below as the original document can be difficult to read, additional information on movements has been taken from his Casualty and Active Service, (see *Appendix 6.2*):

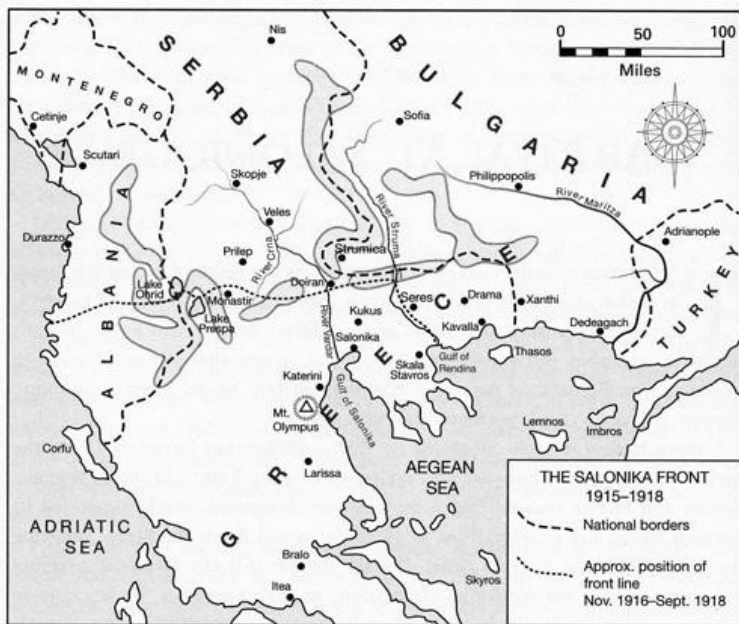
Corps	Regt	Promotions, casualties etc	Army Rank	Dates
ASC	338	Joined 338 Coy MT ASC	Private	8 Sep 15
		Home (UK based)		31 Aug 15 –
		Appointed Acting Sergeant	Acting Sgt	15 Dec 15
		Embarks <i>HMS Nestor</i> at Devonport		20 Dec 15
		Disembarks Alexandria, Egypt		2 Jan 16
		Surplus to Establishment	Private	24 Apr 16
		Appointed Acting Sergeant	Acting Sgt	1 May 16
		T/f to Infantry, Camel Corps – Cairo		4 May 16
		Surplus to Establishment	Private	31 May 16
		T/f to 338 MT Coy, Alexandria		13 Jun 16
		Embarks <i>USS Kentucky</i> – Alexandria		26 Jun 16
		Disembarks, 338 Coy, ASC MT – Salonika		30 Jun 16
		Admitted Hosp – with pyrexia (fever)		10 Jul 16
		Discharged from hospital – Salonika		26 Jul 16
		Promoted to Corporal – Salonika	Corporal	13 Aug 17
		Exp Force, 338 MT Coy, departs Salonika		7 May 19
		Demobilised at Crystal Palace, London	Acting Sgt	20 Jun 19

After a period of training, Frank's Company left for Alexandria, Egypt on 2nd January 1916 before finally being transferred to Salonika, Greece on 30th June 1916 for the remainder of the War.

²⁰ Long Long Trail, [Army Service Corps Mechanical Transport Companies – The Long, Long Trail \(longlongtrail.co.uk\)](http://longlongtrail.co.uk), accessed 7 March 2023

²¹ *Ancestry* – Ancestry.co.uk – UK, *British Army World War I Service Records, 1914–1920*, accessed 7 March 2023

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The objective of the Campaign in and around Salonika, (Greek-Macedonian-Albanian border), was to stop the Bulgarian Army joining with the German Army in their attack on Serbia. The British fought alongside the French, Greek, Russian and Serbian forces to prevent the Bulgarians advancing.

Many operations were launched between October 1915 and September 1918 but the Allied failure to break Bulgarian

resistance resulted in a stalemate along the Salonika Front. It was not until 1918 that a surprise Allied attack managed to break through the Bulgarian lines during the Battle of Doiran. The Salonika campaign was long and dangerous, ending with the surrender of Bulgaria in September 1918²². Living conditions for soldiers on both sides were harsh. Winter and summer brought extremes of climate and disease – especially malaria, which caused more casualties than the actual fighting.

Taken from a page in the Medical records from the British Salonika Forces, the table illustrates the monthly intake and death rate to malaria alone. We know from Frank's service record that he was admitted to hospital in June 1916, shortly after arriving in Salonika for pyrexia, high fever. There are no other such entries on his record so it would seem he escaped contracting malaria.

Salonika is often referred to as 'the most forgotten front'. Whilst it didn't see the widespread carnage witnessed on the Western Front, the terrain that Frank served in was inhospitable, remote and far from home. Even after Germany surrendered on 11th November 1918, it was a further seven months before Frank was back in London getting demobbed.

Month.	Admissions.	Deaths.
September 1916	8,941	112
October	6,872	70
November	2,788	16
December	1,387	12
January 1917	677	3
February	1,113	1
March	2,553	1
April	2,233	2
May	2,759	5
June	3,139	1
July	6,228	27
August	9,242	48
September	16,488	84
October	14,921	41
November	7,200	22
December	4,859	15
January 1918	2,513	3
February	2,787	6
March	5,107	3
April	5,634	3
May	5,921	1
June	7,655	8
July	5,714	9
August	5,675	16
September	3,892	20
October	5,555	113
November	5,670	42
December	1,852	21

²² The Salonika Campaign – [The Salonika Campaign — Never Such Innocence](#), accessed 7 March 2023

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His service record suggests he served with distinction, three times promoted to Acting Sergeant, covering vacancies or leave and finally receiving full promotion to Corporal in August 1917. He would not have been considered for either the temporary or permanent positions if he had not shown willingness to accept additional responsibility and been of good character.

On the 20th June 1919, Acting Sergeant Frank Gibbon of 338 Company, Motorised Transport Division, was officially demobilised and discharged from the Army at Crystal Palace London. After nearly four years away from home, he could now return to his family.

5.3 Demobilisation and return to London

When Frank left for War in August 1915, the family were living in Maida Vale. The address on his demobilisation form showed they were now living at 9 Greville Road, Kilburn, less than half a mile away from where they were previously on Elgin Avenue.

The family size had increased while Frank had been away in Egypt and Greece. Vera and Bernard had gained two additional brothers in Stanley, born on the 2nd January 1917 and George, born on the 25th November 1918.

Thanks to the survival of two letters²³, written by Frank almost forty years apart, we have a clear picture of exactly what happened next.

Frank describes returning home to Greville Road, Kilburn, a large house with 3 or 4 tenants to find two more children, “war babies”. He actually condoned Minnie’s actions, stayed with her but she was determined to leave and live with the other man.

One of the other tenants was a Gus Webb, who had been invalided out of the Army after a dose of gas and was living with his mother. Webb was already married with two children, his family living in Woking.

Frank, writing the second letter, albeit long after the event, takes an incredibly pragmatic view of things. He writes in a very matter of fact manner,

“that here, under the same roof, were a man whose wife was living away and a woman, whose husband was far off overseas. Both normal human beings in their late thirties and both better suited to each other than their legal partners”

Frank even goes on to describe Webb as having a normal and agreeable personality in an ordinary way, then noting he had a black streak which surfaced after too much drink, quoting the Latin phrase *“In vino veritas”*, – in wine, the truth. Webb blackened Frank’s eye and left him with bruises after the simmering affair boiled over. Shortly after, Frank moved out of

²³ Letters to the Child Emigration Society, 14 Sept 1922 and to Bernard, 30 Sept 1961, courtesy of Gillian Gibbon

“Dear Phyllis”

Greville Road and rented an unfurnished room near Chelsea in 1920, moving the following year in January 1921, to Lockwood Road, Ilford.

From the 1921 census, we know that Minnie, Stanley, George, Harold and Gus Webb are living together at Greville Road. Frank and Bernard are together in Ilford. Sadly Vera had now been admitted as a patient at St Mary’s in Carshalton. Frank was finding regular employment difficult to come by although the ex-serviceman’s gratuity was helping him get by. After this stopped he was scraping a living by going round selling eggs.

5.4 Bernard and Australia

Frank continues his egg round for a few more years, describing it as a haven of peace to what had gone on before. At the same time he had a nine year old boy who was not getting the attention he needed. Frank ‘sent’ Bernard away to Ford End, near Chelmsford, Essex, from the summer of 1921 to the summer of 1922, he clearly wasn’t coping with bringing his son up on his own.

Earlier we had Irene baptised at Felsted, Essex, and then being adopted by the Hill family at Great Waltham. All three of these places, Ford End, Felsted and Great Waltham are 3–4 miles away from each other. It is highly probable that Frank must have had a family member, brother or a sister living here as it is a location that he keeps returning to.

Bernard returned to Lockwood Road, Ilford with Frank in September 1922. Matters can’t have improved as when Frank saw an announcement in the papers about the Fairbridge scheme he got in touch and in September 1923 had a meeting with them.

The idea of the Fairbridge scheme was to solve the problem of the number of children who were born into poverty in the UK while populating the Empire with “good, white stock”.

The belief among Britain’s ruling classes at the time was that children from poor or broken families needed to be “rescued”. It was thought taking children away from financially disadvantaged families was the only way to ensure they did not also become destitute themselves. In the 1920s promotional publicity in newspapers declared that children from the lower classes were a “burden and a menace to society that could be converted (in)to valuable assets in Australia”.

The Fairbridge scheme was the brainchild of Kingsley Fairbridge. As early as the 1900s he was advocating for sending children from England’s “orphan and waif class” to the colonies to take up land as white settlers.

“Dear Phyllis”

In 1912 the first Fairbridge Farm School opened in Australia – in Pinjarra, some 50 miles south of Western Australia’s capital Perth – and many more would follow throughout Britain’s colonies. The plan was to turn boys into farmers and girls into farmers’ wives²⁴.

After meeting with the lady from Fairbridge, it was agreed that Bernard would go to Australia at the end of the year, 1923. Frank had completed the application form to the Child Emigration Society, (CES), as the scheme was then known, in September 1922, which tells us that he had initially approached the National Adoption Society who put him in touch with the CES.

On the form, (see *Appendix 7*), he describes Bernard as inquisitive, intelligent and fond of the country life. Frank describes his occupation as a ‘peddler’ and general works, having been discharged from the Army as an NCO and noted he is of ‘good character’. No brothers or sisters are declared for Bernard although we know that Vera was residing in St Mary’s Hospital in Carshalton. Minnie is noted as Bernard’s mother and in what must have been a great show of restraint, Frank describes her character as “wayward”.

Frank wrote to Minnie in October and again in December but got no reply. He was surprised at her silence and Bernard was very anxious to see her but there was no reply forthcoming from her. Bernard departed for Australia in December 1923 which would have been the last time Frank saw him.



Bernard along with other Fairbridge children in December 1923 shortly before departing to Australia for a new life.

Whilst Frank and Bernard would not see each other again, they very much kept in touch. Frank would write to Bernard telling him of what was happening in England, Europe, of his days out

²⁴ The Fairbridge scheme, [What were the child migration scheme and the Fairbridge Farm Schools? | Glasgow Times](#), accessed 7 March 2023

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in London with Peggy, a neighbour’s young girl who he doted on – later giving her away when she got married in place of her father who had passed away.

From a letter written in December 1932²⁵, Frank asks if Bernard had received the *Times* calendar he had recently sent him. He quotes from *Iolanthe* and *Gondoliers*, two of the Savoy operas written by Gilbert and Sullivan, describing how he took some children to London to visit Father Christmas where they received presents at the Selfridges Christmas bazaar, watched the changing of the Guard and visited the London Museum. He talks of the bitter cold, the onset of winter and how he enjoys visiting Epping Forest after a snowfall. He also mentions that business is flat and in his job, he receives no dole money or health insurance, which suggests he is self-employed.

In a lengthy eight page letter, written November 1937²⁶, he talks about the onset of old age, moving from your 20’s to 30’s and 40’s before realising life has passed you by at 60 – quite a downbeat letter which continues to consider the storm clouds gathering over Europe with the rise of fascism and threat of Hitler. He says of Hitler, “*Austrians are Germans just as Yorkshiremen are English*”. He writes at length about the problems around the Sudetenland with its predominant German speaking population, all very insightful and sadly accurate.

In the same letter, Frank outlines how he fills his time by visiting Conway Hall in London, listening to debating societies, walking through Hyde Park, visiting art galleries and museums, sitting in Euston station watching the world go by, attending the Cenotaph services and listening to choirs sing in City Temple church.

A more upbeat letter was written in August 1945²⁷, the end of World War II. Frank muses on the devastation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki that brought the War to an end, how there are queues for absolutely everything and the ‘Americanisation’ of the West End, squeezing out his favourite Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. He mentions that he had a letter published in the *Sunday Times* bemoaning this new phenomenon and quotes WS Gilbert. He also mentions that he may have landed a job as a night-watchman.

5.5 Frank Gibbon to 1945

From the letters that have been kept we have a clear picture of how Frank’s world imploded following his return from serving his Country in Greece and Egypt during WWI. After the shock of finding Minnie had been unfaithful whilst he had been away, he tried to continue the marriage only to finally leave after being beaten and bruised by Minnie’s new beau.

²⁵ Letter from Frank to Bernard, 11th December 1932, courtesy of Gillian Gibbon

²⁶ Letter from Frank to Bernard, 11th November 1937, courtesy of Gillian Gibbon

²⁷ Letter from Frank to Bernard, 20th August 1945, courtesy of Gillian Gibbon

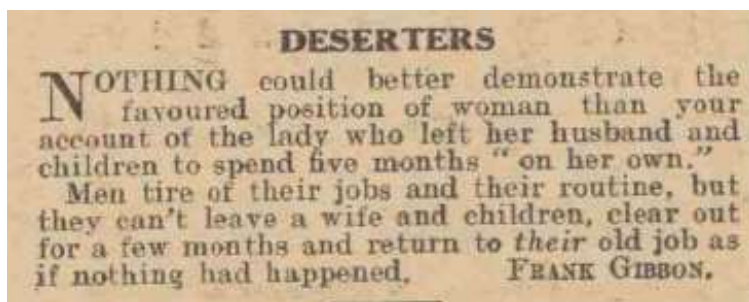
"Dear Phyllis"

Taking young Bernard with him, he struggled to find employment that allowed him to give Bernard the attention he needed, ending up selling eggs door to door. After sending Bernard away for a year to friends or relations in Essex he felt that a more permanent solution was best for the young boy and so enlisted the help of the Child Emigration Society whereupon Bernard was sent to start a new life in Australia.

It is clear that Frank had an active mind and took every opportunity to keep himself abreast of national and international news. He also had an interest in the Arts, Music and Heritage as is noted from his frequent references of visits to the theatre and museums.

Despite having little success at bringing up his own children, he appears to have adopted a neighbour's girl, Peggy, and forged a friendship that was to last up until he died in 1963. Perhaps he saw it as an opportunity to contribute to a child's happiness in a way that he never quite managed with one of his own.

On the job front, he struggled to land anything of any substance or permanence. From selling eggs, to general labouring to haberdasher salesman to night-watchman, none of which would be stimulating or rewarding for someone of Frank's obvious intellectual mind.



We know from the letters that he has survived that he was a prolific letter writer. A search on the British Newspaper Archives also reveals that he was not averse to writing to newspapers and sharing his thoughts on various matters. In 1929²⁸, he

wrote to the *Daily Mirror*, on a subject that was for obvious reasons, close to his heart. The letter was titled "Deserters" and observed that women had a favourable position over men as they could just 'up-sticks' and leave and then return as if nothing had happened whereas men were tied to their job and couldn't do like-wise and hope to return to the same job with impunity.

²⁸ British Newspaper Archives, Daily Mirror, 19th May 1929, [The British Newspaper Archive | findmypast.co.uk](https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/), accessed 8 March 2023

“Dear Phyllis”

Another letter, written in 1938²⁹ to the *Daily News*, echoed his earlier thoughts when writing to Bernard in 1937 around the subject of Czechoslovakia. In it, Frank referenced the indigenous German population of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia that were now part of the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, and the dangers of having separated these people from the natural homeland.

On the 29th September 1939, Britain took a snapshot of the population via a ‘mini-census’ or more correctly known as the 1939 Register. The information was used to produce identity cards and, once rationing was introduced in January 1940, to issue ration books. Information in the Register was also used to administer conscription and the direction of labour, and to monitor and control the movement of the population caused by military mobilisation and mass evacuation.

On the night the Register was taken, we find Frank living in 228 Upton Lane, West Ham with his mother, Fanny and his sister Flora and his brother Charles FitzGibbon. Frank is entered on the Register as ‘Frank FitzGibbon’ with the addition at a later date in green ink of the name ‘Gibbon’³⁰. There must have been some cross-checking carried out when the Register was examined and the anomaly noted. It would be interesting to know how Frank explained his name change to his family, if at all.

228 Upton Lane	20	1	Fitzgibbon Fanny J	F	9 Nov 50	W	Unpaid Domestic Duties
		2	Fitzgibbon Flora L	F	21 FEB 75	S	Head Teacher (Retd)
		3	Fitzgibbon Eileen H	F	2 OCT 15	S	Secretary Linguist
		4	Fitzgibbon Frank	M	4 JUN 77	S	Salesman (Haberdashery)
		5	Fitzgibbon Charles J N	M	13 AUG 79	M	Director of Ptd Co. PAINT VARN

Not far from where Frank was living in West Ham, his estranged wife, Minnie, is living in Willesden with three of her children, Stanley, Phyllis and Harold. Whereas Frank declared himself as married, (M), on the form, Minnie declares herself as widowed³¹, (W), see below. It is not possible to tell whether or not this is the story she told her children although it may have conveniently helped her explain her single status to friends and neighbours.

1	Gibbon Minnie L	F	19 Dec 81	W	Unpaid domestic duties
2	Gibbon Stanley	M	2 Jan 17	S	Civil Servant Clerk Royal Courts of Justice
3	Gibbon Phyllis J	F	2 May 21	S	Counter hand (Biscuit Factory)
4	Gibbon Harold	M	10 Oct 22	S	Finisher, Boot repairers

²⁹ British Newspaper Archives, Daily News 3rd September 1938, [The British Newspaper Archive | findmypast.co.uk](https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/article/1938-09-03/1), accessed 8 March 2023

³⁰ 1939 England and Wales Register, RG101-1028g

³¹ 1939 England and Wales Register, RG101-970j

“Dear Phyllis”

From what we know of Frank's life from being demobilised in 1919 to the end of the Second World War, he flitted between low paid jobs and lived a solitary life, (until moving in with his mother and siblings), filling his time with visiting London and reading.

It can be said that having 'lost' three daughters at an early age, the break up of his marriage with Minnie and having to send his son Bernard away for a better life in Australia, that his personal life was anything but a success.

6. Stanley Gibbon

6.1 Family and Career Pre-War

Stanley was born on the 2nd of January, 1917 at home, 9 Greville Road, Hampstead. Minnie registered³² the birth five weeks later with the Registrar, Frank's occupation given as a Private in the Army Services Corps.

Registration District HAMPSTEAD.								
1917 BIRTHS in the Sub-District of HAMPSTEAD in the County of LONDON.								
No.	When and Where Born.	Name, if any.	Sex.	Name and Surname of Father.	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Rank or Profession of Father.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.
193	Second January 1917 9 Greville Road	Stanley	Boy	Frank Joseph Gibbons ⁽ⁿ⁾	Minnie Louisa Gibbons ⁽ⁿ⁾ formerly Green.	Private A.S.C. (Clerk.)	M. L. Gibbon Mother 9 Greville Road	Light February 1917 A. E. Piffitts Registrar.

On the 1921 census he was still at Greville Road, aged 4, living with his mother, younger brothers George and Harold and Gus Webb. Stanley and George would have been of a young age when Frank and Minnie separated so it is difficult to say how this affected their childhoods. It is equally unclear as to whether Stanley would have remembered his sister Vera taken away and admitted to a children's hospital.

Family life can't have been too bad for Stanley as in the 1939 Register³³ he is recorded as still living at home, 49 High Street, Willesden, age 22, with Minnie, sister Phyllis, 17, and brother Harold, 16.

11	1	Gibbon Minnie L	F	19 Dec 81	W	Unpaid domestic duties
	2	Gibbon Stanley	M	2 Jan 17	S	Girl Servant & Clerk
5-16-48 AKA	3	Gibbon Phyllis	F	2 May 21	S	Counter hand (Biscuit Factory)
	4	Gibbon Harold	M	10 Oct 22	S	Finisher Boot repairers
	5	Hurst Fredck. C.	M	13 Sep 17	M	Hose pipe finisher

³² England and Wales Birth Index, District Hampstead, Volume 1a, Page 596

³³ 1939 England and Wales Register, RG101-970j

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The First World War was a catalyst that caused Willesden to change from a predominantly middle class suburb to a working class part of London as after the war it grew rapidly as many factories opened up and with numerous flats and terraced houses being built to accommodate the workforce. The saturation of this new industry was to prove a curse later during WW2 as it became a target for the German bombers.



Stanley chose not to opt for a position with any of the more local based companies that were on his door-step but took up a position as a Civil Servant, a Clerk at the Royal Courts of Justice in Central London. The commute was not onerous as both Willesden and the Courts were connected by nearby Tube Stations taking half an hour or so each way.

The Courts were a relatively new building, only completed and opened in 1882. While the Old Bailey is traditionally associated with criminal cases, the Royal Courts of Justice is where the ultimate legal power of England and Wales resides. The High Court and Court of Appeal is only second in the UK legislature system to the Supreme Court which is housed in Parliament Square. They had originally been housed in the Palace of Westminster for centuries. The interior has more than 1,000 rooms that include various meeting chambers, administrative offices, and at least 78 court rooms.

None of this would have prepared Stanley for what happened next. He would soon be thrown from a safe desk job as civil servant into the maelstrom of the Second World War.

6.2 World War 2 Service and 51 Squadron

War broke out on 3rd September 1939, Stanley was only 22 years and 9 months old. Under the National Service Act, enacted on the same day, compulsory conscription of all men between the ages of 18 and 41 was brought in, subject to certain exemptions. Men aged 20 to 23 were required to register on 21st October 1939. By the end of 1939 more than 1.5 million men had been conscripted to join the British armed forces. Of those, just over 1.1 million went to the British Army and the rest were split between the Royal Navy and the RAF³⁴.

Conscription was a long and drawn out process and Stanley officially enlisted on 4th April 1940 in the Royal Air Force as Aircraftman Grade 1. For much of the following couple of years, he trained as a Wireless Operator and Air Gunner within Bomber Command before achieving the rank of Pilot Officer in December 1942. The role was to send and receive wireless signals during the flight, assisting the observer with triangulation "fixes" to aid navigation when

³⁴ BBC Archives – [BBC – WW2 People's War – Timeline](#), accessed 9 March 2023

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necessary and if attacked to use the defensive machine gun armament of the bomber to fight off enemy aircraft.

During this period of training in the summer of 1941, Stanley married Winifred Bradbeer from Croydon, also a clerk in the Civil Service³⁵.

In December 1942, Stanley was sent to No.10 Air Gunner School at RAF Walney, just outside Barrow-in-Furness. Each bomber required two or three gunners in its crew, so thousands were needed for the impending strategic offensive and to replace the high losses that were being incurred.

RAF Walney played an important role in the training programme, it operated with 10 Westland Lysanders based on the station, providing towing aircraft for the target drones. Two Boulton Paul Defiants provided airborne practice and there was accommodation for 100 officers, 140 sergeants and 1,200 airmen.

Whilst at Walney, Stanley underwent an intensive course before he was passed on to the operational training units of Bomber Command. The course for a wireless operator / air gunner was due to last eighteen months. The course involved sighting; aircraft recognition, clay-pigeon and 25 yard range shoots, care and maintenance of .303 and .5 Browning machine guns and 20mm cannon; turret hydraulics, manipulation and operation, and the use of cine-camera guns.

Stanley only completed fifteen months before he was transferred to No.1652 Heavy Conversion Unit at Marsden Moor, Yorkshire. The airfield at Marsden Moor was used to convert pilots from the two engine Whitley and Wellington bombers to the four-engined Handley Page Halifax bomber.

The station had just appointed a new Commander a few weeks before Stanley arrived in April 1943, Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC, one of the most decorated pilots of the War. Cheshire later assumed command of 617 Squadron from Guy Gibson who had just led the successful 'Dambusters' raid on Ruhr dams.

The conversion training, aimed at qualifying crews to operate heavy bombers before being posted to operational squadrons took twelve months. Finally, after over two years of intensive training, on 20th May 1943, Stanley was assigned to 51 Squadron, part of Bomber Command, RAF Snaith near Selby, Yorkshire, which flew Handley Page Halifax Bombers.

Ironically, Handley Page built their heavy bombers at a factory in Cricklewood, a mile away from where Stanley was living in Willesden. The Halifaxes that Stanley flew in were of the MkII category, powered by four 1,390bhp Merlin engines.

The Halifax had a wingspan of 104 feet and was 72 feet long. It had a maximum speed of 280 mph and a ceiling of 24,000 feet, though the latter was substantially lower when carrying a full combat load.

³⁵ England and Wales Marriage Index, July 1941, Volume 2a, Page 580

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It could carry its full bomb load of 13,000 pounds to ranges of 1,000 miles. The crew consisted of a pilot, co-pilot/flight engineer, navigator, bomb aimer, radio operator/gunner and two gunners.

During the course of the next 7–8 months, between June 1943 and January 1944, Stanley flew 29 Operations with 51 Squadron. Bomber Command aircrews suffered a high casualty rate and out of a total of 125,000 aircrew, 57,205 were killed, the highest loss rate of any branch of the British Armed Services. A further 8,403 were wounded in action and 9,838 became prisoners of war. Therefore, a total of 75,446 aircrew, (60 percent of Bomber Command's aircrew), were killed, wounded or taken prisoner³⁶.

Yet there is no official campaign medal commemorating the sacrifices of these men. Their contribution to the war effort overshadowed by the controversy over the saturation bombing of German cities in 1944–45.

During the war, this was not a debate that concerned most members of Bomber Command. They were preoccupied only with seeing the next mission through and surviving. At the same time German raids on British Cities had been devastating and had killed many tens of thousands of civilians.

Conditions on the plane were basic. It was noisy, cramped and cold. The temperature could drop to –40°C, cold enough to freeze exposed flesh if it touched metal. Crews were acutely aware of their vulnerability in a plane laden with bombs and fuel. As they approached the target, searchlights, guided by primitive radar, tried to 'cone' the Bomber between two different beams to offer it as a target for the anti-aircraft guns. Flak, (anti-aircraft fire), was intended to explode at the same height as the planes, throwing out shards of hot metal that could easily rip through the thin skins of the bombers.

German fighters were also equipped with radar that could home in on individual British planes. Once they had found a target they would follow it, trying to knock out the rear gunner. If they

³⁶ BBC website, [BBC – History – World Wars: The Air War, and British Bomber Crews, in World War Two](#), accessed 9 March 2023

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succeeded, they could shoot at the plane from behind and below in relative safety. German night-fighter pilots often struck before they were seen, latterly using a cannon that fired vertically, up into the unprotected belly of the bombers.

Dropping the bombs was the most dangerous part of the mission. Planes had to fly level and straight to maximise chances of hitting the target. After the bombs fell, the pilot would have to hold position to take a flash photograph of the site. Without this photograph, the flight might not count towards the 30 required to complete a single tour of duty.

Occasionally, planes might even be hit by bombs released from a plane above. When crews returned home they were exhausted by the intensity of the dangers they had experienced and by many hours flying in uncomfortable conditions. Some of them would have seen other planes exploding in huge fireballs, or being shot down.

Losses on each flight varied enormously during the war. Half of all aircrew were lost before they had even completed ten missions. Historians have debated whether Bomber Command's contribution to the war effort was worthwhile, and whether the loss of German civilian lives can ever be justified. But whether the strategy was militarily and morally acceptable or not, the men who flew the planes and died in their thousands did not devise it and deserve our

greatest respect and admiration for what they went through.

Over the 29 missions that Stanley flew in, the crew of seven remained the same, bar a handful of flights. Flight Officer Ernest Herrald, (Pilot), Sergeant Peter Jones, (Navigator), Sergeant Alfred Kell, (Bomb Aimer) were with Stanley, (Wireless Operator-Front Gunner) on each of his 29 missions. Gunners, Sergeants John O'Dowda and "Dick" Sibley flew on all but a few, (see *Appendix 8*).

On all but the very last couple of missions, Stanley and the team flew Mk.II Halifaxes. On the last missions to Magdeburg and Berlin they flew a Mk.III. The later variant replacing the Merlin engines with more powerful, 1,650bhp, Bristol Hercules engines. The considered opinion amongst Halifax crew and pilots was that this Mk.III with its more powerful engines was the finest of all aircraft in Bomber Command, outperforming even the Lancaster,



Stanley, second from the right-standing, with his crewmates alongside a Halifax Mk.II – summer of 1943. Back row–Jones (Navigator), Herrald (Pilot), Higgs (Engineer), Gibbon (Wireless), Sibley (Gunner) Front row–O'Dowda (Gunner), Kell (Bomb Aimer)

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(although the Lancaster could still carry a heavier payload).

Joining up with 51 Squadron at this point in time must have been difficult for Stanley. Fred Heathfield³⁷ recalls that the turnover rate was at its highest in the early Summer of 1943. He goes on to say...

“...we started the Battle of the Ruhr in March 1943 with 20 aircraft, fourteen weeks later when the Battle ended we had lost 40 aircraft over Germany plus others lost in training so the Squadron was wiped out twice... the early summer of 1943 was not a good time to join the Squadron...”

Every one of Stanley’s missions took place in the dark at night, typically taking off from Snaith between 10–11pm and returning back to base around 4–5am, quite often flying consecutive nights. During the raids on Hamburg, the team flew four out of the six nights between 24 July and 29 July 1943.

Stanley took part in three ‘campaigns’ during 1943–44, these were:

- The Battle of the Ruhr, March to July 1943
- The Battle of Hamburg, July to August 1943
- Berlin, November 1943 to March 1944

A brief overview of each of the campaign’s objectives³⁸ follows, in order to provide context, and then a summary of a couple of the missions that Stanley flew in during the campaign to help understand what he and his crew were experiencing. The extracts are taken from the Operations Record Book³⁹ which would have been completed on return to base.

6.2.1 The Battle of the Ruhr, March to July 1943

Bomber Command, under the direction of Sir Arthur Harris, had been building up its forces during the winter of 1942/43 and by the Spring of 1943 was in a position to sustain major all out attacks on German infrastructure. Berlin may have been the obvious initial target, however the distance involved precluded it as the shortening nights didn’t allow for the amount of cover needed. The industrial heartland that was the Ruhr could be reached in these shorter nights.

The Ruhr and the corridors leading to it, were heavily defended with searchlight and flak and patrolled by the most experienced night-fighter squadrons in the Luftwaffe. In order to spread German resources more thinly, Harris would send a third of his raids during this period to other European targets, Czechoslovakia, Munich, Turin and the Baltic. This meant that the enemy could not concentrate all their resources defending just the Ruhr.

³⁷ Fred Heathfield, 51 Squadron Crew Stories

³⁸ Campaign objectives summarised from the excellent work of Lesley Spicer

³⁹ Operations Records Books and Narrative sourced by Lesley Spicer

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Harris was confident on two fronts. Firstly, the increase in four-engined bombers at his disposal rose as the campaign went on. The heavier payloads per plane can be illustrated by the fact that in February 1943, 1,000 tons of bombs were dropped in a single night for the first time. Three months later, more than 2,000 tonnes would be dropped on Dortmund in a single night by a similar sized attack.

Secondly was the development of ‘Oboe’ beams. Oboe was a blind-bombing device controlled by two ground stations in England which measured the distance of an aircraft from them with radar pulses. RAF Mosquito planes, because of their ability to fly at high altitudes, were the vehicle for this new technology. Mosquito’s were part of the Pathfinder squadrons that led the Heavy Bombers to their targets. Using Oboe, the Mosquitoes were able to drop their flares with greater accuracy, highlighting to those following exactly where to drop the bombs. The success or failure of a raid now largely depended on the Pathfinders' marker placement and the success of further correction marking. The Pathfinders were always first on the scene for an attack and the last to leave, ensuring that each following Bomber had the target identified.

The Ruhr was the main centre of German heavy industry with coke plants, steelworks, armaments factories and ten synthetic oil plants. Bomber Command attacked 26 targets identified during the Offensive. Targets included the Krupp armament works at Essen, (see right), the synthetic oil plant at Gelsenkirchen and the Rheinmetal-Borsig plant in Düsseldorf, which was evacuated during the battle.



6.2.2 Target, Dusseldorf – 11th June 1943

Flight Officer and Pilot Herrald along with Stanley and the other members of Halifax HR834-MH took off from RAF Snaith at 23.52hrs. They were part of a raid comprising 783 aircraft, 326 Lancasters, 202 Halifaxes, 143 Wellingtons, 99 Stirlings and 13 Mosquitoes. One can only imagine the noise these 3,000 plus aero engines made once gathered together.

The Pathfinders did their job and in what was to be the most damaging raid of the war for Dusseldorf, 42 industries connected with the enemy war effort were shut down, 35 suffered a partial reduction, 20 military establishments were hit and 8 ships sunk or were

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damaged. A report attributed to a wireless operator on his first mission, (possibly Stanley Gibbon), commented that...

“... the first sight of flak⁴⁰ was pretty awesome, suddenly you realised that the target they were actually firing at was you. As you approached the target, the searchlights and flak intensified until it looked impossible to find a path through without being hit. The aircraft were at 18,000ft and the crew on oxygen, pitching and bucking with flak bursting all around...”

Stanley and his crew returned to Snaith at 4.16am. In total, 38 aircraft were lost, 14 Lancasters, 12 Halifaxes, 10 Wellingtons and 2 Stirlings, 4.9% of the force, which was within the 4–5% band of “sustainable losses” that the RAF anticipated on such raids.

6.2.3 Target, Bochum – 12th June 1943

Bochum is the fourth largest city in the industrial Ruhr, home to one of the largest steel plants in Europe, oil refineries and synthetic oil manufacturers. For the second night running, Stanley and the others took off from RAF Snaith just before midnight and joined up with 503 other aircraft, predominantly Lancasters and Halifaxes. The raid took place over a cloud covered target but the Oboe system worked well and targets were located and hit.

After releasing their payload, Flight Officer Herrald and his crew plotted a course to return home when a single engine enemy aircraft was sighted only 400 yards away. The Halifax did a diving turn to port and when the enemy closed to 300 yards, rear-gunner Sibley opened fire, firing approximately 500 rounds from each gun. The enemy aircraft was next seen diving towards the ground with smoke and flames issuing from it and then seen to explode in mid-air before falling to the ground in two pieces. The Halifax was undamaged.

The Squadron Gunnery Leader added a post-script to the Operations Record by commenting *“...although the Halifax did not carry out the correct evasive action to combat a stern attack, the mistake was rectified by excellent shooting which caused the destruction of the enemy aircraft, A very good show on the part of Sergeant Sibley...”*

⁴⁰ Flak is like a mid-air grenade. The shell is fired from a land based artillery gun and then explodes at altitudes of upto 40,000 feet. The detonating shell damaging aircraft with the explosion and shrapnel.

6.2.4 The Battle of Hamburg, July – August 1943

Hamburg was Europe's largest port and second largest city in Germany. It housed massive shipyards, U-Boat pens and oil refineries. The city was outside the range of the Oboe radar system however there was an innovation yet to be used in anger that would allow the Allied Bombers to pass through German defences in greater safety and numbers. This was code-named "Window". It entailed millions of 27cm x 2cm coarse black paper with aluminium foil attached to one side being released by the Bombers which rendered the German radar systems virtually useless as they were swamped with 'false echoes'. Navigation was made easier by the distinctive coastline and wide River Elbe leading to Hamburg's dock basin.

The objective of the Battle of Hamburg was to slow down the German War effort, not by a direct attack on the heavily defended Naval base, but on the supply chain and infrastructure around it. Harris directed four major raids on the city in the space of ten days. Stanley and others from 51 Squadron were involved in all four in the last week of June and first few days of August 1943. Taking off from Snaith at around 22.30hrs and returning six hours later must have been exhausting, each time expecting the enemy to be more prepared than they were the previous night.

This was also the first collaboration between the RAF and the American Air Force, (USAAF), in a major operation. The American B-17 Flying Fortresses flew in the days after the RAF had been in at night, targeting U-Boats and Naval Shipyards. Their success was hampered by the smoke from the damage done by the earlier RAF bombs and their targets were largely missed.



Stanley, (second from right, middle row), with his other crew members wearing life jackets and members of the ground crew at RAF Snaith.

6.2.5 Target, Peenemunde – 17th August 1943

Code named Operation Hydra, this was an attack on Germany's V1 and V2 rocket production sites. All of 51 Squadron were involved and all were told that if they failed to knock out this important site, they would be sent back again the following night.

In total, 696 aircraft were deployed by Harris for this raid, one that was carried out on a clear moonlit night. Eight Mosquitoes were sent to attack Berlin to cause a diversion, which allowed the main force a better passage to the target. The Pathfinders located the main targets which were all bombed successfully, taking out the rocket factory, experimentation station and scientists quarters. It was estimated this set the German V2 programme back a number of months thus providing London and her citizens some respite from the daily shelling they had been experiencing.

There was a loss of 40 aircraft, most during the final raid when the German night-fighters arrived in force utilising their new Schrage Musik weapons, twin upward firing cannons fitted to Messerschmitt's 110's. This was one of the crew's longer missions, taking off for Peenemunde just before 9pm and not returning until 4am, over seven hours in the air.

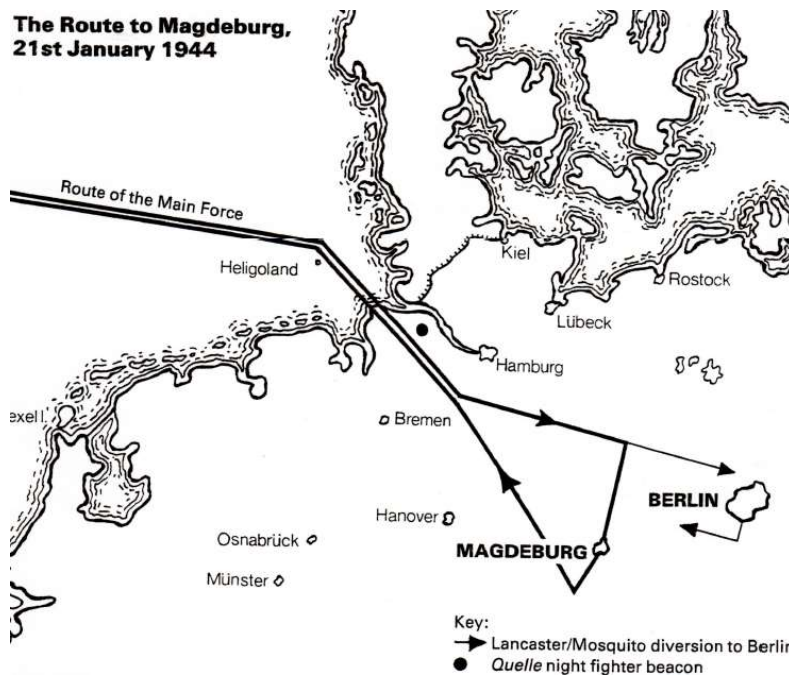
6.2.6 Battle of Berlin November 1943 to March 1944

Bomber Command was now ready for what would prove to be its greatest test of the War. The all-out assault on Berlin began on the night of the 18/19th November and continued for the next 5 months across 32 major raids.

An early setback to Harris was the forced withdrawal of the Stirling aircraft. They were unable to reach similar altitudes of the Lancaster and Halifax and were suffering huge losses so were withdrawn from the attack. This left the Halifax MkII and MkV as the next most vulnerable as their altitude capability wasn't as good as the Lancaster and they too started to suffer heavy losses. At this time, Stanley and his crew were flying the Halifax MkII. Taking these aircraft out of the battle cost Bomber Command 250 aircraft, only mitigated by the steady increase in production of Lancasters and the more reliable Halifax MkIII. German night-fighter squadrons were also becoming more proficient and deadly.

Aircrew morale was put to a severe test, especially amongst Halifax MkIII crew as it was their planes that the increasingly efficient German defences found first. Bomber Command lost more than 7,000 aircrew and 1,047 bombers and a further 1,682 aircraft were damaged or written off. The Battle of Berlin diverted German military resources from the land war and had an economic effect in physical damage, worker fatalities and injuries, relocation and fortification of industrial buildings and other infrastructure. By 1st April 1944, the campaign had failed to force a German capitulation. Berlin was not reduced to ruins and the Germans were nowhere near surrender as Harris had forecast.

6.2.7 Target, Magdeburg – 21st January 1944



Magdeburg, 75 miles South-West of Berlin was the target for the ill-fated raid on the 21st January 1944. The route to the target was designed to make the Germans think that Berlin was their destination. When the main attack force was 40 miles from Berlin, they were to head South for Magdeburg with only a small number of Lancasters and Mosquitoes continuing to Berlin itself to divert enemy fighters from the main force.

Unfortunately, the Germans anticipating an attack on Hamburg had positioned their fighters at Quelle, near Cuxhaven, close to the route of the strike force before they made their deceptive turn South. As a result, 57 Bomber Command aircraft were shot down in the running battle between Hamburg and Magdeburg, among them, 21 Halifaxes and their crews failed to return, the highest number of losses by the Group in one night during the War.

The Operational Report submitted by Flight Officer Herrald on his last operational flight, gave an indication of what the crew experienced...

"...bombs dropped well away from target, fighters engaged early, great amount of flak and searchlight activity, Navigators knee put out, 2nd pilot sick nine times..."

Flight Sergeant Sibley provided this report on the encounter they had with an enemy aircraft...

"...an unidentified single engined enemy aircraft was sighted on the port quarter at 350 yards... immediate combat manoeuvre consisting of a corkscrew to port was taken. At 300 yards both the enemy aircraft and mid-upper gunner opened fire, at 250 yards the enemy broke away... the rear gunner fired 50 rounds only as the other three guns were frozen up. Strikes were observed on the enemy aircraft, no damage to our aircraft"

The citation for the Distinguished Flying Cross, (DFC), awarded to the pilot, Ernest Herrald, confirms that this particular encounter could so easily have ended in tragedy were it not for his skill in evading the fighter...

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“... on the outward flight the Bomber was attacked by a Fighter, owing to a defect, gunners were unable to fire their guns to defend their aircraft. During the next half hour the enemy repeatedly attacked but each time Flight Lieutenant Herrald out-maneuvred his adversary. In the end the Fighter was successfully evaded and Herrald continued to the target and bombed it. His skill and resource throughout this spirited action were worthy of the highest praise...”

Despite the extreme dangers the crew had faced and the bravery in evading the enemy at close range through corkscrew turns, the comment received from Gunnery Leader back at base, once the report had been filed was, *“... more care must be taken to thoroughly dry out guns to prevent freezing at higher altitudes...”*

6.2.8 Target, Berlin – 30th January 1944

This was to be Stanley Gibbon's last operational flight. His regular Flight Officer and Pilot had made his last flight earlier in the month and was replaced by the newly arrived Wing Commander David Wilkerson. They took off from RAF Snaith at 17.22hrs and joined 533 other aircraft taking part in this raid, 440 Lancasters, 82 Halifaxes and 12 Mosquitoes.

The raid took place through complete cloud cover and Bomber Command claimed a successful attack. Industrial premises, Goebbels Propaganda Ministry buildings and the Berlin transport system all suffered. 33 planes were lost, 32 Lancasters and 1 Halifax, over 6% of the force. Stanley and the crew of LW445 MH-Z arrived back at Snaith six hours later at 23.44hrs.

On the 6th June 1944, Stanley Gibbon was awarded the DFC for acts of valour, courage and devotion to duty while flying in active combat against the enemy. Six months later, on the 19th January 1945, he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant.

Sadly, the Gunner, Pilot Officer John O'Dowda lost his life along with the rest of his crew on 15th March 1944, shot down by flak over Stuttgart. He was only 21 and from the Royal Canadian Airforce.

The Bomb Aimer, Alfred Kell was made up to Flight Lieutenant in 1945 and also awarded the DFC. He survived the War and went on to become a pharmaceutical display manager in Hartlepool. In October 1969, aged 60, he was found drowned on the beach at Hartlepool after a bout of heavy drinking. He had recently suffered two coronary attacks, the post-mortem returned the verdict of suicide while under the influence of alcohol.

Post traumatic stress disorder has only really been recognised as a psychological disorder in the past 40 years, or from 1980 when it received its official diagnosis. Until then it had been put down to 'battle fatigue'. The recognition probably came too late to save Alfred Kell and many others.

6.3 RAF International Bomber Command Centre

Winston Churchill famously said in 1940 that *“The fighters are our salvation but the bombers alone provide the means of victory,”*, so it proved. While the Spitfire and Hurricane pilots of the Battle of Britain were justifiably lauded, it was the bomber crews who eventually brought Germany to its knees. Waves of raids on cities such as Hamburg and Dresden crushed the Nazis’ industrial might and sapped their spirit. Yet five years later on VE Day when Churchill praised those who had contributed to victory there was one glaring omission. To his shame, the Prime Minister pointedly made no reference to Bomber Command. Unlike every other part of the Armed Forces, the airmen of Bomber Command never received a Campaign Medal.



Their bravery and courage has now been recognised with the opening of the International Bomber Command Centre⁴¹ overlooking the City of Lincoln. It was opened in 2018 and serves as a fitting memorial to all those who served during the Second World War. The Spire which dominates the City landscape is 102 feet high, the same as the wingspan of an Avro Lancaster. The Centre recognises the sacrifices made by the men and women from across 62 different Countries during the War and the 55,573 lives lost in defending Britain against Nazi Germany. The average age of those who lost their lives was 23.

⁴¹ International Bomber Command Centre, [The IBCC experience – International Bomber Command Centre \(internationalbcc.co.uk\)](https://internationalbcc.co.uk), accessed 11 March 2023

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Flight Lieutenant Stanley Gibbon, DFC

Medals, (picture-bottom left),
Distinguished Flying Cross, (top
right), then the four from left to right
are, The 1939-1945 Star, The Air
Crew Europe Star, The Defence Medal
and The 1939-1945 War Medal.

Letter, (picture-bottom right), from
King George VI on award of the DFC.



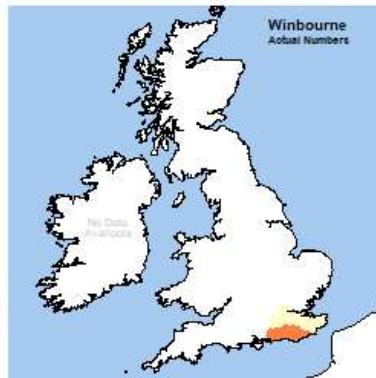
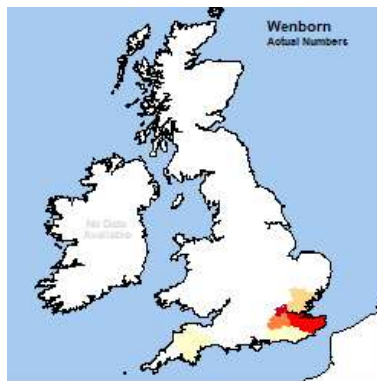
7. Wenborn – Surname Background and Origins

The surname Wenborn was first found in Sussex where they held a family seat as Lords of the Manor, referenced in the year 1296 when Gilbert de Waneborn held lands. The stability of surnames is a recent phenomenon, (since the mid-19th Century). Up until then illiteracy was prevalent and surnames were often spelt how they were heard, phonetically, either by the parish clerk recording a baptism or by a collector of taxes. It was quite common for a parish register to record different spellings of one family name in a short period of time.

For example, if research was undertaken into the 18th century or beyond then variations of the Wenborn name such as: Wenborne, Wenbourn, Wenbourne, Wenbon, Wenburn, Wenburne, Wenbone, and many others would have to be considered.

This name, with variant spellings, could possibly derive from residence by the Wimborne river in Dorset. The name is from the Olde English pre-7th century "Winn" meaning "meadow", plus

"burna", a spring or stream, hence, "Meadow Stream". On this river are Wimborne Minster, Wimborne St. Giles and Monkton up Wimborne, all of which were recorded as Winborne in the Domesday Book of 1086 for Dorset⁴².



Researching the distribution of the four most popular variations of Wenborn using the British Surname Atlas⁴³, (the others are: Wenbourne, Winborn and Winbourne), the over-riding concentration of the name occurs in the South East of

England, notably Kent and Middlesex.

The absolute numbers are low, making the Wenborn surname quite rare. In 1881, which is when the Surname Atlas takes its information to map distributions, there are only 88 occurrences of folk using the name Wenborn in Britain, Middlesex 34, Kent 29, Surrey 15 and 10 elsewhere.

⁴² Surname Database, [Surname Database: Winborn Last Name Origin \(surnamedb.com\)](https://surnamedb.com/), accessed 13 March 2023

⁴³ The British 19th Century Surname Atlas, v1.20, Archer Software

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The Banwell ratio helps identify where the concentration of the name actually occurs, pointing towards the origin of the surname itself. The Banwell ratio illustrates how much the surname ‘hits above its weight’ in any given area. For example, take the most common name in Britain, Smith. This name would have a Banwell ratio of 1:1 as its distribution across Britain is very uniform as there would be a Smith in every parish or settlement.

The equivalent Banwell ratio for Wenborn in Kent and Middlesex is 10:1 and 4:1 respectively. This simply means there were 10 times more Wenborns living in Kent in 1881 than you would have expected to come across for the size of the County.

The ‘hotspots’ in Kent were West Ashford and Gravesend, with Banwell ratios of 149:1 and 122:1 suggesting that this may be where this variation of the surname originated from. The earliest Wenborn that has been researched in our Tree is Robert Wenborn, the father of Thomas Wenborn who was born in Chislehurst, Kent, in 1705. Robert, who married Francis Camp in 1704 would therefore have been born circa 1680. Chislehurst is 15 miles from Gravesend and 45 miles from West Ashford.

8. Chislehurst, Kent, 18th century origins

Situated less than ten miles from London, Chislehurst was first mentioned in a charter of 973. The name meaning the wood where the ground is gravelly, (‘chisle’-gravel, ‘hurst’-wood), it was settled comparatively late, the soil making it unsuited to cultivation.

From medieval times it was a royal manor, which was held for many years by the Walsingham family, (Francis Walsingham was principal advisor and ‘spymaster’ to Elizabeth I). The village soon became a popular location with Londoners looking for property in the country, it was high and well drained but little in demand for agriculture.



One of the earliest maps⁴⁴, (left), from 1810 showing Chislehurst, gives an indication that the settlement was no more than a small village on the outskirts of London.

The earliest census information available for Chislehurst is from 1841 which gives the population as 1,792. The poor farming land in relation to neighbouring villages resulting in the sparse population numbers.

Robert Wenborn(e), (1742–1804), was a Carpenter, following his father and grandfather who both carried

⁴⁴ Old Maps, [Mets Viewer \(cuni.cz\)](https://www.metsviewer.cuni.cz), London and its Environs, accessed 14 March 2023

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on the same trade in Chislehurst. A trade that would be continued in London by at least a further three generations of Wenborns.

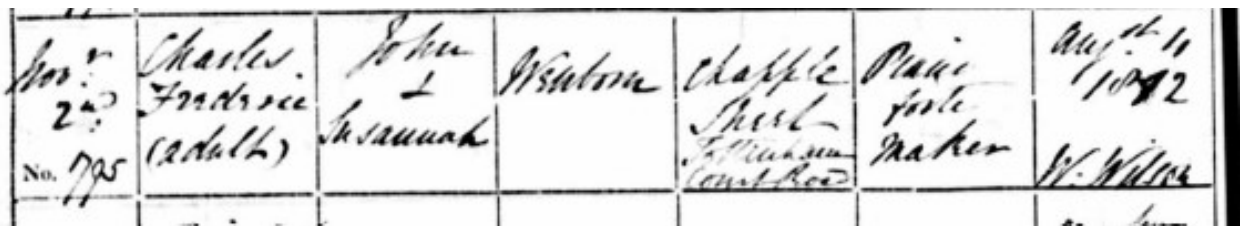
In 1766, age 24, Robert marries Amy Moore at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, London. Apart from their first born, Thomas, all their other nine children were baptised at St Giles Church in Camberwell, less than ten miles from his parents and Chislehurst.

Their first born, Thomas, dies a teenager, aged 15 in 1782. Their next eldest son, John, marries Susannah Moore in 1794. Their other surviving sons forged careers either as a Scale-maker in Clerkenwell or a Cordwainer, (shoe-maker), in Deptford.

9. John Wenborn, 1768–1835

John and Susannah had five sons, Luke, Josiah, George, John and Charles. All their children were baptised outside the State Church in a Methodist Chapel, Whitefields Tabernacle, in Camden. From the baptismal entries of John and Susannah's sons as well as their marriage register entries, we learn more of John's occupation.

When his son John was baptised in 1816, John senior describes himself as a Carpenter, a trade passed down from previous generations of Wenborns. Twenty years later when Charles Frederick is baptised, (as an adult), his father's occupation is described as a Piano-forte maker, (see below). Two years later in 1838 when Charles gets married, he again describes his now deceased father as a Piano-forte maker. Interestingly, when Josiah re-marries in 1861, some 26 years after John's death, he describes his father's occupation as Cabinet-maker.



A handwritten baptismal record from a church register. The entry is for Charles Frederick Wenborn, baptised on August 14, 1842. The record is written in cursive and includes the names of the parents, John and Susannah Wenborn, and the occupation of the father, Piano-forte Maker. The record is signed by W. Wilkes.

No. 795	Charles Frederick	John & Susannah	Wenborn	Charles Frederick	Piano-forte Maker	Aug. 14 1842
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There is a consistency in all these given occupations, Carpenter–Cabinet maker–Pianoforte maker, as between 1816 and 1835 when he dies, John develops his carpentry skills to move into more added-value trades.

As John and Susannah were already living in Camden, they were ideally placed to take advantage of the boom in the pianoforte production that was happening around them. London had over two hundred piano making firms. Manufacturing in North London developed early and the piano industry was well established along the Regent's Canal, in Stoke Newington, Islington and especially in Camden Town.

"Dear Phyllis"

Camden Town enjoyed ready access for transport by canal and rail, proximity to the skilled furniture makers in the Tottenham Court Road area and lay within easy reach of West End retailers and a wealthy clientele. Camden Town was also near the rail-heads of King's Cross, Euston and St Pancras, so transport conditions by water and rail were ideal. These locational advantages helped it to become the centre of the piano industry at a time when every self-respecting household had a piano⁴⁵.



It is not clear whether John ran his own assembly shop with parts bought-in, ready made or whether he worked for one of the larger manufacturers such as Collard and Collard who were the oldest of the well-known piano manufacturing firms of the St Pancras area, having patented a form of upright 'square' piano in 1811⁴⁶.

John would appear to be a well organised individual and a man of means. He wrote his Will⁴⁷ a full eight years before he died, written 20th November 1828, aged 60. In this Will, (see *Appendix 9*), he describes himself as a Cabinet Maker so his Pianoforte making career was to come later in life.

John bequeaths everything to his dear wife Susannah, so one assumes that his sons have been taken care of elsewhere outside of the Will. He mentions money that he has in the Bank of England and Finsbury Savings Bank and monies due to him from a Benefit Society. He also talks of money being raised from the sale of his tools used in his business.



By the time of John's death in 1835, his sons are young men and have established their own way, Luke as a Glass Cutter, Josiah as a Cabinet Maker, George is a Clerk to the Attorney and Charles, a Tailor, had emigrated to America.

John was buried on 27th December 1835 at Whitefields Tabernacle, Camden, (see above), the same Church where his children were all baptised. John and Susannah were devout Methodists all their adult life.

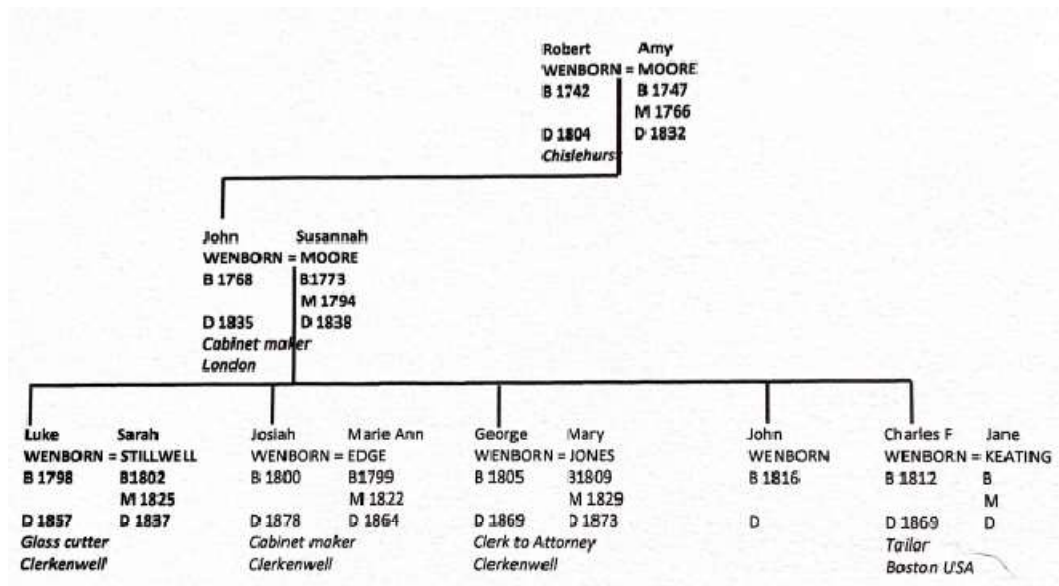
⁴⁵ Camden Local History, [viewport" content="width=800"> Piano Manufacture in Camden Town \(locallocalhistory.co.uk\)](http://locallocalhistory.co.uk), accessed 15 March 2023

⁴⁶ Camden Heritage Trust, [Piano manufacture – Camden Railway Heritage Trust \(thinknewr.com\)](http://thinknewr.com), accessed 15 March 2023

⁴⁷ The National Archives, PROB11/1858/292

“Dear Phyllis”

9.1 The Brothers Wenborn, (sons of John and Susannah)



Although Luke was the oldest son, his story will be told last as it is his line that leads to James Luke Wenborn and ultimately Phyllis. Two of Luke's brothers establish themselves in North London, one emigrates to America and there is no immediate trace of the other brother, John.

9.1.1 Josiah Wenborn, 1800–1878

Josiah's parents, John and Susannah, were practising Methodists, possibly aligned to the branch known as the Countess of Huntingdon Connexion, an Evangelical offshoot of the mainstream Methodism preached by John Wesley. Josiah was baptised in 1800 as a Methodist and no doubt gained his name from his parent's reading of the Old Testament. There is no evidence that Josiah practised his faith into adulthood as none of his children were baptised outside of the State Church of England.

Josiah was trained by his father as a Carpenter. Up until 1833 on his children's baptism records, he describes himself as a Carpenter. On his later children's entries he chooses to call himself a Cabinet Maker. The 1841 census sees him as an Upholsterer then in the 1851 census he really can't decide so he records his profession as "Cabinet Maker, Undertaker, Upholsterer". He reverts to Cabinet Maker in subsequent census returns and on his Probate entry. The role of Undertaker often fell to the local Carpenter as it would be he who made the coffin for the deceased.

As well as having his sons work with him in the family business, Josiah was also employing others. One employee falling foul of the law, as there is a report in an Old Bailey hearing where in 1847 an employee, Gaetano Rita, stole brass weights worth 8 shillings from Josiah. He was imprisoned for a month.

“Dear Phyllis”

Josiah must have had some standing in the community as he was a Trustee of the London Mutual Benefit Building Society. People were joining Mutual Benefit (Friendly) Societies in large numbers and over time they began to represent specific trades and professions, by the late 1800's there were around 27,000 registered mutual societies⁴⁸.

Friendly societies and mutual insurers were often the only way a working person received help in times of ill health, or old age, in days when having no income often meant a life of begging or living in the poorhouse.

A report in the Morning Post⁴⁹ dated 3rd March 1859, (right), told of how Josiah had been accused of handing out Society funds to a member who was no longer entitled to the money as his subs were a year overdue. The member in question was a brother of Josiah's who had fallen on hard times. It was probably his eldest brother, Luke, who we shall later learn had been admitted to the Workhouse two years earlier.

The Judge was fairly dismissive of the case and basically told the Society not to waste court time and sort it out amongst themselves.

CHARGE AGAINST TRUSTEES IN A BENEFIT SOCIETY.—At Guildhall Police-court, yesterday, Mr. Thomas Spilling, Mr. James Connor Cornelius, and Mr. Josiah Wenborn, appeared before Alderman Fiddis in answer to summonses taken out by Mr. J. H. Borley and Mr. Thomas Whitmore, trustees of the London Mutual Benefit Building Association, complaining that the defendants, being also trustees of the same society, did on the 24th of February last unlawfully apply £15 of the society's money to a purpose contrary to the rules. Mr. Wontner, for the complaining trustees, said this was a case under the Friendly Societies' Act, and although a building society it was enrolled, and its rules had been approved by Mr. Tidd Pratt. By the fourth rule it was provided that, if any member fell into arrear in his payments for 52 weeks, his claim upon the society would be forfeited, and it appeared that a brother of one of the trustees fell into arrears 64 weeks, and was, in accordance with the rules, excluded with forfeiture of his share; but he had recently, through his brother, made several attempts to get a sum of money in lieu of his shares, and he at length succeeded in getting £15, by a majority of one at a special meeting called for that purpose, which took the members by surprise. The

Josiah's first wife, Mary Ann Edge, had died and Josiah remarried in 1861 to Sarah Wood age 60. Josiah dies in December 1878, his Probate gives place of death as 105 Asylum Road, Peckham which was Peckham House, the largest Lunatic Asylum in South London. However, despite the name, it also offered sanctuary to “old-decayed folk”, acting as an old person's home⁵⁰. There are no records of Josiah admitted as a patient so hopefully he went there under the latter category.

9.1.1.1 Josiah Wenborn's children

Josiah's eldest son, Charles, followed him into the family business as a Cabinet Maker, his second son, William died at a young age, Henry was a Law-Writer, (solicitors clerk), and lived with his parents all his life and remained unmarried.

⁴⁸ Assoc of Financial Mutuals, [Mutuals – a history – Association of Financial Mutuals](#), accessed 15 March 2023

⁴⁹ British Newspaper Archive, [The British Newspaper Archive | findmypast.co.uk](#), accessed 15 March 2023

⁵⁰ Secret Peckham, [Secret Peckham: The Asylum | My Friend's House \(myfriendshouse.co.uk\)](#), accessed 15 March 2023

"Dear Phyllis"

The fourth son, George, started in the family business then became an engineer – tool maker. He married twice, however his second wife left him, circa 1872, taking their daughter Amy. For the next 30 years, George lived on his own as a hermit.

The newspaper⁵¹ reports into his death, which were reported as far as Lancashire, stated that he lived on income from his properties and in the three years before his death, had not left the house, nor had he worn any clothes in his final three months. George wouldn't allow his house to be cleaned and insisted on sleeping curled up in front of the fire. This is what did for him in the end as his blanket caught alight and he died of his burns, refusing medical help when his housekeeper attempted to save him.

SLEPT BEFORE THE FIRE.
TRAGIC DEATH OF A RECLUSE.

The curious death of a recluse was investigated at Clerkenwell on Saturday, when an inquest was held on the body of George F. Wenborn, 72, an engineer, of Northampton-road.

Deceased was a married man, but his wife and daughter left him 35 years ago, since when he had lived alone, on an income arising from house property and other investments.

His landlady stated that he would not allow his rooms to be properly cleaned, would not go to bed, and insisted on sleeping on the floor before the fire. He had not put his clothes on for the last three months, and had not been out of the house for the last three years.

On Wednesday, while lying before the fire, his night clothes were ignited, and one of his legs was burnt. He would not allow a doctor to be called, and next day he died.

The medical evidence showed that the shock caused by the burns killed him, and a verdict in accordance was returned.

Josiah's fifth son, **Frederick Moore Wenborn**, (1835–1918), lived a full life. He married Helen Perry in Stepney in 1865 and they had one son, also Frederick, born in 1866. However it was Frederick Moore's public life that defined him.

As noted, Frederick married in 1865 and on the marriage entry in the parish register he describes himself as a Professor of Music – at the tender age of 29. He was the musical Director at the City Musical and Elocutionary Society, declaring his pedigree as coming from the Royal Polytechnic Institution, City of London College.

The Royal Polytechnic Institution was built by William Mountford Nurse in 1837 and opened to provide "an institution where the Public, at little expense, may acquire practical knowledge of the various arts and branches of science". It is now the University of Westminster.

From 1868 onwards Frederick was advertising a twice-weekly Singing and Choral Practise evening. He was producing, directing, conducting and appearing in regular shows that were performed at the Albion Hall, London Wall. The shows were varied, 'sacred and secular' music, comic dramas, comedic farces and variety shows. In 1873 he was involved in a Court case with an entertainer who was billed at the top of the show but failed to turn up, attending a local pantomime instead.

The City Musical and Elocutionary
SOCIETY, ALBION HALL, LONDON WALL.
DIRECTOR.....Mr. F. M. WENBORN,
From the Royal Polytechnic Institution, City of London College, &c.
FOURTH SEASON.
REDUCED SUBSCRIPTION EVERY FRIDAY EVENING.
ELEMENTARY SINGING, from a quarter to 7 till 8 o'clock. The Course of Instruction will commence on FRIDAY, 14th APRIL, with an Introductory Lecture by Mr. F. M. WENBORN. Admission Free.
INTERMEDIATE CLASS, from 8 till 9 o'clock, for the Practice of easy Anthems, Part Songs, &c.
CHORAL PRACTICE from 9 till 10.15, of Oratorios, Part Songs, Glees, &c.
Once in each Quarter Members will have the opportunity of giving Solos, Duets, Quartettes, &c. Accompanist, Miss Marienne Potter.
The Society, possessing a Library of 25,000 copies of Oratorios, Cantatas, Odes, Choruses, Glees, &c., is enabled to provide a large variety of Music for the free use of Members.
Terms—Gentlemen, 2s. ; Ladies, 1s. 6d. per quarter.
Dramatic Rehearsals, of pieces to be performed at the public entertainments, every Monday evening, from 8 till 10 o'clock. Public Entertainments will be frequently given.

⁵¹ British Newspaper Archives, Daily News 12 December 1904, [The British Newspaper Archive | findmypast.co.uk](https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/article/12-DEC-1904/1), accessed 17 March 2023

“Dear Phyllis”

In the same year, 1873, the 10th Tower Hamlet Rifle Volunteers put on a variety show that when reported on, sounded like they were playing to quite a hard audience. The report starts by saying that...

“... the cast of more than ordinary class performed in front of an audience, large and respectable who were not as appreciative as one may have expected given the array of talent and length of the programme...”

The review continues by commenting on an unfortunate female soloist, Miss Isabella Powell,

“... Miss Powell made a poor attempt to sing ‘The Faithful Echo’ and retired amidst anything but applause...”

At a slightly more successful fund-raising event in Barham, Kent, in 1886, Frederick and ‘his five sisters’, (who were pupils from a local school), played a variety of instruments, harmonium, piano, violoncello, flute and violins, performing a number of pieces by Mendelssohn. The report⁵² goes on to record that Mr Wenborn later played

programme. A novel feature was the playing of some airs on the Scotch bagpipes by Mr. F. Wenborn, which caused much amusement. The concert realized the useful sum of over £13.

some ‘airs’ on the Scotch bagpipe which caused much amusement. The concert, in aid of the local Church Restoration fund raised the princely sum of £13, (circa £1,500⁵³ in today’s money, 2023).

Frederick continued to direct and conduct performances, including solo evenings with him entertaining the audience at the pianoforte up until the late 1880’s. By this time he had taken an active interest in local politics. He was a member of the Metropolitan Board of Works, Chairman and Trustee of various charities and Chairman of the Shoreditch Vestry. He was elected a member of East Highbury in Council elections regularly during the 1890’s and 1900’s.

He was an active member, regularly promoting and helping at the soup kitchens for the poor of Shoreditch, managing and chairing appeals for those in difficulty or who had lost a breadwinner, chairman of a trust set up to award scholarships to local boys and also chairman of the Dusting and Scavenging committee, what we would now recognise as refuse collection. He also served on the Shoreditch licensing magistrates bench. In a letter thanking the voters who had just elected him in 1903, he said,

“... if you don’t find me among the talkers, look amongst the workers, there you will find me...”

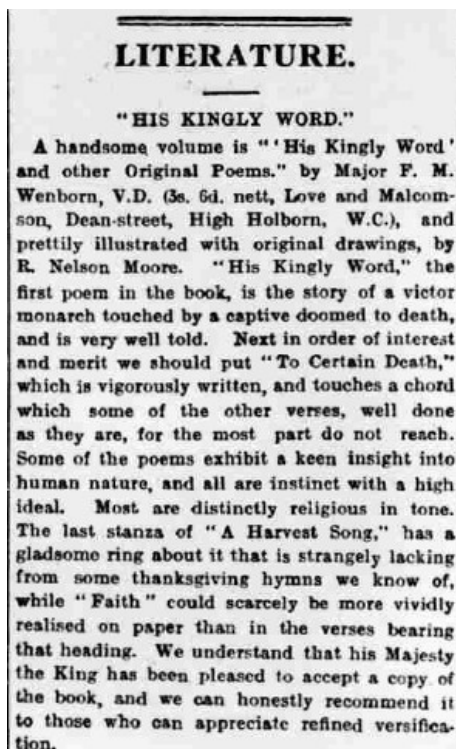
⁵² British Newspaper Archives, Kentish Gazette, 4 May 1886, accessed 29 April 2023

⁵³ Bank of England website, [Inflation calculator](#) | [Bank of England](#), accessed 29 April 2023

“Dear Phyllis”

Frederick had been a member of the 10th Tower Hamlets Volunteer Rifle Division since 1870. He was promoted from Lieutenant to Captain in 1879 and by 1892 he was a Major and the Queen had bestowed the Volunteers Officers Defence Medal on him. A year later he had resigned his commission but retained the honorary rank of Major.

He was also a founding member of his local Freemason lodge in Islington, rising to become the Worshipful Master of the lodge. In 1910 as a Past Master of the lodge, he was giving a speech to the Finsbury lodge on masonic history and introduced as “*the energetic municipal worker of the borough of Shoreditch, who had filled the Vestry chair with considerable ability...*”.



In his later years at the age of 70 he was still getting involved in local groups as President of the Finsbury Park Chess Club, (1905–16). Somehow he also found time to publish a book, “*His Kingly Word and other Original Poems*”. Published by Love and Malcomson in 1906, selling for 3s 6d, it was reviewed across the Country, (left, a review from the *Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette*).

The review says most poems are distinctly religious in tone, exhibiting a keen insight into human nature. It goes on to say that his Majesty the King had been pleased to accept a copy of the book.

The *Catholic Times* favourably reviewed the book although they did quibble over the fact that ‘zeal’ doesn’t really rhyme with ‘ideal’.

Aside from his court action over the non-appearance of a booked performer, Frederick twice had to appear in court, both times as the victim. Firstly in 1889 when a servant who was suspected of stealing his watch was entrapped when Frederick marked some coins which were later found in the said servant’s purse. Secondly in 1910, aged 75, on the way to a school managers meeting in Drayton Park, he was mugged and the chain to his watch was grabbed. The assailant was caught as Frederick shouted for help.

Frederick Moore Wenborn died on the 4th August 1918, aged 81 and was buried in Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington, a non-denominational garden cemetery and public arboretum, one of London’s seven magnificent cemeteries. He left £4,575 in his Will, the equivalent⁵⁴ of over £200,000 today, (2023).



⁵⁴ Bank of England website, [Inflation calculator](#) | [Bank of England](#), accessed 17 March 2023

9.1.2 George Wenborn, 1805–1869

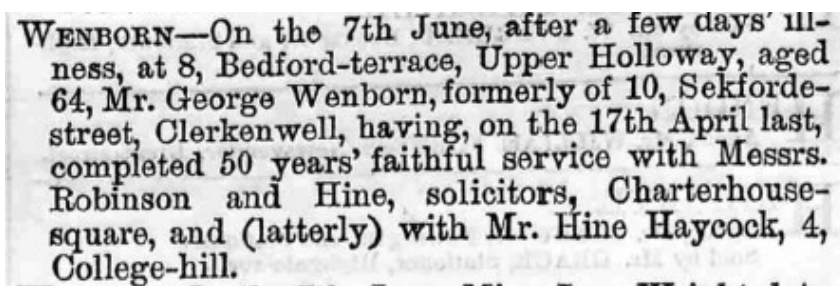
George was born in June 1805 and baptised a Methodist by his parents, John and Susannah. Like Josiah, he didn't carry on his parent's faith after he left home. At the age of 24, he married Mary Jane Jones in St Sepulchre on 21st November 1829, she was four years his junior.

George and Mary Jane had seven sons, John, James, Charles, Edward, Arthur, Josiah and Samuel. Between George and his brother Josiah, they had brought twelve sons into the world, or more specifically, North London, which explains why the Wenborn name had taken hold there by the end of the 19th century.

By all accounts, George led a quiet, respectable life. He entered work at the age of 14 as a clerk in a Solicitors' practise in Charterhouse Square, called Robinson and Hine. By the time he was 40, in 1845, he had worked himself up to the position of Managing Clerk to Attorneys in Law. He represented the firm at various hearings and meetings around the country wherever they had an interest, eg: creditors meeting, liquidation meetings.

He described himself as a Gentleman on his children's baptism and marriage entries in the parish registers. George also put himself forward as a candidate in 1862 for the Clerkenwell Parish elections – he scraped in in seventh place for a position on the St James parish council, Clerkenwell.

After spending all his working life at Robinson and Hine, (latterly Hine Solicitors, who are still in practise today), amassing 50 years faithful service,⁵⁵ he died after a short illness aged 64. Aside from his youngest son, Samuel, who died at the age of two, (1848–1850), all his children made it to adulthood and were soon making their own way in life.



WENBORN—On the 7th June, after a few days' illness, at 8, Bedford-terrace, Upper Holloway, aged 64, Mr. George Wenborn, formerly of 10, Sekford-street, Clerkenwell, having, on the 17th April last, completed 50 years' faithful service with Messrs. Robinson and Hine, solicitors, Charterhouse-square, and (latterly) with Mr. Hine Haycock, 4, College-hill.

⁵⁵ British Newspaper Archive, 19 June 1869, The North Londoner, [The British Newspaper Archive](https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/) | findmypast.co.uk, accessed 18 March 2023

9.1.2.1 George and Mary Jane Wenborn's sons

Their eldest son, John George, born in 1833, Clerkenwell, was apprenticed to Thomas Clark, a Chemist and Oilman. John didn't continue as a Chemist although he did marry the Chemist's daughter, Sarah, in 1858. A few years later, John and Sarah had two children, (naming them John and Sarah), and John senior is trading as a Grocer. He is operating out of Pleasant Row in Upper Holloway, London. Starting off trading Candles and Lamps and Italian Oils before adding Teas and Sugars, then a year later, Fruits and Spices. By 1864, John has an impressive offering, cleverly using the letters in WENBORNS and TEA in his advertisement⁵⁶ to emphasise what he had for sale.

By 1871, aged only 38, John describes himself in the census as 'an Annuitant', usually applied to someone receiving a pension but he would be too young to retire? He dies in 1875 leaving a wife and young family, so perhaps he had been in ill health and had sold his business and had retired from working life.

James Moore Wenborn, born in 1836, remains unmarried all his life, lodging with various families in North London and continuing a trade as a dealer in second-hand books. He dies aged 66 in 1902.

The remaining four brothers, Charles, Edward, Arthur and Josiah, all decide to emigrate to Australia in October 1861 aboard *the Norfolk*. Before they left England, the four were working in a variety of occupations, a Dressing-Case maker, a Watchmaker, a Warehouseman and a Jeweller.

Edward Alfred, the Watchmaker, dies soon after arriving in Australia of colonial fever in 1863, aged 23 and was buried in Melbourne. The other three go on to marry and have families.

WENBORN'S GROCERY & ITALIAN
WAREHOUSES,
2 and 3, PLEASANT ROW, UPPER HOLLOWAY.

EVERY Description of HUNTLEY and PALMER'S BISCUITS.

NIGHT LIGHTS.—Price's, Owen and Merton's, and all the best makers.

BRUSHES and BROOMS, MATS, LAMPS, GLASSES, AND COTTONS.

ORANGE, GINGER, RAISIN, and all kinds of British Wines.

ROBINSON'S GROATS and BARLEY,
Bird Seeds, etc., etc.

NIXEY'S DIAMOND or CRANE'S
Black Leads, block or powder.

SOAPS.—Household, and Yardley and Statham's Fancy Soap.

3s. 6d. STANDARD TEA.
Those who want a strong cup will find this article all they can wish.

TEAS from 2s. 8d. per pound up to 6s. including all the choicest kinds of Souchongs, Pekoes, Gunpowders, Assams, etc.

EPPS'S, DUNN and HEWETT'S, and TAYLOR'S COCOAS.

ALL Articles Sold at this Establishment are warranted of the best quality, at the lowest possible remunerative prices. Families waited upon for orders daily.
J. G. WENBORN,
2 and 3, PLEASANT ROW, UPPER HOLLOWAY.

⁵⁶ British Newspaper Archive, North London News, 15 October 1864, [The British Newspaper Archive | findmypast.co.uk](https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/article/15-OCT-1864/2-3-PLEASANT-ROW-UPPER-HOLLOWAY), accessed 18 March 2023

“Dear Phyllis”

Charles Francis Wenborn, right, who was a Dressing-Case maker before leaving England, turns his hand to Book-binding and Stationery. He marries Mary Wilson in 1865 and they go on to have ten children.

In 1897, aged 59, Charles and Mary emigrate again to neighbouring New Zealand and Dunedin in the South Island. Unfortunately he passed away on 11th September 1899, only two years after moving to his new home.



Arthur Walter Jones Wenborn, who was a warehouseman before emigrating also turns his hand to Books and Stationery. His brother Charles worked for the famous W.Detmold bookbinding firm in Melbourne, so it is likely that this is where Arthur was employed as well.

William Detmold was a noted German-born Australian bookbinder, printer and stationer. He moved to Australia in 1852 and became well known for his quality binding, with customers including the University of Melbourne and the Melbourne Public Library. Detmold won awards for binding at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1878 and the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1880.

Arthur was a regular attendee at the Baptist church in Albert Street, Melbourne and was their resident organist. He also gave concert performances on the pianoforte. He married Susan Gullock, who had emigrated from Bristol, in 1869, and they went on to have nine children. Arthur died in 1891, aged 48, leaving his wife with a young family to bring up. His obituary appeared in the *Bendigo Advertiser* on 14th October 1891...

“... Yesterday morning it was reported in the city that Mr. Walter A. J. Wenborn, who some years ago carried on business as a bookseller and stationer in Pall Mall, had died at his residence in Melbourne. For years past the deceased gentleman had been suffering from a severe attack of asthma and rheumatism, so that his demise was not altogether unexpected. ... he leaves a widow and young family to mourn their irreparable loss. The deceased gentleman was an enthusiast in music, and for years filled the position of organist at St. Paul's Church, and for the Golden Corinthian lodge, of which organisation he was a highly esteemed member. He was also connected with the Royal Golden Chapter of Bendigo. His brother, Mr. C. F. Wenborn, is well-known in connection with the firm of W. Detmold, of Melbourne. The funeral is arranged for this afternoon, the place of internment being the Melbourne General Cemetery...”

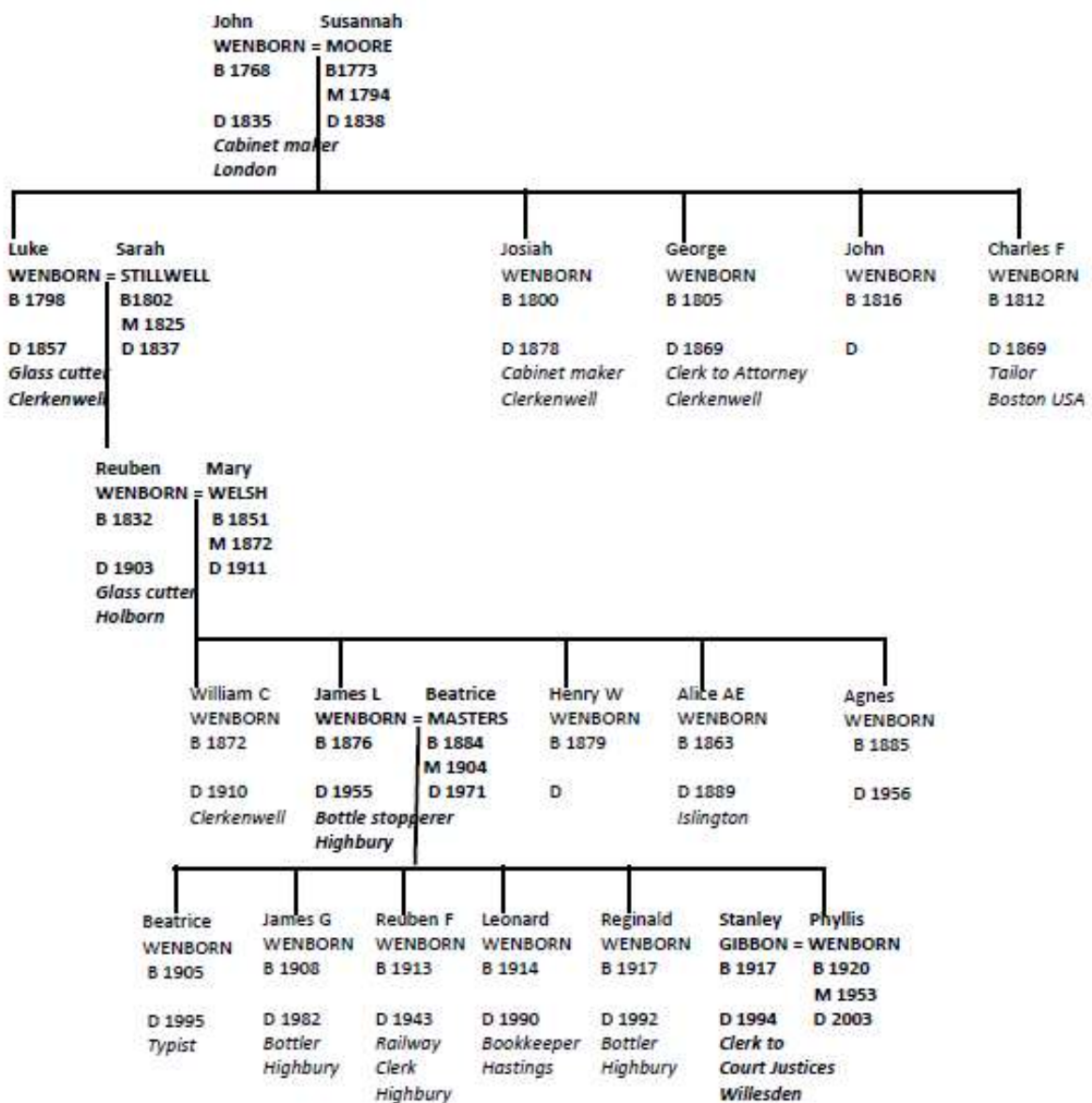
The fourth son who emigrated, Josiah, a Jeweller before he left England, married in 1878 in Sydney and had three children before he passed away in 1883 and was buried in Sydney. He doesn't appear to have kept in touch with his other brothers who emigrated with him.

“Dear Phyllis”

9.1.3 Charles Frederick Wenborn, 1812–1869

Charles married Jane Keating in Camberwell in 1838 and they both emigrated to America shortly after. They settled in Boston, Massachusetts, where Charles became a Naturalised American in 1864. He left England as a Tailor and continued his profession when he arrived in America. They had two daughters, Emma and Susan, both born in Boston. Charles died in 1869, aged 57 and was buried in his adopted homeland.

Having looked at John and Susannah’s three youngest sons, (with the exception of John, born 1816 who likely died in infancy), we return to Luke Wenborn and follow his line which ultimately leads us to Phyllis Wenborn, his great-granddaughter.



10. Luke Wenborn, 1798–1857

Luke was the eldest son of John and Susannah and was born in Mount Pleasant in the parish of Holborn on New Years Eve, 31st December 1798. As with their second son, John and Susannah gave Luke an Old Testament name.

He married Sarah Stillwell on 27th June 1825, Newgate, London. Sarah, born 1802, was the daughter of Richard and Jane Stillwell from nearby Shoreditch. Luke and Sarah had two children, Eliza, born 1826 and Reuben born 1832. Eliza wasn't baptised until she was 25 and intriguingly, later in life, Reuben gives his place of birth as Germany. It may be that Luke and Sarah spent time in Germany on business or possibly on a church mission, there are no passenger lists indicating when they might have travelled or returned.

What we do know is that Sarah died in 1837, aged 34 and was buried at Spa Fields, Clerkenwell. The cemetery was used for Non-Conformist burials and was owned by the Countess of Huntingdon who founded a Calvinistic movement within the Methodist church.

The following years must have been tough for Luke, bringing up two young children and being the only wage earner in the family. By 1841, Reuben, aged 7, had been admitted to St Sepulchre workhouse, Holborn, described simply as a 'pauper'. His sister, Eliza, who was older than him, had found employment as a servant for a family in Finsbury, North London.

Luke can't be found on the 1841 census which suggests he might also have been admitted to a workhouse – the census enumerators often simply entered the initials of the inmates, "LW" to protect their identity and to save time if there were hundreds of inmates in the workhouse.

Ten years later, in 1851, Luke is living in Bowling Street, Clerkenwell with Martha, claiming to be married although there are no records either in parish registers or at the General Register Office to support this. Luke is now 49 and his occupation is a Glass-cutter. This is confirmed again when his daughter, Eliza, is baptised a few months later in adulthood. Eliza, now 25, is still a servant, working in Finsbury. Reuben by this time has left the workhouse and is also a Glasscutter, the same as his father.

London in the early 1800's was by far the most important domestic Glass centre in the country. It had more than twice as many cutters as the rest of England put together, and half the Glass Engravers listed in the whole of England. It also had almost a third of the Glasshouses and Glass Manufacturers listed⁵⁷. A Glass-cutter was not involved in the blowing or pressing of glass but would cut glass sheets or cut the glass into small pieces for items such as stained glass windows.

Cut glass was shaped using "coldwork" techniques of grinding or drilling, applied as a secondary stage to a piece of glass made by conventional processes such as glassblowing. Stimulated by the Great Exhibition in 1851, the British style was spreading across the Western

⁵⁷ Glass making in London, [Industries | Glassmaking in London \(glassmaking-in-london.co.uk\)](https://industries.glassmaking-in-london.co.uk), accessed 19 March 2023

“Dear Phyllis”

world. The abolition of excise duty made cheaper imported cut glass more affordable, however, cut glass remained a staple in most prosperous households, and British glassware was still widely exported.

In early 1855, 8th February, Luke was admitted to St Luke’s workhouse⁵⁸ on City Road in Holborn, (right). He would be 57 years of age and there is no discharge date against his name in the book. The workhouse was a relatively new build, housing over 500 inmates.



People ended up in the workhouse for a variety of reasons. Usually it was because they were too poor, old or ill to support themselves. This may have resulted from lack of work during periods of high unemployment or having no family willing or able to provide care for them when they became elderly or sick. Workhouses were never prisons and entry to them was a voluntary, although often a painful, decision.



On admission to a workhouse, inmates were bathed and issued with an outfit of clothing for the duration of their stay. Each item would be marked as workhouse property to discourage theft. The provision of clothing, (the term ‘uniform’ was never officially used), served a number of practical purposes. It prevented the infestation of fleas and ensured the inmate was suitably attired for work or whatever else was appropriate to their situation.

A typical day in a workhouse would be to rise at 6am, washed and breakfast before work at 7am until noon. An interval for dinner of an hour before back to work again until 6pm, supper from 6–7pm and bed at 8pm, seven days a week. For the men, work was often physically demanding such as breaking stone or working on the land. Meals consisted of Bread and Cheese for breakfast, Pease-Porridge or Meat, (twice a week), for dinner and Broth or Bread and Cheese for supper. The quality and quantity was variable.

On the 15th October 1857, Luke Wenborn died and was buried at nearby St Pancras cemetery⁵⁹. He was 59 years old and had lived a hard life, ending his days in the workhouse.

⁵⁸ London Workhouse Admissions and Discharge records, 1764–1921, London Metropolitan Archives, HOBG-542-01

⁵⁹ Church of England Deaths and Burials, London Metropolitan Archives Parish Registers, DL/T-063-016

11. Reuben Wenborn, 1832–1903

Reuben was born to Luke and Sarah Wenborn in 1832 while they were travelling in Germany. Up until 1891 he declares on each census that he was born in St Sepulchre, London, however this is where he was first brought up, in the workhouse as a pauper.

On the 1891 census⁶⁰, age 59, he enters 'Germany-British subject' when asked for his place of birth. His age, wife (and her age) plus his occupation, 'glass bottle stopper' all support that we are looking at the correct person. His father, Luke, had died some 34 years earlier so it is unclear what prompted Reuben to change what he had declared on the previous five census returns going back to 1841. Equally intriguing is that in 1901 he reverts back to stating he was born in St Lukes, Middlesex, (where his father was in a workhouse before he died).

Reuben Wenborn	Head	59	59	Glass Bottle Stopper		X	Germany	British Subject
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From the age of 18 until he dies some 50 years later, his occupation remains constant even if the words used to describe it change from return to return, Glass cutter, Chemical stopperer, Glass cutter, Glass bottle stopperer and Glass bottle stopperer (own account). The last suggesting that he is self-employed and running his own business.

Whilst his trade or profession may have been a constant throughout his lifetime, his marital status was anything but. Not quite in Henry VIII's league but not far off, between 1855 and 1894 Reuben married four times.

1. 1855, aged 23 he marries Ann Harwood, also 23, at St Giles, Cripplegate, London. Reuben is a bachelor, Ann a spinster. Ann dies in 1864.
2. 1864, aged 31 he marries Ellen Still, 32, at St Peters in Southwark, both declaring themselves a widow(er). Ellen dies in 1872.
3. 1872, aged 39 he marries Mary Welsh, 22, at St Johns in Clerkenwell, (*see Appendix 10 for the original Marriage Certificate*). Reuben declares himself a widower, Mary is a spinster. Mary dies in 1891.
4. 1894, Reuben waits 3 years before re-marrying at the age of 61 to Eliza Ada George, 35, again, both declaring they are widow(er)s. Eliza actually outlives Reuben, just, by one month as she died in January 1904.

⁶⁰ 1891 England and Wales Census, RG12-155-57 page 51

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In the entries of all four marriages, Reuben states his occupation as Glass-cutter and his father as Luke Wenborn, Glass-cutter, so we know that we are looking at the same person in all four marriages.

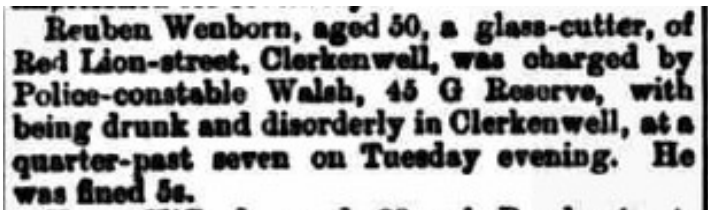
The number of marriages would be highly unusual in today's society, however in Victorian society, even more so. Only in 1857 was the right to divorce granted through the Matrimonial Causes Act and even then only through grounds of adultery. To place this into perspective, in 1880 there were only 300 cases of divorce granted⁶¹. This only rose to 1,000 by 1914.

Reuben married four young women aged between 23–35 and only one, just, outlived him. There was a gap of three months between his first and second wives passing away before he married his second and third wives.

Childbirth was more precarious in the 19th century and many mothers lost their lives whilst giving birth. Reuben and Ann had three children between 1856 and 1859, Ann died in 1864, so childbirth wasn't the cause.

Reuben and Ellen didn't have any children, however, with Mary Welsh there were five children between 1872 and 1885, Mary died in 1891 so again not down to childbirth. Reuben and Eliza didn't have any children between them.

Aside from a court appearance in December 1886 for being drunk and disorderly in Clerkenwell at 7pm on a Tuesday night⁶² there is nothing to suggest that Reuben was anything but a regular upstanding man, who rose



Reuben Wenborn, aged 50, a glass-cutter, of Red Lion-street, Clerkenwell, was charged by Police-constable Walsh, 45 G Reserve, with being drunk and disorderly in Clerkenwell, at a quarter-past seven on Tuesday evening. He was fined 5s.

from an employee to becoming self employed in his chosen trade and was just very unlucky in choosing marital partners, who had relatively short life spans, 32, 41, 40 and 45 respectively. Life expectancy for women in the mid-late 19th century was 47 years of age⁶³.

The death certificates, (*see Appendix 11*), for all four wives were ordered to see if there were any common causes or even suspicious circumstances in their deaths. Could Reuben simply have 'done-away' with a wife after he had fallen for his next bride to be? The answer proved to be very straight-forward and was definitely not the case.

Ann Elizabeth died 11th January 1864 in 12 Park Place, a Fever Hospital. She was 32 years old and cause of death was simply 'Fever'. Reuben's occupation is given as a Chemical Stopperer. The death was registered in Lambeth.

⁶¹ Womens History, [Married Women's Property and Divorce in the 19th Century – Women's History Network \(womenshistorynetwork.org\)](https://www.womenshistorynetwork.org/), accessed 19 March 2023

⁶² British Newspaper Archive, Islington Gazette, 17 December 1886

⁶³ Office for National Statistics, [How has life expectancy changed over time? – Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandlife/articles/howhaslifeexpectancychangedovertime/2019-03-14), accessed 19 March 2023

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Ellen died 12th January 1872 in St Bartholomews Hospital, aged 40. The cause of death was Pneumonia. Here Reuben’s occupation is Tailor. The informant of the death is a hospital worker so may not have known or even met Reuben. The death was registered in the district of St Sepulchre, London.

Mary died 22nd of September 1891 at 45 Albert Street, Islington, aged 39. The cause of death was Bronchitis, Reuben was present at the time of death and describes himself as a Glass-Cutter. The death was registered in the district of Islington South West.

Eliza Ada who died just a month after Reuben on 10th January 1904 was aged 45. She also died of Pneumonia and Cardiac failure. The informant was her daughter, Eliza is described as widower of Reuben Wenborn, Glass-Cutter. The death was registered in North Clerkenwell.

Fever, Pneumonia, Bronchitis could be very loosely grouped as infections of one sort or another, possibly Reuben’s accommodation was often damp and cold, the areas they chose to live were crowded, mixing with folk with similar ailments, cholera was also rife in North London during the late 19th century. It would appear that Reuben was simply very unfortunate to lose three wives, all at a relatively young age. If one was being ultra-suspicious, all deaths were registered at a different Registrar’s Office.

There are only two other occasions that Reuben found his name appearing in the newspapers. The first one has been reproduced in full in *Appendix 12*. It comes from the Islington Gazette⁶⁴ and the headlines are *“Shocking Death of a Married Woman”*. It is a report of a coroners inquiry from July 1877 into the death of a young woman who appeared to have thrown herself out of a window. The connection with Reuben was that she and her husband were renting the premises from him at the time, he was their landlord.

This suggests a certain element of affluence on Reuben’s part which ties in with him starting his own glass-bottle-stoppering business around the same time. Reuben gave quite a detailed statement to the inquiry which also suggested that he and Mary were either living in the same property or adjoining property to where the incident took place.

The other occasion when Reuben was mentioned in the papers was closer to home, again in the Islington Gazette⁶⁵, the article was headed, *“Death of a Servant”*. Reuben and Mary Welsh had five children, Alice Ada Elizabeth Wenborn was their fourth child, born 26th February 1883, Red Lion Street, Shoreditch. (James Luke Wenborn was Alice’s elder brother, born a few years earlier).

⁶⁴ British Newspaper Archive, Islington Gazette, 7 July 1887

⁶⁵ British Newspaper Archive, Islington Gazette, 18 December 1899

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Alice Ada Elizabeth had been a servant girl for two years in Duncan Street, Islington, when she was found semi-conscious by her employer. The cause of death was attributed to inflammation of the brain from an ear infection, picked up following an earlier operation on her ear. The symptoms described in the article, (right), suggest meningitis. Only since the 1980's has routine vaccination all but eliminated this disease from young children-adults.

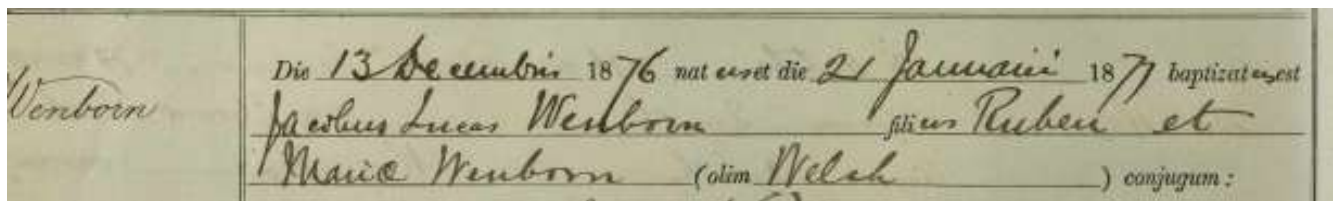
The jury ultimately recorded death from natural causes.

Reuben died in Holborn, December 1903, aged 71. His fourth wife, Eliza, died a couple of weeks later in January 1904.

DEATH OF A SERVANT.
With regard to the death of Alice Ada Elizabeth Wenborn, aged 16 years, lately living at Blue-yard, Duncan-street, Reuben Wenborn, a glass cutter, living at 9, Gainford-street, Barnsbury, said that deceased was his daughter. She was a servant at Blue-yard, Duncan-street. She had been ailing for years. On Saturday he heard that she was found by her mistress in an insensible condition, and she died on Thursday. Deceased had once been under an operation for an affection of the ear, and since then she had complained at times of pains in the ear.
Amelia Lewis, wife of a cab-washer, living at Blue-yard, Duncan-street, said that deceased had been in her service for two years. She suffered from a discharge from the ear. On Saturday morning she went to call deceased, and found her in an insensible condition, and in that state she remained until Monday, when she died.
Dr. R. Stewart, of 30, Cloudesley-street, said that on Saturday he was called to see deceased, and found her in a semi-conscious state. She got worse, and died on Monday morning. He had since made a post-mortem examination, and found that death was due to inflammation of the brain.
The jury returned a verdict of “Death from natural causes.”

12. James Luke Wenborn, 1876–1955

James Luke was born on the 13th December 1876 to Reuben Wenborn and Mary Welsh in Clerkenwell, London. Mary was Reuben's third wife, originally from Portlaoise, Ireland, west of Dublin. Probably at his mother's insistence, James Luke was baptised a Roman Catholic at St Georges Cathedral in Southwark⁶⁶. Built in 1848, it was the first Catholic church in London raised to Cathedral status.



As was traditional with all Catholic parish register entries, the equivalent Latin names were given for the record so James Luke is recorded as '*Jacobus Lucas*'. There is no indication that James Luke showed any interest in continuing his given religion in later life as he was married and baptised all of his children in the State Church.

In 1881 he was living with Reuben and Mary in Red Lion Street, Clerkenwell along with his two brothers, William and Henry. By November 1890, James Luke was indentured as an apprentice Wheelwright, aged 13 years old.

⁶⁶ Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark, Catholic Parish Baptisms 1872–1879, [Record Transcription: England Roman Catholic Parish Baptisms | findmypast.co.uk](https://www.findmypast.co.uk), accessed 22 March 2023

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The indenture agreement, (see *Appendix 13*), between his father, Reuben, a Glass-cutter of 45 Albert Street, London and George Sheldrick, a Coach-Wheelwright of Rodney Street Pentonville, was for a period of five years during which James Luke would be instructed in the art and skills to become a Coach-Wheelwright.

Reuben made an upfront payment of Ten Pounds to Sheldrick who in turn undertook to instruct young James, feed, provide lodgings and clothe him and provide any medical assistance in case of illness. James would also receive a wage of 5s per week, rising to 16s in his final year.

The hours of work were from 6am to 6pm, with an hour and a half for dinner, and Saturday afternoon off. Sundays aren't mentioned so assumedly they were treated as a day of rest.

An Apprenticeship was the most common means of training children in crafts and trades in 18–19th century England. The Statute of Apprentices of 1563 made an apprenticeship compulsory for anyone who wished to enter a trade professionally, meaning that no one could work as a master of the craft until they had served their full apprenticeship period.

Typically this period was seven years long and children could begin their apprenticeship as early as the age of six. An apprenticeship indenture is a legal document that is drawn up by a professional clerk to bind a child to their master. A master agreed to train the child in his profession in exchange for a fee. Along with the agreement to teach the child, the master was also responsible for providing them with food, clothing, and lodging for the duration of the apprenticeship. An indenture needed the signature of a Justice of the Peace in order to become legally binding or to be legally broken⁶⁷.

It is not clear why Reuben, a Glass-cutter and the son of a Glass-cutter, chose to enter James Luke into a totally unrelated trade. At this point in time, Reuben had been a Glass-cutter or Glass-bottle stopperer for over 40 years and had even started up on his own account in the same trade. It would have made more sense to bring James Luke into the family business unless there had been a down-turn in the sector or if the elder son, William Charles, had been taken into the business and there wasn't room for another member of the family.

The wheelwright's craft is amongst the oldest known to humanity. In the 19th century every community had a wheelwright for he was essential to the movement of goods by cart, but with the advent of motorised transport and metal wheels the need for the craft declined. Towards the end of the 19th century, the wheelwright found himself in competition with factory made wagons. With the demise of horse power, Wheelwrights started to supplement their earnings with wider carpentry work.

⁶⁷ Apprenticeship Indentures, [Apprenticeship Indentures, England \(1719, 1747, 1789\) – First Impressions: Books and Papers from the Hand-Press Period \(wordpress.com\)](#), accessed 22 March 2023

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Whatever the rationale was behind placing James Luke as a Wheelwright’s apprentice, it didn’t last long. Five months later on census night, 5th April 1891, he is back living with his mother and father in Abbot Street and his stated occupation is now Glass–bottle stopperer apprentice.

Curtailing an apprenticeship so early would have been a most unusual occurrence. The most common cause was often the young child absconding due to mal–treatment, the master craftsman falling into ill–health or dying or his business collapsing.

None of these seem likely as George Sheldrick was from a long line of Wheelwrights and one would assume he would treat young James Luke with respect. George was brought up in Bottisham, near Newmarket, Cambridgeshire and his father, James, was a Wheelwright–Carpenter. George obviously learnt his trade under his father’s tutelage and subsequently moved to London. He was still practising his trade as a Wheelwright in 1901, aged 56 with a wife and family.

It is more likely to have been a decision by Reuben to take James Luke out of his apprenticeship. Reuben had already paid George Ten Pounds, (over £1,000 in today’s money⁶⁸), so is unlikely to have made such a decision lightly. Either his eldest son, William Charles – who was no longer living at home in 1891, wanted to follow a different career to that of a Glass–cutter and a place become available to accommodate James Luke into the family business or his mother, Mary, had fallen seriously ill, (she died September 1891), and Reuben wanted James Luke back at home.

For whatever reason, James Luke’s short–lived career as an apprentice Coach–Wheelwright was over and he would spend the rest of his working life in the family business and building it into a sizeable concern.

James Luke had moved back to Abbot Street with his parents by 1891. His mother, Mary, died later that year and his father, Reuben, remarried a couple of years later in 1894 to Eliza Ada George. Eliza brought four daughters from a previous marriage with her and possibly for that reason James Luke needed to move out and find alternative accommodation.

In 1901 he is continuing his trade as a Bottle–stopperer although he now adds ‘Chemical’ as a pre–fix to his job description. Reuben at the same time is self employed so James Luke is most likely with his father who also describes himself as a Chemical–Bottle–stopperer.

James Luke found alternative accommodation with the Masters family on Hanover Street, (now Noel Road), Islington, over a mile away from Abbot Street where he was living with his father, so not exactly ‘round the corner’.

⁶⁸ Bank of England, [Inflation calculator](#) | [Bank of England](#), accessed 22 March 2023

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George Masters is a French Polisher living with his wife, Sarah, his three sons and three daughters, his Mother-in-Law, Sister-in-Law, (both widowed), and a niece, so quite a full house to then be taking in a lodger as well.



48 Hanover Street, (picture right), does appear to be a spacious and imposing townhouse. French polishing obviously paid well. One attraction to lodging with the Masters family for James Luke was to be George's eldest daughter, Beatrice. In 1901, at 17 years of age, Beatrice was seven years younger than James Luke, however that didn't prevent them striking up a relationship and eventually getting married on 1st August 1904 at St Peters church in Islington. James Luke was 27 and Beatrice was 20, (see *Appendix 14* for their Marriage Certificate). Beatrice could so easily have been at University at this time as she was offered a place at Cambridge, but her father, George, dissuaded her from taking it in order to be at home to help her mother.

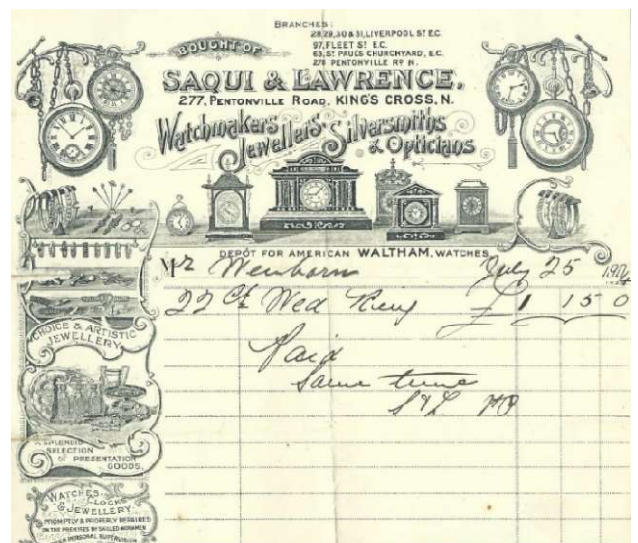


James Luke and Beatrice moved out of Hanover Street and set up home round the corner, in Oakley Crescent, less than a five minute walk from Beatrice's parents. Oakley Crescent was a very respectable street, dominated by tall Georgian style townhouses, (see left). We know that James and Beatrice furnished the house in their taste, thanks to some surviving invoices which also provide us with an insight to some of the pre-wedding expenditure that James incurred, (a selection are included in *Appendix 15*).

As a rule of thumb, a £ spent in 1904 had the purchasing power of £100 in today's money⁶⁹ so for example, the wedding ring from Saqui and Lawrence would have cost £175 today, (2023).

- *Bravington Jewellers* Dress rings £2-16s-6d
- *Saqui & Lawrence* 18 ct Keeper?, Pearl collar £3-2s
- *Wheeler Tailor* Jacket & cashmere trousers £4-12s
- *Essex Furnishers* Various furniture £26-16s-6d
- *Williams Carpets* Carpets £4-18s-1d
- *Saqui & Lawrence* 22 ct wedding ring £1-15s
- *Bauer – Bakers* Wedding cake 13s-6d
- *Crump* Horse carriage £1-8s-6d

Unlike his father, James Luke was to be more fortunate in his choice of partner as their marriage would see them both celebrate their Golden wedding anniversary together in August 1954.



⁶⁹ Bank of England, [Inflation calculator](#) | [Bank of England](#), accessed 24 March 2023

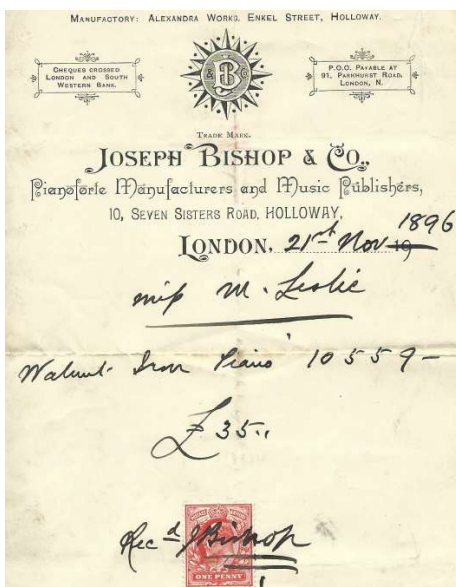
12.1 Wenborns and Pianos

There is a theme that is running through the Wenborn family during the 19th century. Earlier we looked at how John Wenborn, (1768–1835), developed his business from Carpentry services to becoming a Cabinet maker and then a Pianoforte maker in Camden. Frederick Moore Wenborn, (1835–1918), was a Professor of Music who gave recitals on the pianoforte in the 1880's in North London. Arthur Walter Jones Wenborn who emigrated to Melbourne, Australia with his brothers, gave concert performances on the pianoforte in his local Baptist church.

There are also sporadic newspaper adverts featuring a Wenborn & Co from London, piano manufacturers, (see newspaper excerpts, right⁷⁰). Despite an extensive search amongst business directories, contacting Piano historians and following up on every James Wenborn that lived during the 19th century, it has not been possible to identify exactly who this James Wenborn is and where he sits in the Wenborn family tree. Carpentry & Music skills feature heavily in Josiah Wenborns family, so it is highly likely that the connection is here, however it has not as yet been established.

MASSIVE CABINET FURNITURE.
PIANOFORTES, WITHOUT RESERVE, AT ONE O'CLOCK, including Handsome Full-compass extra Tri-chord Cottage Pianoforte, in Rosewood Case, by Saville and Son; a similar Piano in Panelled Walnut Case, by Benson; a similar Piano by Jacques; a similar Piano by Wenborn and Co.

and marble slab, 4ft 9in,
PIANOFORTE in Rosewood Case, by Jas. Wenborn, London.
HARMONIUM & Stands, by Millier & Co., London.



There is an invoice within the same batch of invoices that has survived from James Luke Wenborn's house furnishing purchases that is also indicative of more than just a passing interest in playing the piano. On the 21st November 1896, a walnut piano was purchased from Joseph Bishop & Co on the Seven Sisters Road, Holloway, North London for £35, (almost £4,000 in today's money, 2023).

The model would have looked very similar to the piano pictured right. Although the invoice was within other invoices paid by James Luke, it does seem a lot of money for him to have parted with as he would only have been 22 years of age at the time. It may



have been a coming of age present from his father, Reuben, for him although James was a lodger at that time with the Masters family so it would be questionable where he would put it. Whatever the reason behind the purchase, the fact is that the sizeable purchase was made, either by Reuben or James Luke for an instrument of pleasure to be played.

⁷⁰ Shields Daily Gazette 11 April 1896, [The British Newspaper Archive](https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/) | findmypast.co.uk, accessed 24 March 2023

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Therefore, rooted in the 19th century, across a number of Wenborn lines, there is this affection and love of the piano, something that continued through the 20th century and to this day amongst the current generation.

12.2 James Luke and Beatrice Wenborn – Family and Children

After getting married, James and Beatrice made several house moves before settling down in 10 Highbury Terrace, Islington in 1917. After getting married in August 1904 they moved round the corner from Hanover Street, Islington to 4 Oakley Terrace. Their first child, Beatrice was born here in 1905.

Then in 1909 they moved a few streets again to 28 Devonshire Street, Islington. In the same year their second child, James George was born. Two years later in 1911 it was a case of ‘musical-houses’. James and Beatrice moved out of Devonshire Street to Canning Town, East London, George Masters, (Beatrice’s father), moved into the Devonshire Street house and newly married Albert Masters took over Hanover Street for his growing family.

The brief time spent at the Barking Road, Canning Town address was the only time that James and Beatrice lived outside of the Borough of Islington. It was probably too far from their families and work place and by April 1912 they were renting 3 Westbourne Road, Islington for £12 per quarter. Reuben, their third child was born here in 1914.

George Masters died in 1914 so in 1915 James and Beatrice stopped renting the Westbourne Road property and moved back into 28 Devonshire Street, shortly afterwards their fourth child, Leonard was born.

By 1917 they were living in 10 Highbury Terrace which was to be James and Beatrice’s family home for almost the next four decades until James’s death in 1955. The move to Highbury Terrace was probably prompted by their ever growing family, their fifth child, Reginald, was born in 1917 and their sixth and youngest child, Phyllis, was born three years later in 1920. *Appendix 16* illustrates on a 1920’s Ordnance Survey Map⁷¹ of Islington the locations within the Borough of Islington where James and Beatrice lived.

It was after having moved into Highbury Terrace that Beatrice had a nasty accident with her ‘posh new electric wringer’. Her arm got caught in it requiring her to have a course of rehabilitation. While Beatrice was in ‘rehab’ she made a woven child’s chair⁷². A century or so on the chair remains fully serviceable and now residing today in one her great grandchildren’s lounge, (right).



⁷¹ National Library of Scotland, [View map: Ordnance Survey, London sheet K – Ordnance Survey Six-inch England and Wales, 1842–1952 \(nls.uk\)](https://www.nls.uk/view-map/ordnance-survey/london-sheet-k-ordnance-survey-six-inch-england-and-wales-1842-1952), accessed 26 March 2023

⁷² Source – Gibbon family anecdote, supplied via AG email 5 June 2023, (additional anecdotes are from the same source however aren’t repeatedly referenced to avoid repetition).

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James enjoyed the company of his children although he didn't always provide the best of role models. One of his favourite fruits were cherries and he would eat them with his children on the first floor in Highbury Terrace, windows open and encourage them to spit the pips out into the street to see if they could get them to land in the hats of passers-by.

Highbury, as the place name suggests, was built on higher ground and looked down on what is now Barnsbury, Canonbury and Holloway. Urban development started in Highbury with the building of Georgian terraces around Highbury Fields in 1774. Highbury's rural character quickly disappeared in a building boom during the 1860's and 1870's. By 1872 the increasing population could use the station to commute into the centre of London. The Piccadilly underground line arrived at the bottom of Highbury Hill in 1906.

Following the demise of Highbury Barn, a local music and entertainments venue which became more and more raucous during the late 19th century, local residents looked to football for their large-scale entertainment⁷³. Arsenal FC moved to Highbury in 1913 from Woolwich. They are the oldest club to play continuously in London and in the top flight of English football. James Luke was an early season ticket holder at the club, an interest that he maintained all his life.

Numbers 1–16 Highbury Terrace were built in 1794⁷⁴, by 1829 a further 22 houses had been added. Notable folk who have lived on Highbury Terrace include James Bischoff, (1776–1845), an author who had Mount Bischoff in Tasmania named after him. At number 12 Highbury Terrace, alongside where James and Beatrice lived, there used to live Captain Joseph Huddart, a geographer and marine hydrographer, famous for compiling Oceanic charts. His work in charting the Indian Ocean and waters around Sumatra and Java were, at the time, considered pioneering. In 1805, he laid the first stone of the East India Docks, London in whose planning he had played a major part.

Sir Francis Ronalds, (1788–1873), lived at number one Highbury Terrace, who pioneered the electric telegraph, experimenting by running a wire from the garden of his house to a cottage in a nearby neighbourhood.



⁷³ Islington Life, [Islington Life – Highbury](#), accessed 26 March 2023

⁷⁴ Friends of Islington Museum, [streets-with-a-story-foim-july-2021.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](#), accessed 26 March 2023.

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18 Highbury Terrace, a few doors down from James and Beatrice, was an Elizabeth Fry Home that provided protection for women and children. This was run for 25 years, (1913–38), by Miss Daly, who devoted herself to the girls in her hostel.

The area and Highbury Terrace, (pictured above), was, and still is, a desirable and affluent part of North London. Property regularly exchanging hands today for in excess of £5m, (2023).

12.3 James Luke Wenborn – the Entrepreneur

As mentioned earlier, aside from a brief dalliance with becoming an apprentice Wheelwright, it always seemed likely that James would follow in the footsteps of his Grandfather, Luke and his Father, Reuben, who both worked as Glass-cutters and more latterly as Glass-Bottle-Stopperers, especially as Reuben was running his own business at the time James was finishing his education.

From the various census, baptism, marriage and directory entries that we have for James between 1891, (age 14), and 1939, (age 62), the description he provides for his occupations varies but as we saw with Reuben, it consistently revolves around handling glass products.

- 1891 – apprentice glass bottle stopperer
- 1901 – chemical bottle stopperer
- 1904 – glass cutter
- 1905 – bottle stopperer
- 1909 – glass cutter
- 1911 – glass cutter (worker)
- 1915 – bottle stopperer & glass cutter
- 1939 – druggists bottle stopperer & grinder

The family business which James took over from Reuben was run out of Nelson Place, behind 304 City Road, Islington and immediately adjacent to Oakley Crescent where James and Beatrice first set up home after they got married. From Highbury Terrace, it was a two mile walk straight down Liverpool Street to the Angel and a left turn round the corner to the factory.

A newspaper article published in 1952⁷⁵ sheds more light on the business and operation that James was managing. The writer of the article describes the process of fitting glass stoppers to bottles which involves six hand operations per bottle going on to say that no mass-produced machinery has been invented yet to replicate this manually intensive operation as no two stoppers or two bottle necks are alike.

⁷⁵ British Newspaper Archive, London Daily News 24 Jan 1954, [The British Newspaper Archive | findmypast.co.uk](https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/article/24-JAN-1954/1), accessed 26 March 2023

“Dear Phyllis”

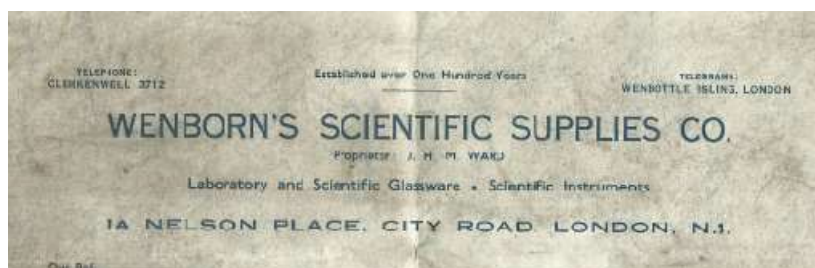
For as long as there have been bottles and jars, people have come up with ways to close them up to keep the contents clean and safe. The earliest glass stoppers date back as early as 1500 BC, though they didn't come into wider use until the mid-19th century⁷⁶.

Stoppers can be simple and utilitarian, or decorative and ornate, but generally have the same three parts. The shank sits inside the bottle or jar neck and serves to close the container. The shank can be ground down to fit a specific bottle exactly. The finial is the top part of the stopper that you grasp to pull the stopper out. Decorative finials were used on perfume bottles, decanters, and other bottles that were meant for display. The neck is the part of the stopper in between the shank and the finial, and is not always present on a glass stopper, depending on its design.



Glass stoppers were usually used on bottles that would be used again and again, such as a perfume bottle, decanters, and apothecary (medicine) bottles. Bottles that were used only once, such as wine or beer, would be stoppered with cork or something less expensive than glass. With the advent of less expensive closures, such as the crown cap or the external screw cap, the use of stoppers declined.

A Company letter head, dating from the 1930's provides further clues to how the business was developing under James. Wenborn's Scientific Supplies – '*established over One Hundred years*', specialising in Laboratory and Scientific Glassware and Scientific Instruments. The



reference to having been established for over a century, (therefore dating back to the 1830's), is an interesting claim which will be explored further.

In addition to providing a bottle-stoppering service, effectively helping to re-cycle used bottles by grinding old stoppers to ensure a good fit to the pre-used bottle, Wenborn's Scientific Supplies also supplied laboratory equipment such as filters, funnels, hydrometer jars, pipettes, petri dishes, cylinders, beakers, flasks etc.

The firm's accounting ledgers that survive from the same period give an indication of the businesses that James was dealing with, both purchasing from and selling to. Major customers included British Colloids, Bourroughes Wellcome, British Drug Houses, Cambridge University, London Hospital and Smith & Nephew amongst many others.

The laboratory equipment that was supplied to the above customer base certainly wasn't manufactured in Nelson Place. James was buying the products in from various suppliers and

⁷⁶ Beach Combing, [A brief history of glass stoppers – Beachcombing Magazine](#), accessed 26 March 2023

“Dear Phyllis”

selling them on, assumedly at a good margin, to the customer. The single largest supplier was Glass Wholesale Supplies followed by Gallenkamp, a small glass manufacturer based in Finsbury, now one of the world's largest manufacturer of scientific appliances.

The next four largest suppliers were Jena Schott, Siemen Schuckert, Scheinhotchoe and Vereinigung Gottingen Werke, all based in Germany and the first two are still going strong. The significance of the German supply base is twofold.

Firstly, as noted earlier, the company, Wenborn's Scientific Supplies had been trading since the 1830's, which would place it under the stewardship of Luke Wenborn, (1798–1857). Luke and his wife Sarah's second child, Reuben, (James Luke's father), was born in Germany in 1832. Could Luke and Sarah have been visiting Germany, looking to secure a supply base with German manufacturers so they could bring their products to London and sell them on to British laboratories.

Secondly, the sales and purchase ledgers for Wenborn's Scientific Supplies, (WSS), both end abruptly in June 1937. In Europe in 1936, Germany re-occupied the Rhineland which was in direct contravention of the Treaty of Versailles and the following year in May 1937, German forces are mobilised to support Franco in the Spanish Civil War. Storm clouds were gathering at a pace over Europe and War was being prepared for. James Luke obviously saw the writing was on the wall and that his supply chain from Germany would not be sustainable for much longer. WSS was probably wound up and the business focussed on it's core trade, bottle-stoppering.

By the outbreak of the Second World War, James and Beatrice's six children were all young adults. Beatrice, the oldest child, had married Albert Sydney Sherlock in Deptford in 1931, James and Reginald had joined the family business and described themselves the same as their father, Druggist–Bottle–Stopperers & Grinders, both still living at home, 10 Highbury Terrace. Reuben was a clerk with London Railways, Phyllis was a short-hand typist and Leonard, a bookkeeper for a Fruiterer, was a patient in Fairlight Sanatorium in Hastings, and being treated for tuberculosis.

13. Phyllis Wenborn

Phyllis was born on the 18th of April 1920 in Islington, North London, to James Luke and Beatrice. She was their sixth child and second daughter, Beatrice, their other daughter was some 15 years older than Phyllis having been born in 1905.

When Phyllis was born, London, Britain and the World were in the grips of the fourth wave of the 'Spanish Flu'. the Spanish flu swept across a Europe that was just recovering from the First World War. During 1914 and 1918, many people had been living on starvation diets and in terrible conditions. Immune systems were weak and resistance slight.

"Dear Phyllis"

It is thought the Flu started in the trenches in the First World War where soldiers reported headaches and fevers and when they returned home they brought it with them. In the summer of 1918 during the victory celebrations, Flu patients began to die of bronchial pneumonia, London was completely overwhelmed by the epidemic. Hospitals were overcrowded, and doctors and nurses worked to breaking point, although there was little they could do to help patients as there was no cure for the Flu. There was no National Health Service either as we recognise today.

In many places theatres, dance halls, churches and other public gathering places were shut. Some factories even relaxed no-smoking rules believing that cigarettes would help prevent infection. The Borough of Hackney recommended that victims stay isolated, go to bed the moment symptoms appeared, and gargle with potash and salt. Streets and buildings were deep-cleaned with disinfectant and people started wearing medical masks⁷⁷.

The illness was horrific in its speed, victims could be healthy in the morning but could have died by the same evening. One man from Stepney described the relentless procession of bodies being carried through the streets. "The undertakers couldn't make the coffins quick enough, let alone polish them. The bodies changed colour so quickly after death the coffins had to be quickly screwed down to await burial."

In an age before vaccines were developed that could have stopped it, the disease eventually killed 50 million people worldwide and proved disproportionately fatal to those in their 20s, 30s and 40s – the very generations that had served as soldiers or nurses in the war.

Children in school playgrounds began to sing a terrible new nursery rhyme.

*'I had a little bird
Its name was Enza
I opened the window,
And in-flu-enza.'*

Fortunately the Wenborns escaped unscathed from this pandemic which claimed many thousands of lives, not just in London but across the Country, an estimated 250,000 died in Britain alone.

⁷⁷ My London News, [London coronavirus: Spanish flu infected half of London in 1918 and this is what it teaches us about social distancing – MyLondon](#), accessed 27 March 2023

“Dear Phyllis”



Phyllis attended Drayton Park School in Islington and gains a mention in the *Islington and Holloway Press*⁷⁸, in the annual prize giving day at the end of the school year in 1931. The prize and certificate was for her work in Scripture.

The school dates back to 1866, however the original building was demolished in 1927 and replaced with a new school, (pictured above). Phyllis would have been one of the first pupils attending the new Drayton Park school which is still operating today, (2023), utilising the same buildings that Phyllis would have used as classrooms. The school log books⁷⁹ survive from her time there, one typical entry on Empire Day, (23 May 1930) reads...

“... Empire Day was celebrated in the school. The children assembled in the hall, Mr Morgan gave a very interesting talk on the Empire, and the duty of each child to ‘play fair’. Patriotic songs were given, the flag saluted, and the proceedings finished with the National Anthem and three cheers for the King...”

Towards the end of Phyllis’s formal schooling in 1934, she entered the Lewisham table tennis tournament and succeeded in winning the Ladies’ event. The *Kentish Mercury* of 14th October 1934 carried a picture of Phyllis receiving the trophy from the Mayor and Mayoress of Lewisham, (right).



At the end of her formal-compulsory schooling in 1935, Phyllis enrolled at the Islington Day Continuation School. To combat the lack of secondary school places available, the London City Council opened additional central schools and new Day Continuation Schools for employed young people in reaction to the raising of the school leaving age to 14 by the 1918 Education Act⁸⁰.

At the Day School, Phyllis ended up taking six subjects under the umbrella heading of “Business Training”, Short-hand, Typing, English, Book-keeping, Commercial Arithmetic and French. Geography and Business Methods were dropped early on in favour of French. During the three years that Phyllis studied here, she averaged between 85–90% in all of her chosen subjects except English where she averaged 74%. In the last term, her English tutor

⁷⁸ British Newspaper Archives, *Islington and Holloway Press*, 18 July 1931

⁷⁹ Drayton Park School, [PowerPoint Presentation \(primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://www.powerpointpresentation.com/primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com), accessed 27 March 2023

⁸⁰ UCL, [Education in London | Library Services – UCL – University College London](https://www.educationinlondon.org.uk/library-services), accessed 27 March 2023

"Dear Phyllis"

commented on her report that she was "very seldom present", suggesting a dis-interest in the subject had taken hold.

Regularly either top of the class or in the top three in her subjects, Phyllis always received glowing end of term comments from the School. The following are a selection of the comments received from the Course tutor. A sample end of term report is included in *Appendix 17*.



It would appear that Phyllis had learnt a great deal from her Father in the ways of Business. She excelled at Book-keeping and Commercial Arithmetic so would have been a great asset to James Luke in the family business.

From an entry of appointments in the London Gazette dated 12th August 1938, Phyllis, (18), was working as a typist in the Civil Service, or more accurately, HM Procurator General and Treasury Solicitors Department. A year later, Phyllis was still there, although events in Europe were about to change all this.

14. London and the Blitz

Much has been written about the Blitz, two concentrated periods of bombing London by the German Luftwaffe, September–October 1940, (across 57 consecutive nights), and then again November 1940–May 1941.



Blitzkrieg, the lightning war, was the name given to the devastating German bombing attacks to which Britain was subjected from September 1940 until May 1941. The Blitz was a sustained aerial attack, sending waves of bombs raining down onto towns and cities. The attacks made up a larger campaign of attempting to destroy British infrastructure, cause devastation and destruction and lower morale⁸¹.

Towns and cities were subjected to the German bomber raids which, over the course of eight months resulted in 43,500 deaths of innocent civilians. The Blitz began on what became known as "Black Saturday", 7th September 1940 when the Luftwaffe launched its attack on London. Around 350 German bombers dropped explosives on the city, targeting the East End of London.

In just one night, London suffered approximately 450 fatalities and around 1,500 injured. From this moment onwards, London would become shrouded in darkness as the German bombers launched a sustained attack for consecutive months. The intention was to destabilise the economic backbone of London and weaken the infrastructure. London was now a main target for incoming Luftwaffe attacks, resulting in many children across the capital evacuated to homes around the country in a bid to protect them from the dangers of the Blitz.

Within weeks of the first bombing raid executed on London, the attacks turned to night time bombing raids, increasing the fear and unpredictability. This was not just a physical act of destruction but a deliberate psychological tool. London would remain a primary target throughout this phase of the war, so much so, that on 10th to 11th May 1941 it was subjected to 711 tons of high explosives leading to approximately 1,500 dead. The efforts of the civilian population cannot be underestimated as they played a crucial role in protecting and rebuilding their city.



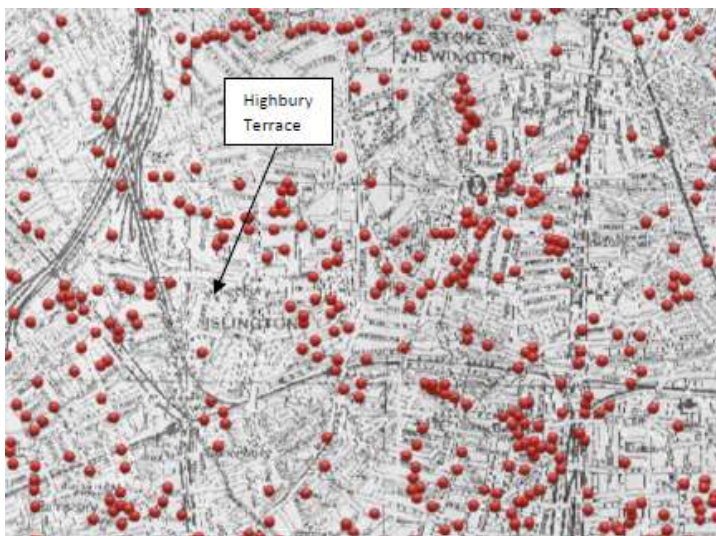
The targeted bombing of civilians and ensuing firestorms that engulfed London during this period appears to have escaped the 'post-war apologists' memories whenever 'Hamburg' or

⁸¹ Historic UK, [The Blitz – Historic UK \(historic-uk.com\)](https://www.historic-uk.com), accessed 27 March 2023

"Dear Phyllis"

'Dresden' is mentioned. The War was brutal and both sides were looking to secure an advantage to win it. Ultimately, the Blitz failed to damage morale, interrupt British war production or the economy. Cities, (other than Birmingham), were up and running less than ten days after a major raid. During the period of the greatest bombing of September 1940, an American witness wrote

"By every test and measure I am able to apply, these people are staunch to the bone and won't quit ... the British are stronger and in a better position than they were at its beginning. People referred to raids as if they were talking about the weather, stating that a day was "very blitzy".



To understand better what happened next and what dominated the thinking inside 10 Highbury Terrace it is useful to study a map⁸² of exactly where the bombs were falling during the period of the Blitz, September 1940–May 1941.

James, Beatrice and their three children, (James, Reg and Phyllis), were living and working under constant bombardment every night

from the Luftwaffe. As the above map illustrates, it was only by pure luck that they were never directly hit. The map is only for the period of the Blitz and doesn't include any bombs or V2's that fell from May 1941 to the end of the War in 1945. It would be difficult to imagine living under such circumstances, the daily air-raid sirens, the sound of the hundreds of aircraft droning overhead, explosions as the bombs were dropped, not knowing whether your home would be the next one to be hit, followed by the fire and ambulance crews attending to the damaged properties and injured folk.

James, (31), and Reg, (22), were working in the family business with James Luke. It isn't clear why they were not called up as they would have been of an age to have been conscripted, (the age for conscription was 18–41), possibly due to the business providing medicinal bottles for the war effort. Their brother, Reuben, had enlisted with the Royal Navy and the other brother, Len, was a patient in a TB Hospital. This left Phyllis, the youngest, who was still living at home and commuting to work in the centre of London. James Luke took the sensible and understandable decision to arrange for Phyllis to be evacuated away from the danger to Stratford-upon-Avon.

Stratford-upon-Avon was relatively rural and although it was only 20 miles from Coventry, which suffered badly during the Blitz period, it was considered a place of safety for young

⁸² Bomb Sight, bombsight.org, accessed 27 March 2023

“Dear Phyllis”

Phyllis. Despite now separated from his youngest daughter, James Luke undertook to keep in touch with her every day by writing each evening to her from North London.

15. “Dear Phyllis” – the War Letters

Phyllis left war-torn London for Stratford-upon-Avon around June 1941, London had been under constant bombardment for over nine months. The first of the surviving letters is dated 2nd July 1941 and there are only a half-dozen surviving for the next two years, 1942 and 1943. From 1944 until the end of the War, there are nearly 200 letters written by James Luke to Phyllis that describe London, family life during the War and his thoughts on events as they unfolded.

Aside from the immediate family interest, they form a unique collection of letters that portray ‘life under the bombs’. James Luke writes with a cheery optimism, stiff upper lip, that is often written about when the spirit of the Blitz is discussed. Here, in his own hand, is that exact spirit and fortitude that helped keep the wheels of London and Britain’s economy turning during the darkest hours.

The letters were primarily written by a father to his daughter and no-one else. The thought of them ever being read, 80 years after the earliest one was written, would not even have occurred to James as he was writing them. Having carefully read each letter on more than one occasion, it can be confirmed that they contain nothing that portrays any family member or friend in anything but a positive light. The tone is upbeat and positive, (James aiming to keep Phyllis’s and perhaps his own morale up). The underlying humour is warm and touching. In short, the letters form a collection that should be treasured and read in order to appreciate, get to know and understand James Luke, the entrepreneur, citizen, husband and father.

To reproduce and comment on each letter written would start to become repetitive and the uniqueness of the collection would be lost amongst the detail. The following chapters will share, in a chronological order, an abridged view of the contents which overall paint a picture of the mood and thoughts for that point in time. Every letter and page has been electronically scanned and catalogued, (see *Appendix 18* for complete catalogue), and two are reproduced in full in *Appendix 19 and 20*.

The letters are all written by James Luke to Phyllis, quotations shown in *italics* are taken directly from the letters themselves.

15.1 “Dear Phyllis”, 1941 – 1943

By July 1941 the War had been underway for nearly two years. London has been subject to the Blitz as commented on earlier. Rationing has been introduced across Britain, the British Expeditionary Forces were pushed back and out of Europe via Dunkirk by the German Army, the Battle of Britain has been fought and the immediate threat of invasion seen off and at the

"Dear Phyllis"

time of writing of James's letter on 2nd July 1941, America was still neutral. The German attack on Russia, (Operation Barbarossa), had commenced, opening up the Eastern Front.

James describes a typical family outing punctuated with exploding bombs, bus windows taken out and returning home finding the dining room windows had been blown out, all in a very matter of fact style as if discussing the weather.

"... the best bit of luck occurred Sat. Warning was on and I asked Mum to come to our usual fun fair, (The Dogs at Harringay)... well excitement as usual. We see one fall, heard another but we and the rest of folk just carried on giving our money away. We got back at 9-25 Sat night... there was Jim outside no.10 clearing up the glass from our dining room front. The Robot had fell on new flats opposite Telephone exchange in Highbury Grove... We had not been home ten minutes when in comes Reg as he saw a low Decker bus with windows blown out ... only Thomas the great hulking hero was on guard... don't worry about us now as we are all down low and shall certainly take the greatest care of ourselves... back to the bad days as people are flowing down Tubes and shelters for safety...⁸³"

It seems strange today that a Dog racing event, (Harringay Greyhound stadium, circa late 1930's, right), would continue amidst a bombing raid and the mayhem and sirens that would follow, however it appears so. Thomas, 'the hulking hero' is the family pet cat.



Up until 1960 when the Betting and Gaming Act finally legalised off-course betting, having a wager on the Horses or Dogs was only permissible at the event itself. To satisfy the demand for off-course betting, bookmakers would set up base in a friendly pub, hire runners to tell what the odds were, collect bets and pay off the winners, while lookouts warned about policeman. It was said that on occasions, James would play the part of the 'lookout'. From his vantage point, he would flash a piece of blue glass to signify the police were coming, possibly from his factory office on City Road.

This wasn't the only time that James 'sailed close to the wind' with the Law. One afternoon at the factory, the 'local bobby' paid a routine visit and passed the time over a cuppa. The two of them had a long chat and during their conversation they both agreed how terrible it was that there was so much thieving going on when folk should be pulling together and the local black market was thriving. James asked whether the Police had had any luck recovering a stolen tea chest. "Sadly not", replied the Officer and he shortly left. The entire time they had been talking, the Policeman had been sitting on the said stolen tea chest! It isn't clear what it was doing there or if James was just looking after it, however, it can be assumed that James kept some interesting company.

⁸³ Letter dated 2 July 1941 – Gibbon collection

“Dear Phyllis”

At this stage of the War, V1 and V2 rockets had yet to be launched against London. The “Robot” that James refers to is a colloquialism for a Bomb.

The next surviving letter is written almost a year later in May 1942. America has now entered the War after the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Russia and the Allies have experienced defeats at Stalingrad and Tobruk respectively and the Luftwaffe Blitz campaign continues against Britain’s major cities.

The letter in May is written on the last day of the month, so Phyllis will receive it on the first of June, the letter is headed, *“Rabbits, White Rabbits”*, a superstition that if said aloud will supposedly bring good luck for the remainder of the month. The main source of news in the May letter is an imminent delivery of Oranges and Tomatoes and that orders at the factory are ‘miles long’.

Fast-forward to the next letter and we find ourselves in March 1943. Germany has suffered her first major defeat of the War at Stalingrad, Allied victory in North Africa paves the way for an invasion of Italy, who are soon to surrender.

The British public’s reliance and hopes on Russia inflicting more damage on Germany is reflected in James’s writing...⁸⁴

“...the War will now soon be over. Joe Stalin has been promoted to a Field Marshall, another rise of 2d a week for Joe. Up the Russians... I firmly believe the bottom of Germany will fall out very soon, this War will be over in about 6 months. I have spoken, (Bow-Wow)”

James also mentions that he has managed to get two of his workers a further six months deferment. An indication that the Government view his Bottle-Stoppering business as important to the War effort. The *Bow-Wow* at the end of the sentence above is a common

usage in James’s letter writing which is similar in today’s terminology of a smiling emoji.

August 1943⁸⁵ is very upbeat...

⁸⁴ Letter dated 7 March 1943 – Gibbon collection

⁸⁵ Letter dated 22 August 1943 – Gibbon collection

"Dear Phyllis"

"...went to Harringay Sat afternoon racing, had a very nice time, 4 bets 2 winners, 50% not bad, we all won more ill-gotten gains. We came home, had tea then Mum and I crept off to the pictures, Astoria..."

James goes on to offer a couple of tips for the St Ledger, (Ribbon and Umidad), before commenting on the progress of the War and his take on how it is unfolding...

"... Italy will be out very soon, end of the month... will then put paid to Tommy Hitler and if Jerry lasts this year of 43 shall be very much surprised..."

James concludes by saying how much he is looking forward to a visit from Phyllis and meeting her friend, Betty, and giving her a few lessons in Billiards and Table Tennis. Five days after writing this note to Phyllis, James Luke was to receive news that the ship his second son, Reuben, had been posted to, had been attacked and sunk.

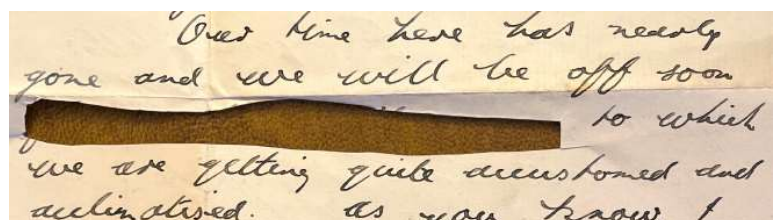
15.2 Reuben Frederick Wenborn, 1913–1943



Reuben was James and Beatrice's third child, born 3rd October 1913. It was said that Reuben acted differently to the other children. He spoke and presented himself differently. When out with the family, Reuben would walk on the opposite side of the road. His father, James, would shout across the street, possibly in the strongest cockney accent he could muster, "*Reub, Reub, what are you doing over there son, come and join your family over here*".

Reuben went to work for London Transport (Railways) in the Engineering Department in Acton. In November 1940, Reuben, (left), signed up for the Royal Navy as a Signaller and was trained at the Royal Navy Training Establishment at Shotley, (known as HMS Ganges), before being assigned to HMS Egret, (pictured overpage).

The letters that servicemen and women wrote back home to their family and friends were all individually vetted by a Senior Officer before they were allowed to leave the ship. With security absolute key, it was vital that information on movements or location didn't get through to the enemy, either by accident or even purposely. An example of this was a letter Reuben wrote to Phyllis on 10th February 1942 where he wrote and mentioned where the ship was next heading for. The 'censor' took to the letter with a pair of scissors and removed the offending words, (see right).

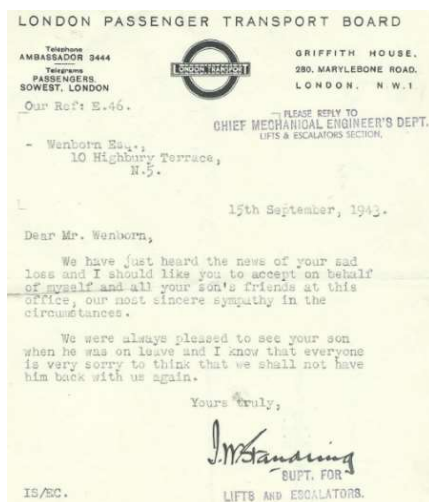


On 13th August 1943, Reuben wrote to his two sisters, Betty and

"Dear Phyllis"

Phyllis, and mentioned that he had been ashore at the 'George Cross Island, (Malta), commenting that there was not much to see there but bomb damage and that he had also been ashore at 'the Rock', (Gibraltar), and bought some bananas which were still a rare delicacy. He thanks them for the books by Dickens that he received but admits they have gone to the ship's library as they are too long winded for him.

Reuben signs off by saying he hopes to see them both when he is next on leave again in a few months' time in November. Sadly that would be the last communication received from Reuben as 14 days later on 27th August 1943 tragedy struck. While on anti-submarine duties in the Bay of Biscay, just off the coast of Portugal, the ship was attacked by 13 Dornier aircraft, one of which released a guided bomb. The ship exploded violently and was immediately destroyed, with the loss of 194 men. HMS Egret had the unfortunate distinction of being the first warship to be sunk by a guided missile⁸⁶.



Reuben's employer wrote a letter of sympathy to James and Beatrice saying how much he will be missed, that he was a much respected member of staff and how that they were always pleased to see him when he was on leave and were very sorry that he would not be returning.

Reuben was 29 years of age when he died. He is remembered on the

Portsmouth Naval Memorial, (Panel 76, column 3), in Hampshire, managed by the Commonwealth Graves Commission⁸⁷.



⁸⁶ UBoat website, [HMS Egret \(L 75 / U 75\) of the Royal Navy – British Sloop of the Egret class – Allied Warships of WWII – uboot.net](https://www.uboot.net/), accessed 1 April 2023

⁸⁷ Commonwealth Graves Commission, [Ordinary Signalman Reuben Frederick Wenborn | War Casualty Details 2670166 | CWGC](https://www.cwgc.org/), accessed 29 April 2023

15.3 Highbury Terrace, November–December 1943

The letters written in December mention about getting ready for Christmas and how James will kill two birds with one stone, as when he collects the chicken, he will deliver 40 gross of bottles, (nearly 6,000 bottles), to a customer. Business would appear to be booming although a missed opportunity seems to grate a little...⁸⁸

"... we have miles of orders and can't get near doing them. So only one alternative, they must wait their turn. Lovely position, no one to do the business but Wenborn & Co, 'Bow-Wow'. I really think Cosmetic ramp (?) is going West, it appears to me they are hot on the trail of these Gangsters, Shame on them, Live and let live our motto..."

It reads as if an opportunity to provide a bottling solution for the cosmetics sector has been lost to other firms willing to under-cut Wenborn & Co. Family anecdotes suggest that the customer involved may have been Chanel No.5 who wanted their perfumes bottled.

James sent Phyllis a "very posh parcel" for Christmas and sends seasonal greetings. He writes a post script in his last letter of the year, despite Vera Lynn's popularity as the "Forces Sweetheart", she doesn't hold quite the same admiration in no.10 Highbury Terrace...

*... good news, Vera Lynn has done her contract so we know her one note will not annoy us..."*⁸⁹.

There is little mention of the War other than James noting that 'Tom Hitler' seems to have 'shot his bolt' and there has been very little trouble other than spasmodic gun fire and he is trusting that Russia will keep them busy.

This was the quiet before the storm as over the next 18 months, James constantly writes of life under the bombs and the very near misses on Highbury Terrace.

15.4 Highbury Terrace – January, February, March 1944

By January 1944, Italy had surrendered and Allied troops were landing at Anzio beach, just south of Rome. Soviet troops had pushed Germany back from Leningrad, (St Petersburg), thereby ending one of the bloodiest sieges in history and Hungary were wavering in their support for Hitler, sensing the tide of War was turning against him.

Despite all this, London remained very much in the eye of the storm as the Luftwaffe continued their night bombing of the Capital. James, Beatrice and the family endured further bombing during January with James writing to Phyllis commenting that *"... we had a pretty good firework display on Friday..."*⁹⁰ or that *"... we had a concert from Tom Hitler this morning, fun starting at 6-15am, rather earlier than usual..."*⁹¹.

⁸⁸ Letter dated 29 November 1943 – Gibbon collection

⁸⁹ Letter dated 21 December 1943 – Gibbon collection

⁹⁰ Letter dated 24 January 1944 – Gibbon collection

⁹¹ Letter dated 6 February 1944 – Gibbon collection

"Dear Phyllis"

Then the jovial mood shifted in the letter of 20th February⁹². James starts by saying that they have been to the pictures and that he will try and find a lemon for Phyllis but hasn't seen any for a long time before writing about last night...

"... I was pleased you were not here Friday night, we had a very trying experience... what a party, did not occur to me Tom Hitler had so much money for his latest Party. You know Aberdeen Park, well he dropped a beauty there and candidly I really thought our turn had come... what with the guns and the bombs I can assure you I was thankful you were safe in your abode, when Aberdeen Park was hit, up we all got, even I came down and you know it takes a lot to disturb me... I am sorry to tell you this as I candidly thought we were finished..."

The following month doesn't bring any respite however James and Beatrice continue to live a charmed life inside Number Ten, Beatrice would often take refuge under the dining room table which was in the kitchen in the basement...⁹³

"... I told you about Drayton Park being in for large lumps but things there are Very Bad All around Holloway Road, like a fair yesterday all day. Large time bomb lodged in the Polytechnic. Expect also hope they will get it out but all shops closed till this bit of fun is over..."

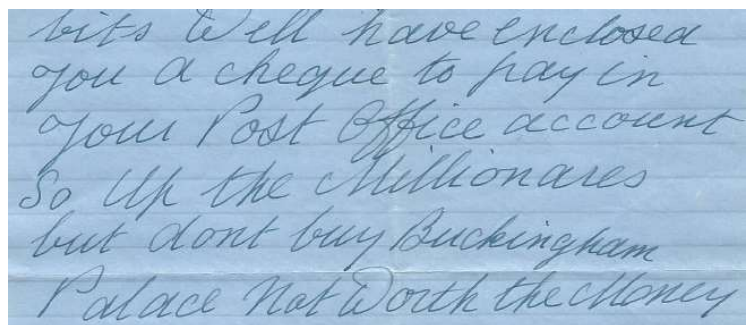
James continues in a similar vein for the next few weeks, interspersed with tales of visits to the Dogs at Harringay and saying how busy they are at work, not able to cope with the orders before signing off every now and again with *"... Up the Russians..."*.

15.5 Highbury Terrace – April, May, June 1944

The months of April and May seem to be a bit quieter than previous months. James manages to arrange to get the windows repaired that were blown out and Beatrice continues her regular visits to the pictures with Jim. She has also arranged to visit Phyllis in Stratford with James staying behind to look after the house and the business.

April the 18th is Phyllis's 24th birthday and her parents have sent her a cheque for her to pay into her Post Office account. We don't know how much it was for but James adds the following...⁹⁴

"... so up the Millionaires but don't buy Buckingham Palace, not worth the money..."



bits Well have enclosed
you a cheque to pay in
your Post Office account
So Up the Millionaires
but dont buy Buckingham
Palace Not Worth the money

⁹² Letter dated 20 February 1944 – Gibbon collection

⁹³ Letter dated 16 March 1944 – Gibbon collection

⁹⁴ Letter dated 16 April 1944 – Gibbon collection

“Dear Phyllis”

Up until now, the racing at Harringay had only been held on Saturdays. This now changed and Mondays were also race nights. It must have been a popular decision as James notes that it was a terrific crowd, lots of pushing and even Mum got ‘windy’, however he safely escorted her home.

June 1944 marked a real turning point in the War. On 4th June, Allied troops liberated Rome meaning Allied bombers could hit targets in Eastern Germany for the first time. On 6th June, Allied troops successfully landed on the Normandy beaches of France, opening a “Second Front” against the Germans.

On the 22nd of June, the Soviets launched a massive offensive in Belorussia, (Belarus), destroying the German Army and driving the enemy westward to Poland. Then on 25th June, the Allied forces break out of the Normandy beachhead and race East towards Paris.

Despite the significant events taking place in Europe, there is not much mention of the War in the early June letters other than James cursing the ‘new invention’ from Germany in sending rockets over, (V1 pilotless bombs). James talks at length about the horses he has backed and the odds he backed them at and the problem he is having in getting enough good workers to cope with the level of orders received.

The tone changes again from mid-June as the V1 rocket campaign intensifies. James mentions Pentonville Road, Finsbury Park cricket pitch and Highbury Corner all being hit. Their back bedroom windows were also damaged in one raid.

In a letter written on 22nd June⁹⁵, James talks about the folk taking cover in the Tube stations and shelters...

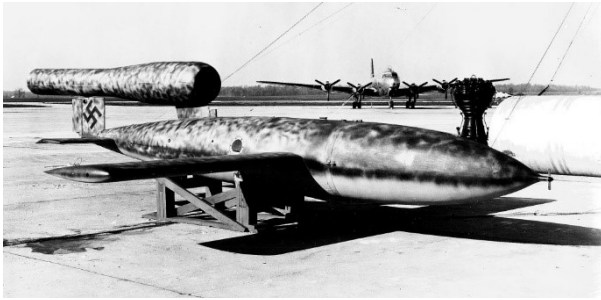
“... lined up with their usual bedding, waiting to go down to their rest house and safety. The Rats, they are the folk who say ‘we can take it’ and anything else that crosses their sticky path...”

‘The Rats’ are referred to again later and the folk that James is referring to are those who are taking advantage of empty houses during the raids and stealing belongings whilst the occupants are sheltering elsewhere. Not a story that is often talked about when London and the War is covered. Probably one reason why James preferred to stay at home during a raid than leave it empty for such predators.

Phyllis is obviously keen to come and visit her parents, however they urge her to remain safe in Stratford and she should come once the rocket activity has died down. The rockets aren’t stopping James and Beatrice enjoying the heatwave as they are regularly sitting in their deck chairs in the garden of number ten.

⁹⁵ Letter dated 22 June 1944 – Gibbon collection

15.6 The V1 bomb



Between June and October of 1944, the citizens of London were under attack by this new weapon. It was a flying bomb, with no pilot, and quickly nicknamed "doodlebug" because of its unique sound. According to witnesses, it sounded like a raspy, pulsing, buzz. London was their intended target. Although many

didn't make it to their final destination, the ones that did strike the City produced sizeable loss of life and property. Some say that it was mostly used as a psychological weapon to bomb the populace into negotiating a peace deal.

The entire city would freeze as they could hear the engine spluttering away. One witness remarked that "you would pray that it keeps going past, hoping it becomes somebody else's problem in some other street, hopefully nobody you know. Then, the motor cuts out and you know it is dropping somewhere near you with half a ton of high explosives.

Eight months earlier, a young airman called Stanley Gibbon had flown with his crew in a Halifax Bomber to Peenemunde, code name Operation Hydra, to attack the German V1 development factory. Whilst the raid may have delayed the development of the V1 and V2 bombs, it hadn't stopped them completely.

15.7 Highbury Terrace – July, August and September 1944

The Summer of 1944 saw the Allies advance into France and Belgium and the Russian Army push Germany back into their homeland.

In July the Allied troops liberated Caen and Hitler survived an assassination attempt. Allied forces break-out of Normandy in "Operation Cobra". This transformed the warfare from close infantry combat into the fast-paced movement warfare that led to the loss of Nazi controlled France.

In August the Allies invade Southern France. Romania capitulated to the Soviets and Paris was liberated. September also saw Brussels liberated. The speed at which the Germans were retreating took everyone by surprise. By September the Russian Army had occupied Estonia. The Germans withdrew in order to prevent being encircled.

Back in London, the next two months, July and August, sees a concentrated bombardment by a new type of warfare, the V1 and V2 rockets. 'The Robots' as James calls them are coming over regularly, often with no warning. James keeps himself busy with his Bottle-Stoppering as business continues to flourish and in the evenings and weekends with backing horses or visiting Harringey for the Dog Racing. Beatrice joins him at Harringey and is a regular cinema goer with her son Jim for company.

"Dear Phyllis"

James continues to write daily to Phyllis, writing in a very stoical, matter of fact manner with underlying, dry humour. The reality must have been terrifying, living on your nerve ends, praying that each rocket will continue on its path, over and beyond your own home. The following excerpts are taken from the July to September 1944 letters which illustrate how James relays to Phyllis how they are managing this 'disruption' to their lives...

"... we had a very hot night Sunday. The enemy kicked off usual time Midnight. Mum and I heard a cool dozen fall but we all here are still in tact less a few windows..."⁹⁶

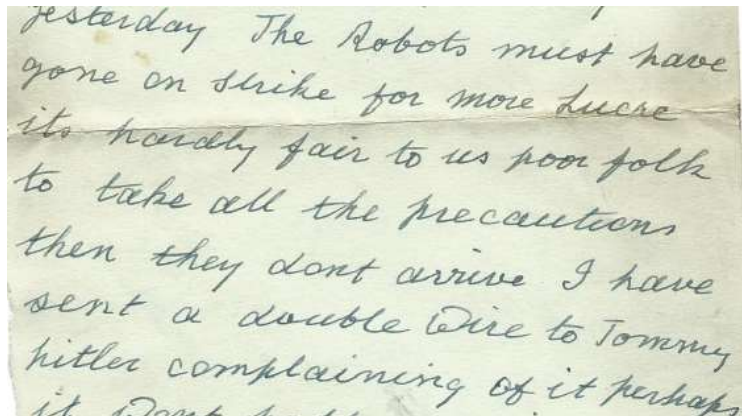
"... Tuesday afternoon just before Tea one came roaring over, not very high up, noise from it was terrific. Naturally we all ran to have a good look at it, there it was, a fire-pot at the back all alight going right over us eventually it flops at Camden Town. Personally I was very glad that the engine kept running but in these great seconds of rush, life appears to hang on threads... it would be a poor show for us if one did visit us, but there we still go on, all they do at Len's firm is taking cover, as many as twenty times a day, in bigger firms, all must go down below when the enemy is in sight, Police orders..."⁹⁷

"... you worry a wee bit but really it is not as bad as folk imagine, also news of any description grows like a snowball, bigger and bigger until folk that are not here wonder if there is any more of Town left. So please don't take notice of these people as some of them are in the yellow brigade..."⁹⁸

"... coming home from the Pictures, Mum told me she sees the yellow brigade all lined up at the Tube, usual rest night, above all, free entrance..."⁹⁹

"... if you ran away, someone clever runs in, well there is nothing to take as the looters have been in action again, heroes they are... they (the Germans) came to visit us but we must expect a bit of fun now and again just to let us know we are having a War..."¹⁰⁰

"... the Robots must have gone on strike for more lucre, it's hardly fair to us poor folk to take all precautions then they don't arrive. I have sent a wire to Tommy Hitler complaining of it, perhaps it won't happen again..."¹⁰¹



Yesterday The Robots must have gone on strike for more lucre it's hardly fair to us poor folk to take all the precautions then they dont arrive I have sent a double wire to Tommy hitler complaining of it perhaps it wont happen again

⁹⁶ Letter dated 3 July 1944 – Gibbon collection

⁹⁷ Letter dated 12 July 1944 – Gibbon collection

⁹⁸ Letter dated 18 July 1944 – Gibbon collection

⁹⁹ Letter dated 20 July 1944 – Gibbon collection

¹⁰⁰ Letter dated 21 July 1944 – Gibbon collection

¹⁰¹ Letter dated 26 July 1944 – Gibbon collection

"Dear Phyllis"

"... Saturday night one came over our house, lit Reg's room up with the light on it as the engine stops running. Reg turned his head toward the cupboard and waited for it as it glided to the Nags Head, opposite the Gaumont Pictures in Holloway Road and down it came with a terrific roar, direct hit on Express Dairy, so you can guess another part of London is missing..."¹⁰²

"... we had about four alerts today, heard several large lumps fall but Wenborns still intact. Did not worry Mum but you know she went to have a lie down this afternoon but had to get up because Jerry began to throw his presents about..."¹⁰³

"... things here have been very quiet in the game of War. Expect Tommy Hitler is getting beaten and he is going to try to be as unkind to us as he can, well we can take it, we here are still intact and looking forward to seeing you again very soon..."¹⁰⁴

"... we here had a very large lump come down about 915 last night, no alert, just a heavy thud. You know that's not playing the game..."¹⁰⁵

James's letters, which are written daily start to take on a predictable pattern. He will start off by thanking Phyllis either for ringing them or receiving a letter from her or even gently admonishing her for not ringing or writing – 'reverse the charges, do you need any more stamps'.

There would then follow a narrative about any German bombing activity which is brushed off very casually, (see above for examples of this). Some family news about Mum, Betty, Len or close friends would be next followed by his exploits at the Dogs and whether or not the latest visit helped swell the Wenborn coffers.

A brief comment about the weather, then how business was going, (normally, too many orders, we can't cope) before finishing off with something along the lines of look forward to seeing you soon when all this is over and it is safe to come home. If James didn't have much to say, he would start to write bigger so it didn't seem like a short letter. This is all written with clear affection and love and no small amount of dry humour.

15.8 Highbury Terrace – October, November and December 1944

The War proceeds very much in the Allies' favour, The Allies invade Greece and liberate Athens. Rommel is forced to commit suicide for his alleged involvement in the assassination plot against Hitler, Yugoslavia falls to the Partisans, aided by the Russians and the Japanese retreat from Burma.

¹⁰² Letter dated 30 July 1944 – Gibbon collection

¹⁰³ Letter dated 16 August 1944 – Gibbon collection

¹⁰⁴ Letter dated 21 August 1944 – Gibbon collection

¹⁰⁵ Letter dated 19 September 1944 – Gibbon collection

"Dear Phyllis"

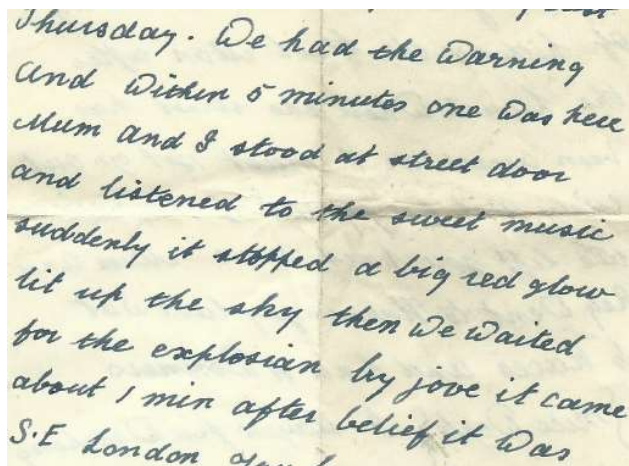
James is now writing less about the falling bombs, which are still occurring sporadically, and more about how he believes the War will soon be over and his successes at the Dogs. One event that dominates his writing across these three months is Len, Phyllis's brother, who was admitted to hospital again for what looks like a prolonged stay.

Five years earlier, Len had been admitted to the Fairlight Sanatorium in Hastings, a Tuberculosis treatment hospital. This was, and still is, an infectious disease that normally affects the lungs, is highly contagious and is caught by inhaling tiny droplets of a sneeze or cough from an infected person.

In October 1944, Len is back at a sanatorium, although this time the King George V in Godalming. From his own letters, Len maintains a cheery disposition, sharing jokes in his letters such as, *"... did you hear about the (idiot) who thought VAT 69 was the Pope's telephone number..."*. His health is very frail as minor gardening duties leave him breathless and tired, bearing in mind he is a 30 year old man who should be as fit and strong as he will ever be.

Having been admitted, Len is given various tests before the surgeons decide how best to operate on him. He expects to be there for up to 12 months and comments that the food there is better than of the other sanatoriums he has been at, which suggests he has been in and out of hospital continuously for the duration of the War.

As noted earlier, James talks less about the bombing and more about how he expects the War to be over very soon and how bad it is going for "Jerry Hitler". When, on the few occasions he does write about an attack, it is with a fairly dismissive air...



Thursday. We had the warning
and within 5 minutes one was here
Mum and I stood at street door
and listened to the sweet music
suddenly it stopped a big red glow
lit up the sky then we waited
for the explosion by jove it came
about 1 min after belief it was
S.E London street

*"... we had the warning and within 5 minutes one was here. Mum and I stood at street door and listened to the sweet music, suddenly it stopped and a big red glow lit up the sky, then we waited for the explosion, by jove it came about 1 minute after, believe it was SE London... We know they are still having a go so it seems you must defer coming home yet as we think it is safer to be at your famous abode..."*¹⁰⁶

*"... we had a nasty rocket on Sunday 5pm tea time. It crashed at Highgate near bus garage. That shook the famous borough of Islington. Still, it is over in seconds, no warning, just a loud crash. So Tommy and his gangsters are still trying..."*¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Letter dated 6 October 1944 – Gibbon collection

¹⁰⁷ Letter dated 7 November 1944 – Gibbon collection

“Dear Phyllis”

The next letter mentions one of Wenborn’s major customers being hit, British Drug Houses...

“... it appears Rocket fell on British Drug Houses at 820pm. Of course there are only a few minor casualties thank goodness. Damage you can guess will be great as Jim said it is the biggest fire he has seen, as you know there is a vast amount of drugs there that go up with a big roar. We only lost two windows, so we are still going on as usual, very strong and fit for next bit of fun...”¹⁰⁸

James does mention how difficult it is becoming to get anything and then goes on to provide an insight to the importance the Government have placed on Wenborn’s operation regarding the War effort...

“... things here seem to me to get worse as regards buying anything at all, does not matter what it is, glass, clothes, food or anything. Whatsoever, of course we here at factory are ok as we are on highest priority work hence we can demand from our various bottle works our requirements to finish orders for various military medicinal use...”¹⁰⁹

James finishes off writing for the year by wishing Phyllis a grand time for the great festive day, (he never actually uses the word Christmas), and hopes she enjoys herself. There is obviously still an element of danger present as it would have been natural for the family to have all come together over Christmas and New Year however there is no indication of this being discussed or attempted.

15.9 Highbury Terrace – January, February and March 1945

January sees the end of Battle of the Bulge and Germany begins what will ultimately be the final retreat. Russia liberates Budapest and Warsaw and in March the last bomb lands in Britain. The War is drawing to an end.

From the end of February James’s letters are slowly becoming more about family news, Len’s progress in hospital, success with betting on the Dogs or Horses, arranging tickets for the West End and how Thomas the cat is putting on weight.

Quite a few of the letters end with, *“Up the Russians...”* as they are pushing Germany back at a ferocious speed. The consensus is that the War will be over in a matter of months. As the months progress and the bombs become fewer and fewer, it would almost be possible to read James’s writing with a twinge of regret for when it finishes, although more likely he is trying not to worry Phyllis and he will be as relieved as anyone when the raids come to an end...

¹⁰⁸ Letter dated 24 November 1944 – Gibbon collection

¹⁰⁹ Letter dated 30 November 1944 – Gibbon collection

"Dear Phyllis"

"... Jerry is still doing his utmost to make things warm for us but we are still as usual putting up with it, expect it is only a flash in the horizon..."¹¹⁰

Mar 20-45 No 1 No 10 Same Place
Tues 5-30 p.m.
Dear Phyllis
Thanks for your welcome letter also your news. You know I don't like to hear of your being accosted by these drunken louts. It will worry me more than any air Raids occurring here so do be careful as I get very perturbed when I hear of these loavers accosting people as you know they are some very nasty people creeping about especially these service fellows

"...North London is having a fair share of presents, Jerry is distributing, still we are at War..."¹¹¹

"...hectic day Tuesday, six all told Tuesday night, we hear just a loud explosion then a big rumble all in seconds. Of course we don't know what is happening, people here are quite unconcerned, not like the old days of the Blitzes, these things come and go..."¹¹²

"... rockets are beginning to arrive quite regular since you went back. Now the snow has gone, expect the performing rockets to arrive as usual. We had a beauty at 830am Friday to start the day, as usual, far far away..."¹¹³

"... rockets are arriving regularly, Wednesday 5pm one exploded in the air and believe me it shook London... we do not mind them as they are harmless so far up..."¹¹⁴

"... we here are all OK, no complaints, no noise. Things are nearly normal only the Old houses are not there, results of Jerry's kindness..."¹¹⁵

"... last Saturday at Harringey at about the 5th race we had a warning and over came a Robot and terrific crash fell behind us but far far away. This was an extra turn, no charge for excitement it caused. We shall be very pleased to see you in the near future. I still think this War with Jerry won't last March out and I mean '45..."¹¹⁶

"... only one rocket arrived Wednesday night, not too bad but one only is one too many for someone..."¹¹⁷

"... we had the usual amusement Thursday night. Mum heard four of them, you know there is no charge for this bit of extra fun so really we must consider it most kind of them to come..."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ Letter dated 4 January 1945 – Gibbon collection

¹¹¹ Letter dated 15 January 1945 – Gibbon collection

¹¹² Letter dated 23 January 1945 – Gibbon collection

¹¹³ Letter dated 2 February 1945 – Gibbon collection

¹¹⁴ Letter dated 15 February 1945 – Gibbon collection

¹¹⁵ Letter dated 3 March 1945 – Gibbon collection

¹¹⁶ Letter dated 10 March 1945 – Gibbon collection

¹¹⁷ Letter dated 15 March 1945 – Gibbon collection

¹¹⁸ Letter dated 23 March 1945 – Gibbon collection

“Dear Phyllis”

There was one incident of note that was commented on in a letter¹¹⁹ and that was James showing concern for Phyllis after she had been accosted by “... *some drunken louts...*” in Stratford. James says that this perturbs him more than any air raid and that there are some very nasty people creeping about, especially these service fellows, (which is a sweeping statement but may reflect what is actually happening?).

The business continues to ‘suffer’ from too many orders and not enough bottles. At the end of March, James gives his workers four days off until Tuesday, (so assumedly it is Easter). He goes to the factory on Good Friday and is there by himself, so writes his letter to Phyllis while he is waiting a delivery of bottles.

15.10 Highbury Terrace – April, May and June 1945

By March the Allies have crossed the Rhine and in April, Mussolini is captured and executed and the Russians reach Berlin. On the 30th of April, Hitler commits suicide and a week later on 7th May 1945, Germany unconditionally surrenders.

The letters from James to Phyllis are now all about how things are returning to normal, how Len is receiving a different treatment but may still be in hospital until October and encouraging Phyllis to return home now that it is safe to do so. James writing on 5th April is typical of the mood of the month...¹²⁰

“... well things here are normal, no noise at all, so we can carry on in peace. Expect you will be pleased to hear that a very pleasant time awaits you at No.10, you know we shall be awfully bucked when we know you are finished at Stratford on Avon. It has been far too long for all of us, so happier days are here...”

By the end of June, Phyllis is still at her digs in Stratford and James is still writing saying they are looking forward to seeing her back home. It isn’t clear whether it is work commitments or something else preventing Phyllis returning to London, however she is still living in Stratford in September.

Part Two will now follow the fortunes of Frank, Stanley, James Luke and Phyllis in a post-War Britain that is being re-built after six years of conflict that had changed the face of Europe and the World.

¹¹⁹ Letter dated 20 March 1945 – Gibbon collection

¹²⁰ Letter dated 5 April 1945 – Gibbon collection

PART TWO

16. Frank Gibbon – The Post War Years

Frank was 68 years of age when WW2 ended. He was still living with his mother, Fanny, at 228 Upton Lane, West Ham, which is where he would continue living until his death in 1963. Fannie died in 1950, aged 99, leaving Frank as the sole occupier.

Having left the Army after WW1 in 1919, Frank had, at best, drifted between low paid jobs. His son, Bernard, was now settled in Australia and his estranged wife, Minnie, was living in North London. It is unlikely that he had any contact with her as she declared herself to be a widow on the 1939 Register and when Stanley Gibbon married in 1953, he declared on the Marriage certificate that his father, Frank Gibbon, an insurance clerk, was deceased.



Frank was very much alive and still writing to Bernard who had now married Freda Fletcher, (left, on their wedding day). In February 1952¹²¹ Frank writes a lengthy letter describing how he was alone in a room in Kensington Palace, admiring the bedroom where a young Princess Victoria was awoken to be told of the news of the death of her father, William IV, in 1837. Frank was then spoken to by an usher who told him the present King, George VI, had just died. What follows is a detailed account of the breaking news and the pageantry to follow, including the music that would be played and the route the procession will take.

Frank wryly notes that this will be the fifth coronation he will have witnessed in his lifetime, Edward VII, George V, Edward VIII and George VI were the others. His detailed knowledge of the history and architecture of the Royal Palaces, the roles performed by the Heralds, and their correct titles plus his description of the carriages, crowds and general mood of the Country makes it a very colourful letter, capturing a special moment in time, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

Although the letter spans seven pages, there is no mention of anyone else, of his work-life and only right at the end does he ask how Bernard and Freda are doing. It resembles the writings of someone, who whilst is well-read, self-educated and enjoys the theatre, museums and current affairs, is actually very lonely, living in a world of his own.

¹²¹ Letter from Frank Gibbon to Bernard, 10 February 1952, courtesy of Gillian Gibbon

"Dear Phyllis"

One of the ways in which Frank occupied himself, or filled in his days, was to attend Court Cases, watching from the public gallery as high profile cases were debated and argued over. This was no doubt an inexpensive form of entertainment and would be interesting to witness the wheels of justice in action.

One such trial that Frank attended was that of Dr. Adams who was accused of poisoning a patient. On the first day of the trial, 18th March 1957, Frank was photographed by a newspaper photographer at the front of the public queue, (see below), waiting to be admitted to the hearing. On the reverse of the photograph, he notes that he had been queueing since 6am, waiting for the doors to open at 10.15am. He also writes that standing next to him was an American journalist who wasn't able to obtain a press pass. After a full week of hearing the arguments for the prosecution and defence, the Judge acquitted the Doctor of the charges against him.



Despite his lack of a steady income or well paid job, Frank strikes a very debonair pose in a smart coat, jacket and bow tie, (1st on the left).

A surviving letter from Sunday 21st September 1958¹²² from Frank to Bernard is another long historically fact packed letter, describing his visit to Dover castle, his short holidays—long weekends to his favourite B&B in Folkestone, all written whilst he was at work at the factory. As it was a Sunday, it was possible that his job wasn't necessarily on the production line but more of night watchman or security. This would explain how he found the time to write a lengthy letter whilst at work. He also talks of having to soon pack up and leave the factory for another week, suggesting that it was only a weekend job.

¹²² Letter from Frank Gibbon to Bernard, 21 September 1958, courtesy of Gillian Gibbon

“Dear Phyllis”

Again, there is no mention of anyone else, or about his work but a lot of commentary on the prevailing General Election and how Frank stayed up until the small hours of the morning listening to the results coming in over the radio. By this time, Frank was aged 71.

It is not possible to tell whether it was ill-health or simply advancing years that prompted Frank to write as he did to Bernard in September 1961¹²³. The letter starts off by responding to a request for Minnie’s address in which Frank suggests that he is not the best person to ask, and then explains how Minnie never forgave him in sending Bernard to Australia. What follows is a detailed account of why and how Frank and Minnie separated and why Frank felt Bernard stood a better chance in life by going to Australia. He also explains why Minnie, Bernard’s mother, never came to see him off. The letter, written in 1961, is from an elderly 84 year old man to his 48 year old son and whilst the contents of this letter have been noted earlier, it is relevant to repeat them again as Bernard is likely to be hearing this for the first time, over forty years after the event itself...

“... I came home in May 1919, to Greville Road, Kilburn... a large house with 3 or 4 tenants, among these was a certain Gus Webb who had been invalided out of the Army after a dose of gas and had been living there with his mother for 2 years before I got home... here, under the same roof, were a man, whose wife was living away and a woman whose husband was far off overseas. Both normal human beings in their late thirties and both better suited to each other than their legal partners...

... as regards the personality of Gus Webb, he was quite normal and agreeable in the ordinary way but there was an ingrained black streak in his nature that came to the surface whenever he had had too much to drink. The ancient Romans had a saying, ‘In Vino Veritas’, In Wine, the Truth...

...and it showed itself at last in a scene in the house, a fight outside with my eye blacked and a few bruises as a result... thus the long simmering affair had boiled over...”

¹²³ Letter from Frank Gibbon to Bernard, 30 September 1961, courtesy of Gillian Gibbon

“Dear Phyllis”

Frank then explains how he moved out to Ilford, started an egg-round which he continued for a few years, taking Bernard with him. Frank was still feeling restless and disturbed so sent Bernard away to Ford End village in the Essex countryside and whilst he was away came across an announcement about the Fairbridge scheme. He met a lady from the scheme and agreed with her that Bernard would be accepted and start a new life in Australia. Frank wrote to Minnie twice but received no reply.

“...I remember how anxious you were to see Mum before you went away and how puzzled I was at her silence, not knowing how matters really were...”

Minnie had just given birth at this time so had possibly either missed the letter or was too pre-occupied to answer it.

Frank then goes on to say that instinctively he looked for compensation and sort of adopted Peggy, the little girl from ‘downstairs’ and took her out for walks and trips into London, (photograph right, Frank in Trafalgar Square, 1953). Her father died when she was 14 years old and six years later, when she married, there were 5 kindred uncles available to give her away.

“...but I was the selected uncle for the great occasion and everything went off well. Indeed the natural uncles were relieved to be out of the limelight on the occasion...”



It is the one surviving letter where Frank opens up to Bernard on why he was sent to Australia under the Fairbridge scheme for young children. It is possible to feel the sadness from Frank when he talks about him ‘adopting’ a surrogate in place of Bernard in Peggy.

As a side note, Bernard contacts Rhodes Fairbridge, an ex-Chief Executive of the Fairbridge scheme, in 1962 for the address of a Mrs Mary Dennehy, one of his teachers at Fairbridge. Bernard then writes to the Australian Government, Public Works Department, nominating Mrs Dennehy for recognition in the upcoming Queen’s Birthday Honours list. His time at Fairbridge could not have been too bad if many years later he held the staff in such high regard.

In January 1963, Peggy, (who Frank had ‘adopted’ since a child), wrote to Bernard informing him of his father’s ill-health. He had been in hospital and back at 228 Upton Lane but is only a matter of time. She mentions he has little money and no insurances for a burial and would Bernard care to help in the matter.

On the 10th July 1963¹²⁴, Peggy writes again to Bernard informing him that Frank has passed away peacefully and it was a relief as he had been ill for many months. Peggy also writes...

¹²⁴ Letter from Peggy to Bernard, 10 July 1963, courtesy of Gillian Gibbon

“Dear Phyllis”

“... I am sure anything I have done will meet with your approval as I was very fond of him and I am sure he felt the same way about me. He received your letter in hospital and was thrilled, and relieved in his mind about sending you out to Australia...”

Peggy also mentions that as his pension continued whilst he was in hospital, there was enough money to cover all the funeral expenses. His death certificate, (*see Appendix 21*), confirms he died from cerebral arteriosclerosis, a hardening of the arteries in the brain which brings on dementia-like symptoms.

Frank died aged 85 in Langthorne Hospital, Leytonstone. He didn't live out the happiest of lives, however, Peggy, his surrogate daughter was with him at the end and his son, Bernard, who he never saw again after sending him to Australia in 1923, had written to him in his final months, putting his mind at rest over the decision to send him away for a better life.



17. James Luke Wenborn – The Post War Years

During the War years when the family were separated and Phyllis had been evacuated to Stratford-upon-Avon, it was only natural that James Luke would wish to keep in regular contact and reassure her that all was well on the home front. Post-War, his letter writing continued, although not as regular, however James Luke could be considered a prolific letter writer as it is likely he wrote also to his other daughter, Beatrice, (Betty), and other acquaintances.

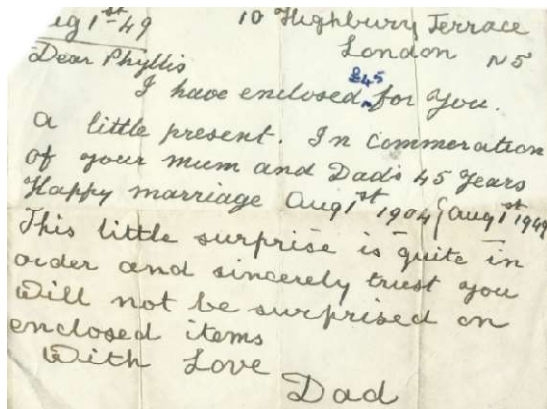
Many of the letters are now written either from a holiday resort, (Great Yarmouth, Westcliffe on Sea), or to a holiday resort where Phyllis was staying, (Isle of Wight, Devon). Holidays by the seaside were obviously a favourite for James Luke, staying in nice hotels, taking in the sea air, enjoying good meals in the hotel along with a glass of brandy as a night-cap.

There is less written about the Wenborn Bottle-Stoppering business other than the occasional comment that ‘business is good’ and Jim, (eldest son, James), is carrying on a ‘good show’. James Luke is now well into his 70's and it would have been surprising had he continued to be as hands-on in the business as he had been. Handing the running of the business to his two sons, Jim and Reg, would allow James Luke to enjoy a well-earned retirement.



"Dear Phyllis"

James retains an interest in going to watch the Dog racing at Harringay and follows the odds quite keenly. He writes in detail about his winnings, how much he put on and the odds he received, all 'swelling the Wenborn coffers'. Even on holiday, he immerses himself in studying the newspaper for the racing odds.



His generosity continues into retirement as demonstrated when James and Beatrice celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary on the 1st August 1949. James writes to Phyllis¹²⁵ enclosing a cheque for £45 in commemoration of their celebration, see left. (This would be the equivalent of nearly £1,300¹²⁶ in today's money, 2023).

One recurring theme in James's letters is the mention of either having been to watch Arsenal FC play at Highbury or planning to go and watch them play, taking a friend or Len or Beatrice. We know from James's Westminster Bank book from the 1930's that there were regular payments to Arsenal FC. Family anecdotes tell of James as one of the early investors, (debenture holders), in Highbury Stadium and was a season ticket holder for many years.

James had now taken a back-seat from running the business so he could afford to spend more time watching football. His regular mention of Arsenal and their results in his letter writing suggests that he was a keen supporter.

Pre-War, during the 1930's, Arsenal were the dominant team in English football. Under Herbert Chapman and then George Allison, Arsenal won the First Division five times and the FA Cup twice. They



were known as 'the Bank of England' club as they attracted record crowds, (regularly in excess of 60,000 and at its peak over 70,000), and could therefore afford to recruit the best players of the time such as David Jack, Cliff Bastin and Alex James.

During the War the Football League was suspended for seven years, but Arsenal returned to win it in 1947-48. They won a third FA Cup in 1950, however, the War had taken its toll on Arsenal. The club had had more players killed than any top flight club and debt from reconstructing the North Bank Stand drained Arsenal's resources.

¹²⁵ Letter dated 1 August 1949 – Gibbon collection

¹²⁶ Bank of England inflation calculator, [Inflation calculator](https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/inflation-calculator) | Bank of England, accessed 23 April 2023

“Dear Phyllis”



1952 saw another Cup Final although this ended in defeat by the one goal to Newcastle United, the Chilean, George Robledo, heading the winner, (see left). The following season saw Arsenal win a record-breaking seventh championship in 1952–53 however success was to prove elusive for years after. James Luke

will have seen Arsenal at their very best during the 1930’s and immediate post-War period. Highbury Stadium must have been a wonderful place to spend a Saturday afternoon, generating much atmosphere and excitement.

An article in the Daily News (London) published on 24th January 1952¹²⁷ provides a rare insight into the Wenborn Bottle-Stoppering business, (*see Appendix 22*). As part of an article that looked at London craftsman, unique in their own field, it tells of the Wenborn business, which is in its fourth generation. It explains how the bottles are given stoppers that take up to six hand operations to ensure a good fitting before being exported by air all over the world.

As well as an insight into the business, the article also reports how James Luke enjoys an evening cup of tea made with hot milk, not water, to which he adds sugar, whisky and butter. He attributes his youthful demeanour to this daily routine.

A letter written on 30th June 1952¹²⁸ by James Luke to Phyllis includes the first mention of Stan Gibbon. In it, he writes that “...Mum has decided she will accept Stan as your friend...”, James titles the letter as “No.1 Special Edition”, as if it is a significant announcement. At the time, Stan was still married to Winifred and with two young children. Beatrice may have initially ‘disapproved’ of her daughter seeing a married man, albeit in the process of a divorce, however she has obviously warmed to Stan and seen how happy the two were together.

Phyllis and Stan get married on 7th November 1953 and James Luke writes to the newly-weds on 11th November 1953¹²⁹ saying that he hopes they are enjoying their honeymoon and how all the china has now been returned, the billiard table cleared and that there are still flowers in every room. This all paints a picture of Highbury Terrace playing host to a house full of happy guests all celebrating the wedding with food and drink aplenty.

¹²⁷ British Newspapers Archive, Daily News London 24 January 1952, [The British Newspaper Archive | findmypast.co.uk](https://www.findmypast.co.uk), accessed 23 April 2023

¹²⁸ Letter dated 30 June 1952 – Gibbon collection

¹²⁹ Letter dated 11 November 1953 – Gibbon collection

"Dear Phyllis"

James is now 78 years of age and his writing is starting to deteriorate and holidays spent at a slower pace, letting others go for walks as he finds it too tiring. The summer of 1955 sees James and Beatrice celebrate their Golden, 50th wedding anniversary, and at the end of August James is taking his oldest daughter, Betty, to watch Arsenal. James and Beatrice are also looking after their grand-daughter, Victoria, (Vicky), who James says is enjoying her Channel swims and 'eating all the profits'.

Another August letter talks of James spending time in bed, and saying that he is feeling better as the pain has gone thanks to Mum's medicine, 'Brandy Galore!'. Ten weeks later, on 17th November 1955, James Luke passes away, shortly before his 79th birthday.

The letters of condolences received on the days following his death illustrate the high regard that James was held in, not just by his close friends and neighbours but also his suppliers, customers and tradesmen who carried out work for him. A selection of sentiments expressed provide an indication of the character of James...

"... it is now a very long time that we have known him and we can say without hesitation that we deeply respected him and his straightforward ways in business..." – AJ Charlton & Sons–Builders and Decorators

"... I feel very much that I and those of my colleagues who knew him for over a quarter of a century have lost a very dear friend..." – Crookes Laboratories, Park Royal, London

"... he was a kindly, pleasant person and always, however ruffled we were, would endeavour to help. The world, unfortunately, has not nearly enough of his kind.." – Welkeen Products, Kentish Town

"... although we never had the opportunity of meeting him, we always found much pleasure in speaking to him on the telephone, we shall very much miss his cheery voice..." A.Matthews, Grafton Street, London

"... as a next door neighbour for 30 years, I had learnt to know your father and to respect him. We shall miss him very much..." Capital Motor Co., City Road, London

"... it was always a great pleasure to speak to him, for he never seemed to be anything but very cheerful and happy..." – Thomas Morson & Son Ltd, Ponders End, Middlesex

"Dear Phyllis"



James was survived by his wife of more than 50 years, Beatrice, and five of his six children, Betty, Jim, Len, Reg and Phyllis.

A full life, well lived would be an appropriate description of his 78 years. A man who enjoyed life, his family, sporting interests and built a respected business across two World Wars.

Blessed with a cheerful outlook and a keen sense of humour, James Luke Wenborn would have been missed by all who knew him.

18. Stanley and Phyllis Gibbon, née Wenborn

Flight Lieutenant Stanley Gibbon DFC left the RAF after the War and returned to his post in the Treasury Solicitors Office in London's High Courts as an Executive Officer. The contrast of a safe desk job after serving in Bomber Command during the War probably couldn't be much greater.

Phyllis Wenborn was now back at number Ten, Highbury Terrace, with her parents after having spent at least three years away from home in Stratford-upon-Avon, evacuated there as a precaution against the Luftwaffe bombing campaigns over London. Phyllis, now an experienced Typist, was back working in the Treasury Solicitor's Department as a Clerical Officer.

According to the Electoral Registers, Stan was living on Benhill Wood Road, Sutton and Cheam, Surrey with his wife, Winifred, and their two young children between 1947 and 1950, less than a mile away from Winifred's parents who were living on Matlock Crescent. Winifred was also employed by the Civil Service as a clerk.

It is not clear when Stan and Winifred's marriage started to unravel or the reasons why,



however we do know that Stan and Phyllis, (who had known each other before the War as they were both working in the Treasury Solicitor's Office), were courting by the summer of 1949. Stan writes to Phyllis from Goole on 14th July 1949¹³⁰ where he was attending the horse racing with her brother, Jim. He is picked up from the station by Jim in a Sports Allard, (see left). Allard were a short-lived London based car manufacturer, (1945–57) and manufactured less than 2,000

¹³⁰ Letter dated 14 July 1949, Stan to Phyllis – Gibbon collection

"Dear Phyllis"

cars. Noted for their high performance engines, Stan comments in his letter "... *boy, can that thing move, on one occasion we touched 93...*". Whilst Stan just about broke even at the races, Jim won over £200 in the first three races, then wisely packed up.

Stan does mention that while he is missing Phyllis not there with him, he is looking forward to their fortnight away in September. This partly suggests that they have been seeing each other for sometime and the relationship is now quite serious. From a letter written by Stan on Phyllis's birthday in April 1950, we know that he has moved out of Benhill Wood Road and is now living at 63 Poets Road, Islington, less than half a mile away from Highbury Terrace.

By June 1952 Phyllis had introduced Stan to her parents. By April 1953, a close friend of Phyllis's, Lorna, writes to her and among things asks whether the 'Absolute' has come through yet. Stan and Winifred would therefore have started divorce proceedings sometime earlier and probably had separated much before then.

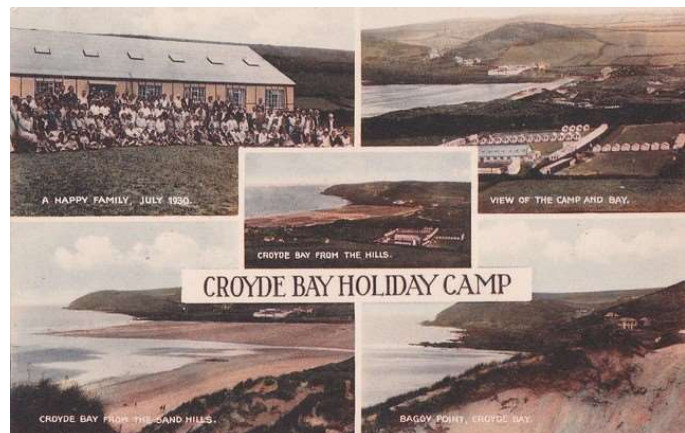


During the last week of June 1953, Phyllis takes Beatrice, (her mother), for a week at Gorleston-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth. Stan and Phyllis write to each other every evening, exchanging news on how their day has gone. Stan is living at Parkhill Road, Hampstead and from a couple of comments made, probably hasn't got a lot of disposable income. He is possibly supporting his estranged wife

and children as well as himself and two separate properties on a civil servants salary.

Whilst the letters¹³¹ talk about mundane matters, (receiving a new tax code, settling the electric bill, the weather, fixing his bicycle etc.), it is clear that they both are very anxious to be together again and eventually married once Stan's divorce has come through. Stan has arranged the purchase of a new house for when they are married and informs Phyllis that the contract is ready to be signed when she returns from her holiday.

At the end of August 1953, Phyllis and her mother, Beatrice, go for a week's holiday at the NALGO Holiday Camp at Croyde Bay, near Barnstaple, Devon. NALGO is an anacronym for the National Association of Local Government Officers. The Holiday Camp was built for the benefit of the staff. There was a second camp built



¹³¹ Letters dated 22-25 June 1953, Stan to Phyllis - Gibbon collection

“Dear Phyllis”

near Scarborough, again for staff and their family. Croyde Bay is still operating and run by NALGO's successor, UNISON.

Stan remains at home, decorating the flat and making sure everything is polished and clean for Phyllis's return. Stan's evenings seem to alternate between Wembley, Charlton and Wandsworth, following the dog racing. He seems to rely on inside tips from his friends, although profits are few and far between. A visit to Highbury and a meal out with another friend fills his week.

They have pencilled in 10th October for the wedding and are telling friends not to expect an invite as it will be a quiet affair. Reading between the lines, Beatrice, Phyllis's mother, is not totally in favour of her daughter marrying a divorcee. Stan mentions a couple of times that he doesn't wish to place a call to Phyllis at the camp in case her name is read out over the tannoy and her mother hears it. Stan even says that his mother, Minnie, would understand if she was not invited under the circumstances, (whatever these circumstances may be). There is some obvious tension towards the union of Stan and Phyllis.

The only other item of note is that Stan in his letters persuades Phyllis to enter the table-tennis competition at the camp and hopefully she will make some friends and start to enjoy herself more. She does enter the competition but gets knocked out early, 'too rusty, haven't played for ages'.

Eventually, albeit a month later than planned, Stanley Gibbon and Phyllis Wenborn get married on Saturday 7th November 1953 at Islington Register Office, (*see Appendix 23 for Wedding Certificate*). Stanley, (36), of Parkhill Road, Hampstead declares his father, Frank Gibbon as an Insurance Agent and deceased. Frank was actually living less than ten miles away in West Ham on his own. Phyllis, (33), of Highbury Terrace declares James Luke as a Glass Grinder. The marriage is witnessed by James Luke and Minnie.



The wedding photograph, (left), shows from Left to Right, Beatrice, Stanley, Phyllis, James Luke and Minnie.

A family anecdote tells of James Luke's shaving habits, always on a Sunday and a Wednesday and never in between, whatever the occasion. When Phyllis got married on

“Dear Phyllis”

a Saturday, James refused to shave and when Beatrice told him he had to shave, James did what he always did when he got into an argument, he went to bed. He stayed in bed just long enough so that when he got up, he didn't have time to shave and true to his word, there is the trace of a white beard on his chin, even on his daughter's wedding day. Irrespective, it is then assumed they all retired back to Highbury Terrace to continue the celebrations with the rest of the family.

A year later in 1954 Phyllis gives birth to their first child, a daughter, Victoria. Eighteen months later and they have a second daughter, Sarah. In August 1958, Phyllis and Betty, (her elder sister), are away on holiday at the seaside while Stan is at home, decorating the house.

Money is either still tight or they manage their cashflows carefully as Stan mentions in his letter¹³² that there is no post other than the final reminder for the telephone. Stan also mentions that Len can't use the season ticket for the Arsenal match this week so he is going to go rather than see it go to waste. There is a small insight into the household routines as Stan writes that Phyllis must miss him not being there to look after the children early in the morning. They are expecting their third child anytime and Stan is working overtime and taking on extra supervisory duties to bring in some extra cash.

Their third child, James Luke is born in September 1958 and two years later they have a fourth child, Mark, in 1960. From a letter written by Stan to Phyllis in July 1961, Stan is at home while Phyllis is away with the four children on holiday. It is addressed from number 12 Highbury Terrace, next-door to where Phyllis grew up and where her mother is still living.

In 1971, within a couple of months, both Stan and Phyllis lose their mothers. Phyllis actually received a call about Beatrice's death as they were leaving for Minnie's funeral. Winnie died in May, aged 89 and Beatrice passed away in June aged 87.



Stan and Phyllis at home with, from L-R, Sarah, Luke, Mark and Vicky.

Bringing up four young children, running a household and managing a career in the Civil Service dominates the next decade for Stan and Phyllis. Their home life was possibly as unremarkable as their experiences during the War had been remarkable. Stan would enjoy sport on the television, particularly horse racing and boxing, throwing 'air punches' in support and having a regular half-a-crown bet at the bookies. In later years, Phyllis would watch the

¹³² Letter dated 25 August 1958, Stan to Phyllis – Gibbon collection

"Dear Phyllis"

football with the sound turned down and the radio for commentary which she preferred to the television commentary.

It was Stan's job to get the shopping at Barnet market on a Saturday morning. He would take either Sarah or Mark and after completing the shopping would stop by The George or The Salisbury for a scotch on the way home. Once home, Phyllis would often berate him for not going to the cheapest supermarket for things and every week he got a dressing down, possibly the reason he wanted to enjoy a drink before getting back.

An evening routine would be giving the dogs treats. Stan would shoot the treats across the floor, one after another, for the dogs to chase and once done would say *"comprenez vous, completo, that's your lot, all done"*. The dogs would then know there was no more to come.

Stan's DIY attempts weren't always successful. When the cellar flooded with sewage, he got a pump and with a friend, they pumped the water out into a drain. Enthusiastically, they continued to pump but the water level wasn't falling. Unbeknown to them, a house a few doors down had built a garden feature and the soil had blocked the drain causing the pumped water to return back to the basement causing a circuitous flow of water.

Phyllis was a forthright personality and not afraid to let folk know what she thought. As a couple, they were regularly late for church, despite living close, often sidling in 10–15 minutes after the service had started. No one ever said anything as they were scared of Phyllis and what she might say. Even in her later years, she would tease friends of her grandchildren for having ginger hair, *"you're a right old copper knob, aren't you"*, would be one refrain. Not something that you could possibly get away with today. Her views on modern fashion were equally to the point, as when commenting on the length of her daughter's outfit, *"Well, you won't trip over that skirt, will you..!"*.

Stan had joined the local masonic lodge and was a senior member of the lodge, usually taking the whole family to dinner and dances. Stan and Phyllis enjoyed dancing together, often the foxtrot and Phyllis would always look fantastic, wearing her favourite perfume, Chanel No.5.

By 1974, Stan's life as a self-confessed hardened smoker is catching up with him. He has been booked into Benenden Chest Hospital. It was originally run under the name of the Post Office and Civil Service Sanatorium Society, specialising in treatment of tuberculosis for the staff and family of the two organisations.

Stan is booked in for a period of six weeks from early June to late July. The aim was to wean Stan off cigarettes completely. The Doctors suggest that to stop straight away would be too much to expect and to limit himself to five a day for the first couple of weeks. Stan prefers to get the pain over with and stop immediately.

After Phyllis and the children visited on the 9th June, Stan writes and thanks them for making the journey and hopes that Vicky isn't regretting having learnt to drive, assumedly the driving responsibility had fallen on her.

“Dear Phyllis”

Following a visit two weeks later, Stan apologises for not being more entertaining and hopes his sorry plight did not upset them too much. The Doctors are trying different tablets in an effort to see which ones work best. Stan does say that his breathing is improving and asks Phyllis to bring a belt for his trousers next time she visits as he is losing some weight.

The treatment must have been at least partially successful as Stan is released earlier than expected and is back with Phyllis and the children. Sixteen years later, in October 1990, Stan is back in hospital with breathing and circulation difficulties. Phyllis remarks in her letter that even over the phone, Stan sounded so breathless. She is occupying herself by taking their dog, Rick, for regular morning walks and re-arranging the furniture. Her DIY skills are exposed with Stan away from home as she had to call in a neighbour to change the living room light after the bulb had gone.

Phyllis’s letters to Stan¹³³ contain much news about people they know from church, the appointment of a new vicar and how the children are fairing. She proudly informs Stan that Luke must be doing well as a client had just treated him to a full day’s racing at Newmarket including lunch and transport home.



Left – Stan and Phyllis with their eldest son, Luke and their grand-daughters, Michelle and Charlotte, and Rick the dog, circa 1987

There is a hint in Phyllis’s last letter that when Stan comes home they need to consider changing their life-style as she is weak and frail and not confident in doing things without him. By this time, Phyllis and Stan are 70 and 73 years old respectively.

19. An interview with Stan, recorded early 1994

A recorded interview between Stan and Les Spicer, (his son-in-law), survives from early 1994. It comprises of Les and Stan having a conversation about Stan’s time with 51 Squadron, talking

¹³³ Letters dated 2–19 October 1990, Phyllis to Stan – Gibbon collection

“Dear Phyllis”

about a specific mission, (Magdeburg), that Stan flew on and various other memories of his time in the RAF, Bomber Command.

Stan at this time is now 77 years of age and whilst his breathing is laboured, his recall and memory is as sharp as if the events happened only last week. The interview is conducted with much empathy, Les, having served in the post-War RAF, would be well placed to understand what Stan has been through and brings his stories out well. Stan talks about his time in Halifaxes in a very careful, thoughtful, matter of fact manner, with no sense of importance to the job that he did or the dangers he faced. Listening to his words is quite humbling.

The raid on Magdeburg was discussed first, this was to be Stan’s penultimate mission, his 28th and his last one with his long-time colleague and pilot, Ernie Herrald, for reasons outlined later. The mission on the 21st January 1944 has been covered earlier, however it is interesting to hear Stan’s own recollections of that particular raid.

“...Magdeburg was the last flight, (with Ernie). He was awarded a DFC in the field, which was extra special, having evaded 3 enemy night fighters. You usually had to wait three or four months but he got it the next morning, (from Harris)¹³⁴...”

“...the Pathfinders went ahead to find out what the winds were like – 150mph. The Penguins on the ground didn’t believe them and downgraded it to 75mph. This was a tail-wind so we were going faster than expected and overshot the target and were looking for Magdeburg after we had passed it...”

“...we found a search-light belt and Ernie realised we were on the wrong course. Tom, the navigator, created a new course but Ernie ignored it. We got chased by fighters now and again but lost them in the clouds. Eventually we dropped our bombs on a place called Halle rather than bring them home. More evasive action on the way back and we picked up a few bullet holes, we couldn’t use our wireless otherwise the enemy could pick us up easier. Luckily no one was killed...”

Later in the interview there is a discussion about exactly how many missions Stan flew on, the regular number was 30 before being rested, Stan believes he flew 29 and Ernie flew 28. Les asks about the significance of Ernie not completing his regular tour.

“...Magdeburg was a rough trip, we were very lucky to get back and pilots were often taken off



Ernie, (thumbing nose) and Stan preparing to board their Halifax ahead of another mission.

¹³⁴ Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur “Bomber” Harris

"Dear Phyllis"

after such a trip in case their nerve had gone which could endanger not just themselves but the rest of the crew. This normally happens towards the end of a tour..."

Stan also mentions how he saw other Allied planes going down in the North Sea and he was able to relay their locations back to base to aid rescue and recovery.

Les talks about a newspaper article which reported on their Halifax flying low over Princes Street in Edinburgh and asks Stan if he recalls the incident.

"... we had to keep our hand in re low level flying and made a low pass, knife edge pass down Princes Street, (where Ernie's wife worked). A cyclist watched the plane fly low and then ran into a wall..."

Les talks about how a company in Surrey had struck up an unofficial Bomber Command campaign medal and permission had been granted to wear it beneath other medals. This was driven by the fact that Bomber Command servicemen had been 'forgotten' by the Government when issuing campaign medals for service during the War. Les states that there was a lot of ill feeling and upset for the lack of recognition and asks Stan if he ever received such a medal.

"... I left my wife not long after the War and she destroyed all my Airforce things and if I had been issued with such a medal, I would never have received it (from her)..."

Stan recalls the time and place when he received notification of his DFC...

"... I received a Government telegram when I was on holiday in the Lake District, shortly after D-Day. I was trying to get a couple of days leave before returning to the Squadron and I thought it, (the telegram), was a recall order but it wasn't, it was informing me of the decoration..."

Stanley Gibbon DFC passed away shortly after the interview with Les on the 12th March 1994. He was survived by his wife of 40 years, Phyllis. Phyllis lives for another nine years in Cumnor, just outside of Oxford before passing away a few days before her 83rd birthday in April 2003 and was laid to rest alongside Stan.

They were both survived by their four children, Victoria, Sarah, (James) Luke and Mark, all who had inherited the Wenborn gene and ran their own successful businesses, continuing a Wenborn tradition stretching back over 250 years.



"Dear Phyllis"

Summary

As with so many family stories, decisions made and chance happenings often determine the path of so many. If John FitzGibbon had emigrated to Australia with his parents instead of joining the Royal Navy in the mid 19th century then Frank and Minnie would not have met and their lives would have taken a different trajectory. Had the Wenborns not led such a charmed life in London during the Blitz or indeed Stanley Gibbon not 'beaten the odds' during his time in Bomber Command, then this particular family story would not be being told.

The strength and fortitude shown by both family lines is truly admirable when facing adverse circumstances, whether it be the catastrophic famine years in Ireland, serving overseas in the First World War only to return to a broken marriage, starting childhood in a workhouse environment before building a successful business, living through the most intense blanket bombing of a British City – watching bombs rain down every night or being catapulted from a safe desk job in the Civil Service to fly Bombers over enemy Germany where each mission undertaken could be your last.

The 'Wenborn–Gibbon' lineage illustrates an ancestral line where normal, everyday folk have each in their own way played their part in shaping Britain, and one in which we can be truly proud of.



“Dear Phyllis”

Epilogue

During the research for this book a number of visits were made to the International Bomber Command Centre, (IBCC), that overlooks the City of Lincoln. Whilst in conversation with the Senior Archivist at the Centre about the documents that were available for inspection, this project, the writing of the book, was shared.

IBCC suggested that the letters written by James Luke Wenborn to his daughter, Phyllis, during the Second World War would be of great interest to them, as it captured a period in history that told the story of what it was like to live under the constant bombardment from the Luftwaffe from the perspective of a civilian. IBCC offered to digitise all of the letters and to have them stored for posterity by the University of Lincoln in their Digital Archive, which would then be available for future students and researchers alike to understand better the life in 1940's war-torn London.

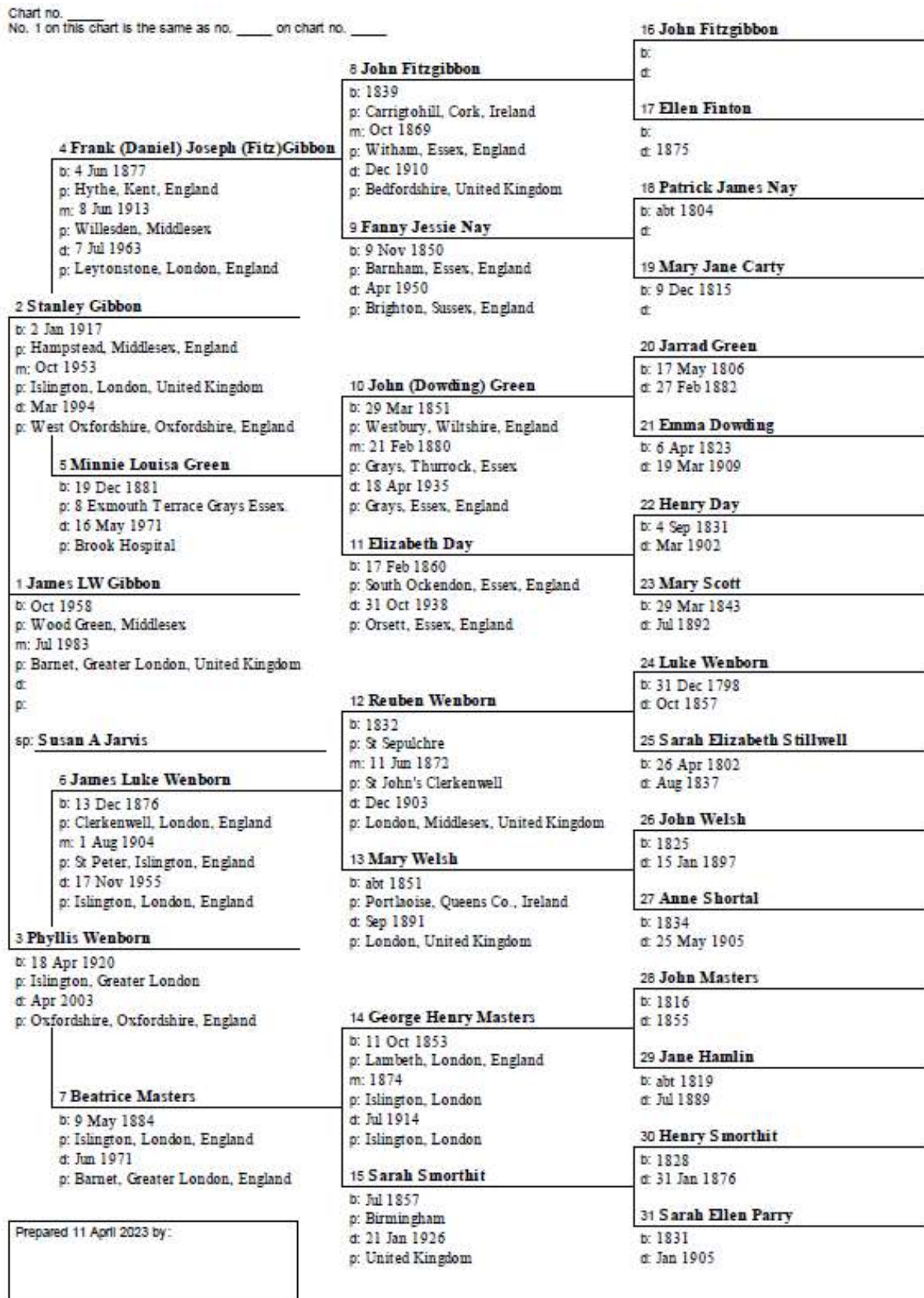
On the 20th January 2023, a meeting was arranged between the Senior Archivist at the IBCC, Peter Jones and Alex Gibbon, Great-Grandson of James Luke and Grandson of Phyllis, to loan the collection to the IBCC for digitisation.



The letters now form part of a wider collection held by the International Bomber Command Centre and their partners, the University of Lincoln in their on-going work in ensuring that the sacrifices made in all walks of life during the War should not be forgotten.

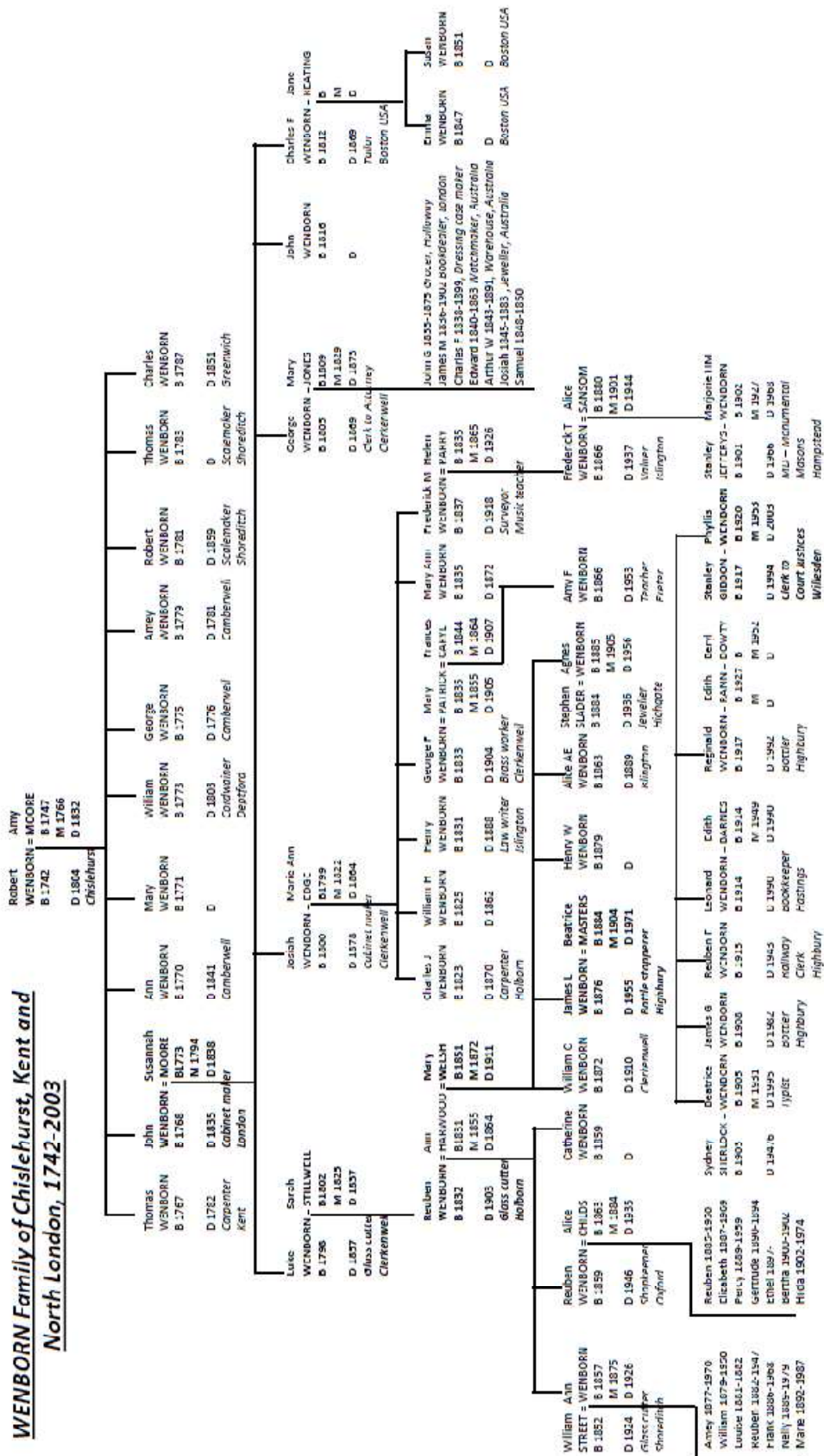
"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 1 – 5 Generational Pedigree Chart of James LW Gibbon

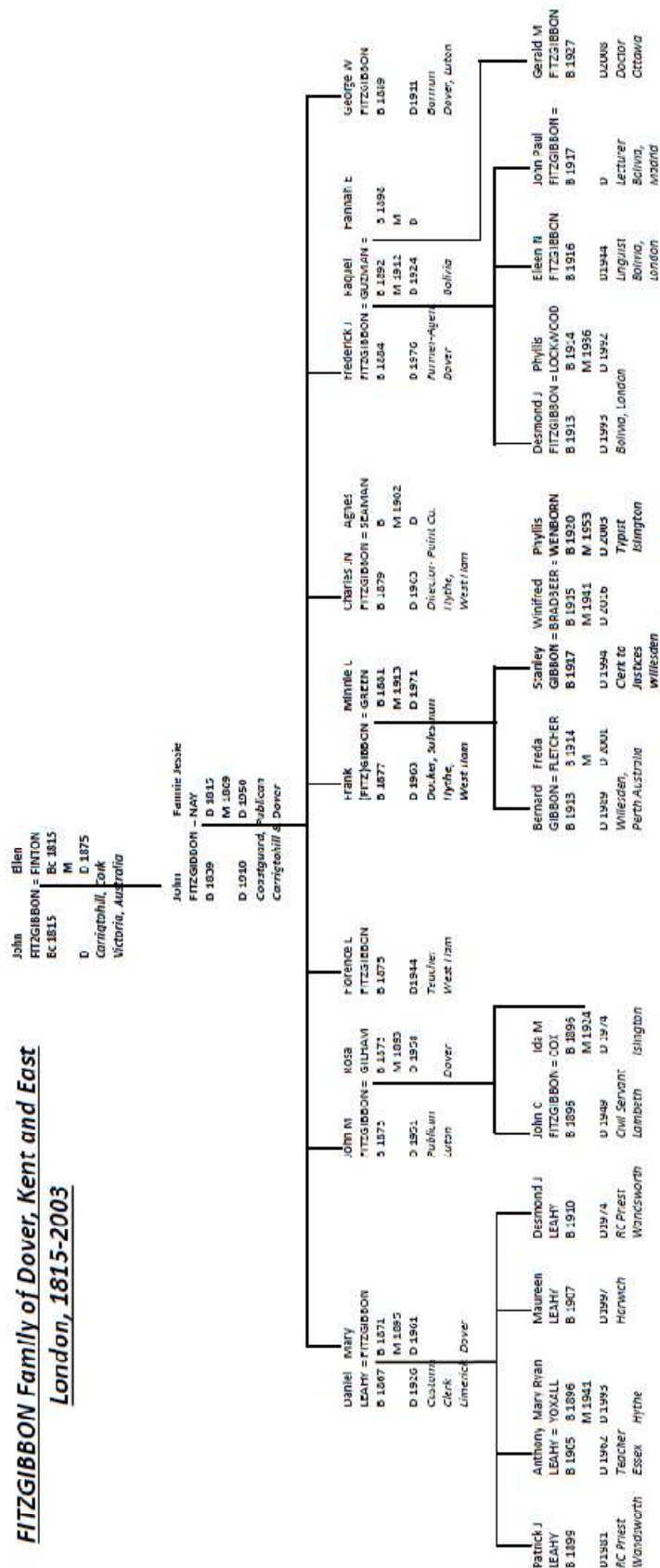


Appendix 2 – Pedigree Chart of the Wenborn Family, Chislehurst, Kent and North London

WENBORN Family of Chislehurst, Kent and North London, 1742-2003



Appendix 3 – FitzGibbon Family Tree of Dover, Kent and East London



"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 4 - John FitzGibbon, Royal Navy Service record, 1856-1880,

The National Archives' reference ADM 139/325/32420

(P. N. Section 13.)

24/1/68

John FitzGibbon No. 32420

78130

No. on Ship's Books	Date of	Character	SHIP	Age	Entry	Rating	Discharge	Cause of Discharge	Time of Service	
									Years of 001 Days	Days
135			Hague	29	Nov 56	B. 2. C.	24 Nov 57			
admiral			"	25	Nov 57	A. 1. C.	20 Feb 60			
20			Mile	1	Mar 58	"	20 Nov 58	relief a.s.		
4			"	10	21 Nov 58	"	4 Feb 59			
414		V. Good	"	5	Feb 59	Ord.	15 Mar 59			
236			Doric	16	Mar 59	"	27 Aug 60			
"	24.5.1.1/62	I. Good	"	28	Aug 60	A. 1.	27 Dec 62		5	224
"			Scourge	20	Dec 62	"	30 April 64			
"			"	1	May 64	Ex. leave	30 June 64			
"			"	1	July 64	Capt. Ing. 1st	31 Dec 64			
1206		I. Good	"	1	Jan 65	"	24 Mar 65		1	181
110			Constance	25	Mar 65	"	20 Dec 66			
"	24.5.1.1/67	I. Good	"	27	Dec 65	a.s.	18 Feb 68			
66		I. Good	Trumble	16	Feb 68	"	22 May 68			
10/11/68		I. Good	Freth. Williams	23	May 68	"	14 July 68			
Page 74/2			Bambrooke	5	July 68	Boatman	11 June 69			
"			Lonelope	12	June 69	"	30 May 70			
1.2.72			Edw. C.G.	27	May 70	Com. Boat	5 May 78			
3			Edw.	5	May 78	a.s.	14 Aug 78			
29.6.81			Cross Guard	20	Aug 78	Com. Boat	13 March 80	Relief applied		
29.6.81			Superintendent	3-115						
									21	124

for pension 22 March 1880

"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 5 – Marriage Certificate of Frank Gibbon and Minnie Green, 8th June 1913

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 13609261-1



VNO

1913 Marriage solemnized at the Registrar's Office in the District of *Willesden* in the County of *Middlesex*

Columns	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Position	Rank or Profession	Residence at the time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
176	8th June 1913	Frank Gibbon	36 years	Bachelor Warehouseman		36 Cambridge Avenue Kilburn	Frank Gibbon (deceased)	Seaman
		Minnie Louisa Green	31 years	Spinster Nurse		36 Cambridge Avenue Kilburn	John Green	Book Labourer

Married in the Registrar's Office according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the ————

by Certificate signed S. W. & Co. Registrar

S. W. & Co. Registrar

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of Willesden

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 3rd day of March 2023

MXJ 606969

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE. © CROWN COPYRIGHT
WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

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Appendix 6.1 – Frank Gibbon, WW1 Service Record – TNA WO363, Soldiers records

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Appendix 6.2 – Frank Gibbon WW1 – Casualty Form – Active Service

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"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 7 – Child Emigration Society Application Form - Courtesy of Gillian Gibbon.

THE CHILD EMIGRATION SOCIETY
(INCORPORATED)
SAVOY HOUSE, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.2.

Date of Application September 22nd 1922

Name of Child Bernard Gibbon Date of Birth Nov 10. 1913

Address

In what Institution?

How long under training there?

Ever in any other Institution?

Ever in Hospital? No If so, with what complaint?

School Standard 2 Ability Good

Creed Church of England Church

Birth-place Willesden Baptized? and where? No

By whom recommended National Adoption Society

Mother's Name and Address Minnie Gibbon, 1 Baker Street W

Mother's Occupation and Character Domestic duties (Character wayward)

If dead, date and cause of death

Father's Name and Address Frank Gibbon, 14 Rockwood Rd. Ilford, Essex

Father's Occupation and Character Peddler + general worker. Good character.

Brothers and Sisters None Name, Age, Address and Employment.

Nearest responsible relatives Discharged N.C.O. good. (Aunt on mother's side)

Any relatives in the Dominions overseas? No 156 Alexandra Rd W. Hampstead.

Remarks

Character of Child Keen, inquisitive + intelligent. Fond of country life.

Is the Child honest? Yes Good tempered? Yes Clean and tidy? Yes

Has the Child any peculiarities of disposition? No

Has the Child had Measles, Scarlet Fever, Whooping Cough, or any other infectious complaint?
No

Signature of person answering the above
X Frank Gibbon

"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 8 – Summarised Crew Listing by Operation – Stanley Gibbon's 28 Missions
RAF 51 Squadron - 11 June 1943 – 30 January 1944

Date-Mission	Plane	Out-In	F/O Herrald Pilot	Sgt Jones Navi- gator	Sgt Kell Bomb Aimer	P/O Gibbon Wireless Op.	Sgt Higgs Flight Eng.	Sgt O'Dowda Gunner	Sgt Sibley Gunner	W/Cdr Wilkerson Pilot	ANO-1	ANO-2
11/06/1943 - Dusseldorf	Halifax Mk.II HR834 MH-	23:52 - 04:16										
12/06/1943 - Bochum	Halifax Mk.II HR834 MH-	23:40 - 04:33										
19/06/1943 - Le Creusot	Halifax Mk.II JD253 MH	22:15 - 05:29										
09/07/1943 - Gelsenkirchen	Halifax Mk.II HR783 MH-	23:21 - 01:11										
13/07/1943 - Aachen	Halifax Mk.II HR234 MH-	23:35 - 05:37										
15/07/1943 - Montbeliard	Halifax Mk.II HR883 MH-	22:03 - 05:34										
24/07/1943 - Hamburg	Halifax Mk.II HR883 MH-	22:35 - 03:57										
25/07/1943 - Essen	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH	22:31 - 03:08										
27/07/1943 - Hamburg	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH	22:42 - 04:11										
29/07/1943 - Hamburg	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH	22:14 - 03:33										
03/08/1943 - Hamburg	Halifax Mk.II JN885 MH	23:52 - 05:23										
09/08/1943 - Mannheim	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH	23:01 - 05:40										
10/08/1943 - Nurnburg	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH	21:00 - 05:58										
12/08/1943 - Milan	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH	20:54 - 06:09										
17/08/1943 - Peenemunde	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH	20:53 - 04:00										
30/08/1943 - Gladbach	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MI-	00:03 - 05:25										
31/08/1943 - Berlin	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH	20:20 - 04:55										
05/09/1943 - Mannheim	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH	19:43 - 03:24										
06/09/1943 - Munich	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH	19:31 - 04:45										
15/09/1943 - Montiucon	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH	20:23 - 03:27										
16/09/1943 - Modane	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH	19:44 - 03:50										
22/09/1943 - Hannover	Halifax Mk.II JN883 MH-	18:53 - 00:21										
22/10/1943 - Kassel	Halifax Mk.II JN883 LK-A	17:40 - 23:38										
11/11/1943 - Cannes	Halifax Mk.II JN883 LK-A	18:19 - 02:48										
18/11/1943 - Ludwigshafen	Halifax Mk.II JN883 LK-A	16:49 - 23:30										
25/11/1943 - Frankfurt	Halifax Mk.II JN899 LK-K	23:53 - 07:16										
21/01/1944 - Magdeburg	Halifax Mk.III LW469 MH-A	20:02 - 03:00										
30/01/1944 - Berlin	Halifax Mk.III LW445 MH-Z	17:22 - 23:44										

Appendix - 9 Last Will and Testament of John Wenborn - PROB11/1858/292

John Wenborn
5/

This is the last Will and Testament of me *John Wenborn* of the Parish of Saint Sepulchre in the County of Middlesex Cabinet Maker as follows First I direct the payment of all my just debts and as funeral expenses and as to for and retaining all my property real and personal of every money in the house at my decess money in the Bank of England Cash in the Finsbury Savings Bank money coming from my benefit society Arrears of furniture wearing apparel boots plate China China Glass tools used by me in my business (which I direct may be sold for the most money and best price that can be obtained for the same the money arising from such sale and all other my Estate and Effects whatsoever and wherever or of what nature or kind soever which I may be in any way possessed of interested in or entitled unto at the time of my decess I give bequeath and bequeath the same and every part

part and member thereof unto my dear wife Susan Ann Wenborn to and for her own sole separate and absolute use and benefit and to be disposed of by her as she may think proper and I do hereby appoint my said wife Susan Ann sole executrix of this my will and I do hereby revoke all former Wills and Testamentary dispositions by me at any time heretofore made and declare this and this paper only to be my last will and Testament the witness whereof I the said Testator John Wenborn have to this in my last will contained in one sheet of paper set my hand and seal this twenty first day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy ~~five~~ ^{four} — *John Wenborn* — (Sd) — Signed sealed published at and attested by the Testator the said John Wenborn in the presence of us who in his presence at his request and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses the word "right" on the last line being a just written instead of the word "did" struck out — *Rich^d Wood* 24 Judd Place West New Road — *Elizabeth Waller* 4

217

Orig^l so

Proved at London 15th February 1836 before the respectable John Dambury Esq of Law and Solicitor by the oath of Susan Ann Wenborn widow the eldest the senior executrix to whom assign was granted having been first sworn duly to administer &c

Appendix 10 – Marriage Certificate, (original), for Reuben Wenborn and Mary Welsh, 1872

1871		Marriage Solemnized at the Church of St. John in the Parish of St. John the Baptist in the County of the City of London						
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
259	1872 June 11	Reuben Wenborn Mary Welsh	23 22	Widower Spinster	Widower Spinster	By Red Sea Road By Red Sea Road	John Wenborn John Welsh	Shaver Builder

Married in the Church of St. John according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church

This Marriage was solemnized between us, By me, William J. Smith, Minister of the Gospel, in the presence of us, Arthur J. Smith, Alfred J. Smith, if the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy two, in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy two, By me, William J. Smith, Minister of the Gospel.

The above is a true Copy of the Marriage Register of the Church of St. John the Baptist, as read in the presence of the Minister of the Gospel, and of the Clergy of the said Church, on the Day of June 11, 1872.

Extracted this 11th day of June 1872.

"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 11 - Death Certificates for the four wives of Reuben Wenborn, 1864-1904

Superintendent Registrar's District <u>Lambeth</u>									
Registrar's District <u>Lambeth Church 1st</u>									
18 <u>64</u> . DEATHS in the District of <u>Lambeth Church 1st</u> in the County of <u>Surrey</u>									
No.	When Died	Name and Surname	Sex	Age	Rank or Profession	Cause of Death	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar
317	<u>Eloised</u> <u>January</u> <u>1864</u> <u>12</u> <u>Park</u> <u>Place</u>	<u>Ann</u> <u>Elizabeth</u> <u>Wenborn</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>32</u> <u>years</u>	<u>Wife of</u> <u>Reuben</u> <u>Wenborn</u> <u>Chemical</u> <u>Druggist</u>	<u>Fever</u> <u>Certified</u>	<u>J. R. Harrison</u> <u>Present at the death</u> <u>12</u> <u>Park Place</u> <u>Lambeth</u>	<u>January</u> <u>1864</u>	<u>G. Taylor</u> <u>Registrar</u>

Superintendent Registrar's District <u>London City</u>									
Registrar's District <u>St. Sepulchre</u>									
18 <u>71</u> . DEATHS in the District of <u>St. Sepulchre</u> in the County of <u>London</u>									
No.	When and Where Died	Name and Surname	Sex	Age	Rank or Profession	Cause of Death	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar
317	<u>Death</u> <u>January</u> <u>1871</u> <u>St. Sepulchre</u> <u>Hospital</u>	<u>Edwin</u> <u>Wenborn</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>40</u> <u>years</u>	<u>Wife of</u> <u>Reuben</u> <u>Wenborn</u> <u>a</u> <u>Taylor</u>	<u>Epileptics</u> <u>Phrenomania</u> <u>Certified</u>	<u>W. H. Messer</u> <u>Occupier</u> <u>St. Bartholomew's</u> <u>Hospital</u> <u>London</u>	<u>January</u> <u>1871</u>	<u>W. H. Messer</u> <u>Registrar</u>

Superintendent Registrar's District <u>Islington</u>									
Registrar's Sub-District <u>Islington South West</u>									
18 <u>91</u> . DEATHS in the Sub-District of <u>Islington South West</u> in the County of <u>London</u>									
Columns	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
No.	When and Where Died	Name and Surname	Sex	Age	Rank or Profession	Cause of Death	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar
194	<u>Twenty second</u> <u>September 1891</u> <u>45 Albert</u> <u>Street</u>	<u>Mary</u> <u>Wenborn</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>39</u> <u>years</u>	<u>Wife of</u> <u>Reuben</u> <u>Wenborn</u> <u>a</u> <u>Glass cutter</u>	<u>Bronchitis</u> <u>Certified by</u> <u>W. B. Richards</u> <u>L.D.S.</u>	<u>R. Wenborn</u> <u>Widower of deceased</u> <u>Present at the death</u> <u>45 Albert Street</u> <u>Islington</u>	<u>Twenty third</u> <u>September</u> <u>1891</u>	<u>W. H. Messer</u> <u>Registrar</u>

Superintendent Registrar's District <u>Islington</u>									
Registrar's Sub-District <u>North Clerkenwell</u>									
19 <u>04</u> . DEATHS in the Sub-District of <u>North Clerkenwell</u> in the County of <u>London</u>									
Columns	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
No.	When and Where Died	Name and Surname	Sex	Age	Rank or Profession	Cause of Death	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant	When registered	Signature of Registrar
1454	<u>Fourth</u> <u>January</u> <u>1904</u> <u>Rodney</u> <u>Street</u>	<u>Eliza</u> <u>Rice</u> <u>Wenborn</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>45</u> <u>years</u>	<u>Widow of</u> <u>Reuben</u> <u>Wenborn</u> <u>Glass cutter</u>	<u>Lobar pneumonia</u> <u>Cardiac failure</u> <u>Certified by</u> <u>D. W. L. Latham</u> <u>M. B. C. S.</u>	<u>Ada Beronet</u> <u>Daughter</u> <u>Present at death</u> <u>28</u> <u>Henry Street</u>	<u>Fourth</u> <u>January</u> <u>1904</u>	<u>F. Tupper</u> <u>Registrar</u>

SHOCKING DEATH OF A MARRIED WOMAN.

CHARGE AGAINST THE HUSBAND.

On Tuesday, at the Islington Coroner's Court, Holloway-road, Dr. Danford Thomas held a long inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of Alice Bryne, aged 39, who met with her death under the following circumstances:—

Jane Russell, wife of John Russell, a cabinet-maker, living at 5, William-street, said that she was first cousin of the deceased, who was the wife of Henry Bryne. They had been married seven or eight years, and lodged at 45, Albert-street, Barnsbury. She saw the deceased on Saturday night, when she called with the washing. She seemed to be in good health. She used occasionally to take more than was good for her; but witness believed that she lived happily with her husband. She never complained to witness of any ill-treatment by her husband. On Sunday morning, about two o'clock, she was sent for, and saw the dead body of deceased lying in the passage at No. 45, Albert-street. She heard that deceased had jumped out of the window, and that she died from the injuries she received.

Reuben Wenborn, glass-cutter, said he was the landlord of 45, Albert-street. The deceased and her husband occupied the first floor back, the window of which was about 20 feet from ground. They had lodged with him about four weeks; during that time he had not heard a quarrel between them until Sunday morning. About 12.30 he was woke up by a noise proceeding from the room they occupied. It sounded as if things were being thrown about the room, and there was also a noise like the smashing of crockery. Witness slept in the room underneath. He heard voices which he recognised as those of Bryne and his wife. He heard the latter say, "If you don't give me the key, I will throw myself out of the window." He next heard the sound of flower-pots falling into the back yard, where he found the deceased lying under the kitchen window. She did not speak, but gave one groan and expired. He and a neighbour, named Robins, ran upstairs and knocked at Bryne's door, and the reply received from Bryne was, "I can't get out—the door is locked." They asked for the key, and Bryne said he could not find it. Mr. Robins then burst open the door.

Witness entered the room, and said to Bryne, "What have you been up to?" Bryne, who had only his nightshirt on, made no reply, but walked straight down stairs. Witness noticed that the window was open, and that the room was in disorder. A quantity of broken crockery was lying about. Witness followed Bryne downstairs, and saw him leaning over the body of his wife in the yard. Witness sent for a policeman, and on his arrival made a statement to him. A doctor was called in, and the body of deceased was removed to the mortuary. Bryne was taken into custody. He did not hear Bryne say anything, and did not speak to him again. The deceased was addicted to drinking habits. Witness had seen her intoxicated on two occasions. He never saw Bryne the worse for drink except on Saturday night. At eight o'clock on Saturday evening, the deceased paid him a week's rent. She then appeared to be sober. The height from the window to the floor in Bryne's room was about 2½ feet.

Henry Robins, living at 21, Albert-terrace, said he knew the last witness. On Saturday night, he returned home about a quarter-past twelve, and went into the back parlour and opened the window. He then heard a row at the house opposite. He heard swearing and the smashing of crockery, the noise proceeding from the first floor back. The window was shut, and he could see a light on the mantel-piece. The disturbance lasted about half an hour. He distinctly heard a woman say, "If you don't open this — door, I'll jump out of the window." This was followed by a sound of knocking at a door. He also heard the woman say, "You have got the key," and a man's voice replied, "I have not got the key." The woman repeated that he had the key, and banged at the door again. This was followed by a smashing sound, and the light then went out. He heard them both swearing again, and the woman say, "Will some one put a match underneath the door, so that I can see." She also said, "If you don't open the door, I'll jump out of the window." He saw her come to the window and open it. She took hold of three flower pots and threw them down into the back yard. She then got out of the window and stood on the ledge. She held up her arms and appeared to give a leap on to the cistern, which was about four feet distant from the window. She missed her footing and fell into the yard. If she had gained a footing on the cistern she could have got in at the staircase window. Witness ran downstairs and jumped over the wall, and found deceased in a dying condition. A minute

or two afterwards the last witness came, and they moved the deceased from under the window. He looked up and saw Bryne with his legs out of the window. He said, "Where's my wife? I'll jump out of the window." Witness ran upstairs, and Bryne said he could not find the key. Witness then broke open the door. Bryne ran downstairs, and addressing the deceased said, "Did I throw you out of the window?" Witness did not hear anyone suggest that he had thrown her out of the window. Bryne then went upstairs and dressed himself, and the police were sent for. Witness believed that Bryne would have jumped out of the window if the door had not been forced open.

Police-constable Markham, 272 N, deposed that just after one o'clock on Sunday morning, he was on duty in Cloudesley-road, when he was informed by a little boy that a woman had been thrown from a window at 45, Albert-street. He ran as quickly as he could to the house, and saw the deceased, who had been placed in a leaning position, against the wall. He sent for Dr Day, who, on his arrival, pronounced the woman to be dead. Witness saw Robins and Bryne, and the latter, after being cautioned, made a statement to him after they entered the bedroom. He said, "This is what my beautiful wife has done. What I say is true. I went to bed. We had a row, and she threw herself out of the window, which was open. She has thrown herself out of the window before, and tried to drown herself in the Regent's-canal." Witness and Inspector Tyler then took Bryne to the Upper-street police-station, and he was charged on suspicion with causing the death of his wife. He was brought before the magistrate on Monday and remanded. He was allowed out on bail.

Inspector Tyler, of the N division, deposed that he arrived at the house about 1.40 on Sunday morning, and found the deceased lying in the passage. Witness examined the bedroom, which was in great disorder. Some pictures on the wall were smashed. It was impossible to reach the window without getting over the bed. Witness took Bryne to the police-station, and charged him on suspicion with causing the death of his wife. He replied, "She did it herself." He was the worse for drink, but appeared to know what he was about. Witness searched the body of the deceased, and found 5d. in bronze, and a pawn-ticket for a shawl pledged on Saturday for 2s. 6d.

Edward Elliott, of 22, Albert-terrace, a book-maker, said that he arrived home about 12 o'clock on Saturday night, and was having his supper in the front kitchen when his wife said there was a row at the back. He walked out into the back yard, and heard a man and woman quarreling and the smashing of crockery. He saw the light in the room opposite go out, and heard the woman say, "If you don't give me that — key, I'll jump out of the window." The man replied, "I have not got the key. You locked the door yourself." The woman said, "I don't know where the — key is," and this was followed by a banging at the door. Two or three minutes after he saw the window go up with a bang. He saw the woman in a kneeling position, and she threw some flower-pots into the yard. She then got out on to the window ledge and stood upright. About a foot from the window was a water-pipe, and she tried to get hold of it and to spring on to the cistern, but missed her footing and fell back wards into the yard. He said to his wife, "That woman is dead." He got into the back yard of No. 45, Albert-street, and saw deceased lying there.

Dr. W. H. Day, of 19, Chapel-street, Pentonville, said he was called in a few minutes after one o'clock on Sunday morning, and found the deceased woman lying in the back yard. She was dead. She was fully dressed, with the exception of a head covering. He had made an examination of the body, and found ex-

ternally no signs of injury except a slight scratch on the scalp. There was a rupture of the liver and the right kidney, probably caused by deceased coming into contact with the edge of the cistern. She had died from syncope, resulting from the internal hemorrhage caused by the injuries she had received. There was a dislocation of the neck. He went upstairs and saw Bryne, who was undressed. The bed in Bryne's room was level with the window, the lower sash of which was raised. Bryne said deceased had threatened to do this two or three times. He had the appearance of having been drinking, but spoke naturally.

Elizabeth Ferriwan, living at 15, Graham-street, was, at the request of Bryne, called as a witness, and deposed that she collected the rent at 19, Graham-street, where Bryne and his wife had previously occupied one room for about four years. She knew that deceased was given to drink occasionally. She was very excitable and violent when in drink, and witness had heard her threaten to make away with herself.

Henry Bryne, the husband of the deceased, after being cautioned by the Coroner that what he stated might be used as evidence against him, deposed that he was employed as handy man at a mineral water manufactory. He and the deceased, who was his wife, had lodged at 45, Albert-street, four weeks. On Saturday evening, he returned home about 6.30, and had a wash and a cup of tea. His wife said, "Where's my money?" He replied, "You won't have any money from me." He said this because she had been drinking more or less all the week, and one day came home followed by a crowd of children. He, however, gave the deceased 2s. 6d. to pay the rent, but he did not know whether she had paid it. She also asked him for 6d. to pay for the mangling, and he said he would lend it her, and did so. At 8.30, he left home, and returned about 12 o'clock. He had been drinking. He met his wife in the street, and she was the worse for liquor. He said, "What, drunk again!" and she commenced abusing him. He went indoors and got into bed, and deceased came up about half-an-hour afterwards. He was asleep. She woke him up, and said, "You — swine, where's my money?" A quarrel ensued, and the deceased broke the jug, wash-hand basin, and a vase. She must have locked the door herself. Witness did not know what became of the key. He remained in bed. Deceased put out the light by throwing something at it. It was a paraffin lamp, and the missile which deceased threw broke the glass. She was quiet for a few minutes, and then said, "Give me the key." He replied that he had not got it. She said, "If you don't give it me, I'll jump out of the window." He did not see the deceased open the window, and did not hear the smashing of the flower-pots. He was not aware that she had gone out of the window until he heard screaming and shouting from the back yard. The door was burst open; he ran downstairs, and said to deceased, "Did I throw you out of the window or not?" To reach the window deceased did not get over him, as there was sufficient space at the bottom of the bed for her to kneel upon. Some years ago deceased threatened to commit suicide, and on one occasion was brought home by a policeman.

Police-sergeant Nutkins said that he had visited the house on Sunday, and found the key hanging up on a nail in the wall.

The Coroner then proceeded to sum up, and said it was fortunate for the husband of the deceased that she was seen by two persons to get out of the window herself and jump from the ledge on to the cistern. It was evident that the woman had not been thrown out of the window. It was for the jury to consider whether the deceased intended to commit suicide, or whether her intention was to jump on the cistern and gain access to the house by the staircase window.

The room was then cleared, and after a brief private consultation, the jury returned a verdict to the effect that the deceased died from the injuries received in jumping from a window while under the influence of drink; and, further, it was an accidental death.

"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 13 - James Luke Wenborn, Apprenticeship Indenture, Coach Wheelwright, 1890

This Indenture made the 1st day of November One thousand eight hundred and ninety

Between Reuben Wenborn of the first part and James Luke Wenborn son of the said Reuben Wenborn of the second part and George Sheldrick of the third part

Witnesseth that in consideration of ten pounds this day paid by the said Reuben Wenborn to the said George Sheldrick the receipt of which sum is hereby acknowledged and of the covenants hereinafter contained on the part of the said Reuben Wenborn and of his said son to be observed and performed He the said George Sheldrick doth for himself his executors and administrators covenant promise and agree with the said Reuben Wenborn to accept and take the said James Luke Wenborn as his Apprentice for and during the term of Five years from the third day of November 1890 in manner following

That he the said George Sheldrick will according to the best of his knowledge teach and instruct or cause to be taught and instructed the said Apprentice in the art of a Coach Wheelwright And will during the said term so long as the covenants hereinafter contained on the part of the said Reuben Wenborn and his said son shall be faithfully observed and performed pay unto the said Apprentice during the first year of the said term the weekly sum of two shillings during the second year of the said term the weekly sum of seven shillings and during the third year of the said term the weekly sum of nine shillings during the fourth year of the said term the weekly sum of ten shillings and during the fifth and last year of the said term the weekly sum of seven shillings

And the said Reuben Wenborn for himself his executors and administrators doth hereby in consideration of the covenants hereinbefore contained on the part of the said George Sheldrick covenant with the said George Sheldrick that he the said Reuben Wenborn will during the said term find and provide his said son with good and sufficient apparel diet lodging and washing fit for an Apprentice and also medicine medical advice and nursing in case of illness And the said Reuben Wenborn and James Luke Wenborn (in consideration of the covenants hereinbefore contained on the part of the said Master) for themselves severally and for their several executors and administrators do and each of them doth hereby covenant with the said George Sheldrick That the said Apprentice from the date hereof during the said term shall and will truly and faithfully serve the said George Sheldrick as his Apprentice and diligently attend to the said business at all times his secrets keep and his lawful commands willingly obey And shall not nor will absent himself from his Master's service without the leave of his said Master nor do nor willingly suffer any damage to be done to the goods monies or other things which shall be delivered or put into his custody or care And shall not embezzle or waste or lend them to any one without his Master's consent and in all things shall and will demean himself towards his said Master and all his as a good and faithful Apprentice ought And it is hereby agreed that the hours of business for the said Apprentice shall be from seven o'clock in the morning till five in the evening he being allowed thereout one hour and a half each day for meals except on Saturdays that the hours to be from seven o'clock in the morning till one o'clock in the afternoon.

In witness whereof the said parties to these presents have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

Signed, Sealed and Delivered in the presence of

H. W. Lewis
45
Chas. A. Jackson
57 Chancery Lane

Reuben Wenborn
James Luke Wenborn
George Sheldrick

HARNAR, BROS. & FATCH, PRINTERS, FURNIVALLS LANE, LONDON, E.C.4.

Appendix 14 – James Luke Wenborn and Beatrice Masters, Marriage Certificate

1st August 1904

Certificate of Marriage.

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1904. Marriage solemnized at S^t Peter's Church in the County of Middlesex in the Parish of Harish

of Islington

Columns.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
158	August 1 st 1904	James Luke Wenborn	24	Bachelor	Glass Cutter	48 Harrow Street	Robert Wenborn	Deceased
		Beatrice Masters	20	Spinster	—	118 Hanover Street	George Henry Masters	French Polisher

Married in the Church of S^t Peter according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by George Henry Masters or authorized by me, David Roberts Curate.

This marriage was solemnized between us, James Luke Wenborn in the Presence of us, Rose Masters David Roberts Curate.

I, David Roberts Curate of S^t Peter, Islington in the County of Middlesex do hereby certify that this is a true copy of the Entry No. 158 in the Marriage Register Books of the said Church of S^t Peter.

Witness my Hand this 1st day of August 1904. David Roberts

"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 15 – Selection of Invoices from 1904, pre the wedding of James Luke Wenborn and Beatrice Masters on 1st August 1904

141, 143 & Essex Road, Islington,
and at 100, Old Street, E.C. 2.
London, 20 July 1904

Wenborn 4 Oakley Present
Bought of H. HUNT, *Proprietor*
TELEPHONE No. 1974 KING'S X.

The ESSEX BEDDING, CABINET and UPHOLSTERY WORKS,
Wholesale, Retail, and for Exportation. **Complete House Furnisher.**

Large Variety of Cabinets, Bedrooms, Suites, Bedsteads, Bedding, Upholstered Suites, Carpets and Rugs, always on show.

Done Map Oriental lit	4	4	
9 Piece Bedroom and Suite	9	9	
4 1/2 King Bedstead			
2 ply patterned bed linen	4	10	
Hotchkiss Pillows	1	10	
Double Sateen Set	3	14	
Pressing Chair with stand Sateen	1	19	6
6 Sateen Chair	1	7	
Second Hand Wash Stand	1		
Dining Table			
	26	16	6
By Cash 15-4-4			
Am't " " 1-10-4	5	14	
	5		
By Balance	16	2	6

Recd by Beatrice Masters
James Luke Wenborn

LONDON, August 1st 1904

M

DR. TO WILLIAM CRUMP,
Job Master,
22, STAMFORD ROAD, KINGSLAND, N.

2 Pair Horse Carriages Wedding job	1	8	6
Deposit		5	0
Balance		£1	3 6

Received with thanks
James Luke Wenborn

"Dear Phyllis"

Bread Patronized for First Quality only.

Mr. *Wentworth*

To A. BAUER,
Baker and Confectioner,
 199, CALEDONIAN ROAD, N.

Madeira, Pound, Sponge, Luncheon, School and other Cakes always fresh.
 WEDDING CAKES MADE TO ORDER.
 PURE WHOLE MEAL BREAD. CELEBRATED MILK SCONES.
 FAMILIES WAITED ON DAILY.

July 26th 1904

Week ending Sat. 190

Bill delivered

	4-lb.	2-lb.	Flour Qrtn.			
MONDAY.....						
TUESDAY.....						
WEDNESDAY.....						
THURSDAY.....						
FRIDAY.....						
SATURDAY.....						
ROLLS.....						
DOUGH.....						
BISCUITS.....						
Total						

Wed July 28. 13/6.

13/6.

PAID. A. Bauer

LONDON, *July 7th 1904*

Mr *Wentworth*

Dr. to J. C. WHEELER,
TAILOR * AND * CLOTHIER,
 28, CENTRAL STREET, OLD STREET, E.C.

TERMS :—NET CASH.

To	Blk diagonal jacket & vest	1.10.
"	Fancy tweed trousers	.12.
"	Blk Vienna frock & vest	2.10.
		<u>£4.12</u>

d with
thanks 7/7/04
pro J C Wheeler
Jew

"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 16 – 1920 Ordnance Survey Map of the Borough of Islington illustrating the locations where James Luke and Beatrice Wenborn lived.



"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 17 - Phyllis Wenborn - Islington Day Continuation School Report - Sept 1936

London County Council.

ISLINGTON DAY CONTINUATION SCHOOL,
OFFORD ROAD, BARNSBURY, N.1.

TERMINAL REPORT.

Name of Student Phyllis Wenborn. Course taken Business Training.

Subject.	Percentage of Marks.	Remarks.	Teacher's Initials.
Shorthand	90 $\frac{4}{11}$	Speed & accuracy greatly improved	TY
Typewriting	✓	Quite good: Has taken R.S.I. exam	Reef
French	90 $\frac{2}{22}$	Excellent. Always does really good work	TY
English	81 $\frac{7}{11}$	Excellent	ref
Geography			
Commercial Geography ...			
History			
Business Methods			
Book-keeping	95 $\frac{1}{11}$	Excellent progress	Hand
Commercial Arithmetic ...	83 $\frac{2}{4}$	Careful & accurate	TY
Mathematics			
Science			
Handwriting			
Orthography			
Technical Drawing			
Economic History			
Woodwork			
Metalwork			
Electrical Work			
Design and Embroidery ...			
Speech Training			
Millinery			
Dressmaking			

Remarks Has succeeded Attendance } Regular
Punctuality } v Good

remarkably well in all
subjects. Intelligent,
careful & accurate

Next Term commences **2 SEP 1936** Price Principal.

"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 18 – Catalogue of Letters (all) – Gibbon collection

Date of Letter	Catalogue No.	From-To	Content of interest
29-Jul-31	19340729	JLW-Reg	Phyllis home, Reuben got Sat off, Beat & Syd join later
03-Oct-38	19381003	Len to PW	
30-Aug-39	19390830	Len to PW	
17-Oct-39	19391017	Len to PW	
25-Nov-40	19401125	Reuben-JLW	From HMS Ganges – don't get a number till assigned to a ship, know one of the lads, came over for a game of billiards
02-Jul-41	19410702	JLW-PW	Dogs at Harringey, bombs falling, blown out dining room window, grim
03-Oct-41	19411003	Reuben-Len	On ship – playing cards, 6,000 miles from home
25-Jan-42	19420125	Reu to PW	
10-Feb-42	19420210	Reu to PW	
31-May-42	19420531	JLW-PW	Rabbits White Rabbits, (RWR), Business good, plenty orders, Face cream, Max Factor etc
02-Jun-42	19420602	JLW-PW	More orders and more Victims?
11-Sep-42	19420911	Reu to PW	
31-Oct-42	19421031	PW-Reuben	keeping sea watches – not much else
07-Mar-43	19430307	JLW-PW	War will soon be over, Joe Stalin promoted to Field Marshall, another 2d a week. Got 2 workers deferment for 6 months
25-Mar-43	19430325	RW-PW	Good at dancing – plenty chance on ship, thanks for scarf
13-Aug-43	19430813	RW-PW	Been to "George Cross Island", ashore at The Rock, Dickens books unread – 'boring'
22-Aug-43	19430822	JLW-PW	Harringey Dogs, 2 winners then Astoria Pictures, tips for St Leger, War good for business, ref Tommy Hitler..? Italy will pull out, Reuben visited, Works 8-630
22-Aug-43	19430822	Reuben-JLW	In a café in Milford then going out doing something not done before – Sub hunting
29-Aug-43	19430829	JLW-Reg	Details of business – need water to wash bottles – winning at Dogs, mentions mouldy old office
10-Sep-43	19431009	RNBT-BW	Sympathy, loss of Reuben, cant help financially
14-Sep-43	19430914	London Transport	Reubens superannuation contact details
14-Sep-43	19430914	London Transport	Sympathy loss re Reuben
15-Sep-43	19430915	London Transport	Sympathy – always pleased to see him when on leave
29-Nov-43	19431129	JLW-PW	Too many orders, no one but Wenborn can do them, Cosmetic ..?.. Is going West, Tom Hitler, Russia will keep him busy
20-Dec-43	19431220	JLW-PW	Pictures, Dogs and Winners – "Bow Wow", many urgent orders
21-Dec-43	19431221	JLW-PW	Chicken for Christmas dinner, business good – 40 gross bottles sent..
24-Jan-44	19440124	JLW-PW	Guns, noise, fireworks display, Fatty Goering, busier than ever, wiring Tom Hitler to stay the battle
04-Feb-44	19440204	JLW-PW	Two raids last night
06-Feb-44	19440206	JLW-PW	Concert from Tom Hitler at 6.15am, Mum to Highbury Pictures
20-Feb-44	19440220	JLW-PW	Aberdeen Park hit bad, Windows out, 'thought our time had come', glad you are away safe, Tom Hitler much money for his latest party
21-Feb-44	19440221	JLW-PW	Islington, Clerkenwell, Aberdeen Park bombed, 'too near for our liking', Up the Russians, Bow Wow
22-Feb-44	19440222	JLW-PW	Orders overwhelming, Beaty thinking of joining you, pace has been very hot
23-Feb-44	19440223	JLW-PW	Biggest barrage yet, don't worry, we will be all right, too near for pleasure, thankful for our luck
24-Feb-44	19440224	JLW-PW	Tom Hitler started 10pm, usual one hour, avoiding large floating lumps, more orders than can cope with – carry on Russia
29-Feb-44	19440229	JLW-PW	RWR, things too bad to say on phone, Harrow got their presents tonight, miles of orders not so many victims as they all be wounded
16-Mar-44	19440316	JLW-PW	Drayton Park, Holloway Rd – things very bad, large time bomb lodged in the Polytechnic – all shops closed
17-Mar-44	19440317	JLW-PW	Saturday Dogs at Harringey, two time bombs Holloway Rd, all people cleared out
21-Mar-44	19440321	JLW-PW	Small party at 1am, lasted one hour

“Dear Phyllis”

Date of Letter	Catalogue No.	From-To	Content of interest
23-Mar-44	19440323	JLW-PW	Business going very strong – up the Russians
04-Apr-44	19440404	JLW-PW	Plenty of business, not so many Victims, being cared for elsewhere?
16-Apr-44	19440416	JLW-PW	Happy Birthday, Mum excited at going away to see you, sent cheque, don't buy Buck Palace, not worth the money
19-Apr-44	19440419	JLW-PW	Small party last night 1am for an hour
21-Apr-44	19440421	JLW-PW	Went to Dogs, Mum got windy, escorted her home, little party, Tom Hitler is finished
24-Apr-44	19440524	JLW-PW	Builders in at last repairing damaged windows
10-Jun-44	19440610	JLW-PW	Busy with British Drug Houses and Crooks Halibut Oil business, farewell do, 90 staff? Fun in Frog land, Winners at Ascot and the Dogs, Wilfred Pickles gave him a tip at Reading
13-Jun-44	19440613	JLW-PW	Mum going to the Pictures, passes on betting tips and Odds
16-Jun-44	19440616	JLW-PW	Mother at Pictures – Gone with the Wind, don't come this weekend, not safe. Fun going on in Frog land
18-Jun-44	19440618	JLW-PW	Guns going off, V2s easier to dodge than bombers, very noisy, folk watching gunners shoot V2s down, tips didn't work out, safer at Stratford, Jerry a bully, bombs at Essex Rd, Stoke Newington and Charing Cross, going off all the time, lost 6d at Dogs
19-Jun-44	19440619	JLW-PW	V2 bombs a nuisance, very spiteful if you get in the way, passed Harlesden Station in the car, being bombed, Lens office nearby, alert from 7pm to 5am, from more danger from gangsters at home, need to guard home better
22-Jun-44	19440622	JLW-PW	Folk queuing to go in Tubes, others taking stuff with their sticky fingers, large lumps coming down at 4am, rattled the house, many orders, must help Churchill and co, needs his cigars
22-Jun-44	19440622	JLW-PW	Bombs at 430, 530 and 8am, bombing Reading – Betty there, Balloons at Croydon not successful, bombs coming now at 945am
23-Jun-44	19440623	JLW to PW	Some close bangs, Mum ok considering, Thomas the cat on guard
24-Jun-44	19440624	JLW-PW	Robots at Pentonville Road, very lively
25-Jun-44	19440625	JLW-PW	Pictures and Dogs, plenty business, Mums only company, Thomas the Cat, please ring, reverse charges, bomb fell Finsbury cricket pitch, went to work Sunday to check on factory
28-Jun-44	19440628	JLW-PW	Monsters roared, robot fell Highbury corner, mother about Reg, lost windows in bedroom and at back, too close for liking
29-Jun-44	19440629	JLW-PW	Bombs Cross St, Essex Rd, Wenborn gang ok, Reg in kitchen, Jim in front, Len in dining room, feel sorry for folk in shelters, brain breaking
30-Jun-44	19440630	JLW-PW	Warning just gone 7am, far from Highbury, too many lumps not healthy, esp if you are in their path, hear warning lie flat on floor
03-Jul-44	19440703	JLW-PW	Enemy kicked off at midnight, cool dozen fell, all ok less a few windows. Mum being very brave – admire her spirit
03-Jul-44	19440703	JLW-PW	Striving to earn honest crust with portion of marg on it
05-Jul-44	19440705	JLW-PW	Warnings going off, folk just carry on, In work Sunday to check as things disappear in the night
06-Jul-44	19440706	JLW-PW	Backed winner Umidad at Ascot Gold cup, getting used to new method of warfare
06-Jul-44	19440706	JLW-PW	Went to Oxford for short weekend with friends – Denizens
08-Jul-44	19440708	JLW-PW	Harringey Dogs, dodging large lumps, two boys at work, one 71 other 73, am a boy to them
09-Jul-44	19440709	JLW-PW	Winnie Churchill says work and take cover – Tommy Hitler .. Lot of toe rags
10-Jul-44	19440710	JLW-PW	Mum had 3 winners at Dogs, got back 930pm, robots over so tucked in at foot of basement stairs until 4am, started again Sunday Caledonian Rd 10am
11-Jul-44	19440711	JLW-PW	diving as orders are to keep as low as you can and you miss any large lumps on your patch, friends advising not to come here justified, visit you soon, can you get Mum a job in Stratford, keep her out of mischief
12-Jul-44	19440712	JLW-PW	Robots started 1130, Essex Rd, Chiswell St, Moorgate, come without warning, very low, all went to have a look, landed Camden, glad it kept going, in seconds life hangs on thread. Lens firm taking cover 20 times a day
13-Jul-44	19440713	JLW-PW	Congrats on passing test – Mums job? Help swell coffers
14-Jul-44	19440714	JLW-PW	Quieter, may forget our diving exercises, Pictures and Dogs, with Thomas the hero, parts of Highbury quite bad
15-Jul-44	19440715	JLW-PW	Poor opinion of evacuees, collected 1600 gross of bottles from British Colloids in Acton, Govt surplus for £350 to stopper

“Dear Phyllis”

Date of Letter	Catalogue No.	From-To	Content of interest
17-Jul-44	19440717	JLW-PW	Warning, Robots, All clear, now waiting for Jerrys next present, Soundas the Greek – business deal? Mum flying visit, call – reverse charges, most suburbs hit, lot to be thankful for
18-Jul-44	19440718	JLW-PW	News like snowball, gets bigger, don't take notice of it, Bombing for 4 weeks – tube rats not washed for when fun started, words fail me to give vivid account of them
19-Jul-44	19440719	JLW-PW	London half empty
20-Jul-44	19440720	JLW-PW	Yellow brigade lined up at tube station, unwashed, keeps them warm
21-Jul-44	19440721	JLW-PW	Contending with looters, business good, Wenborn output very good
22-Jul-44	19440722	JLW-PW	Off to the Dogs, look forward to your visit
24-Jul-44	19440724	JLW-PW	Dogs Pictures and Bye Byes (to the bombs) don't like driving as cant hear them, only see folk running
25-Jul-44	19440725	JLW-PW	Folk still leaving, half crackers half tube cranks, up the Russians
26-Jul-44	19440726	JLW-PW	Robots on strike, not fair having taken precautions and they don't arrive. All the heroes have gone, only Wenborns and Churchill left, and one or two more
27-Jul-44	19440727	JLW-PW	Getting easier than it has been
28-Jul-44	19440728	JLW-PW	Quiet, robots run out of petrol. Getting sunburnt in Yard amongst the bottles
30-Jul-44	19440730	JLW-PW	Robot lit up Regs room, landed opposite Gaumont Theatre, Holloway Rd, hit Express Dairies, we just carry on. 5 winners at Dogs. Sunday not so good, had ten come over – they push orders galore
01-Aug-44	19440801	JLW-PW	Exciting weekend, several lumps with interest. Paddington busy 12 hour queues – holiday week, difficult to get to Stratford
02-Aug-44	19440802	JLW-PW	Hope to visit, Mum stay longer, 7am warning just gone off
11-Aug-44	19440811	JLW-Reg	Expect you having big push at Nelson Place
16-Aug-44	19440816	JLW-PW	Good visit, pleasant break from robots, . 4 alerts today, Wenborns still in tact, went for lie down, had to get up when Jerry started throwing his presents about
17-Aug-44	19440817	JLW-PW	Went to Soundas to collect usual allowance. Collected 14 quarts of beer on lorry.
18-Aug-44	19440818	JLW-PW	Nights better than days. Visiting our old haunts
20-Aug-44	19440820	JLW-PW	Typical robot weather, warnings, all clears with a few bumps in between
21-Aug-44	19440821	JLW-PW	Tommy Hitler beginning to lose. Thomas the cat 3lbs of steak, doesn't know there is a war on
22-Aug-44	19440822	JLW-PW	Don't like to leave the house vacant as so many gangsters waiting to invite themselves in
24-Aug-44	19440824	JLW-PW	Up at 3am, three large bumps, all clear at 6.50am
25-Aug-44	19440825	JLW-PW	Quiet, jolly fine not to be annoyed, expect funds have run out – all over in 2 months
25-Aug-44	19440825	JLW-PW	When this racket stops we shall sadly miss this fun, expect Tommy Hitler may have more novelties coming along
28-Aug-44	19440828	JLW-PW	Off to see Betty in Reading, away from madding crowd of black racketeers, quite a number of them
29-Aug-44	19440829	JLW-PW	Very quiet, no robots. Sorry you didn't win tennis
30-Aug-44	19440830	JLW-PW	Robots not worrying us, tough and hardened to this now
31-Aug-44	19440831	JLW-PW	RWR, things quiet, expect Tommy Hitler getting beaten, miles of orders, money for old rope
07-Sep-44	19440907	JLW to PW	War soon over, miles of orders, Thomas putting 3lb of hoss flesh away each day
08-Sep-44	19440908	JLW-PW	No Robots, will make complaint as not used to this kind treatment. Still have too much business
09-Sep-44	19440909	JLW-Reg	Things normal – not afraid of great gas bag Hitler
13-Sep-44	19440913	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
13-Sep-44	19440913	JLW-Reg	Saw Len Sunday
14-Sep-44	19440914	JLW-PW	City Road is piled out with orders. See you and Mother at Reading, get the deck chairs out
17-Sep-44	19440917	JLW-Reg	Holiday in Braunton, Devon, in bed with a cold
19-Sep-44	19440919	JLW-PW	Had a large lump come down at 7.15, no alert, just not playing the game
20-Sep-44	19440920	JLW to PW	Raids increasing, usual card games, be over by Oct
21-Sep-44	19440921	JLW-PW	Mum at Savoy Picture House, Canterbury Ghost with Charles Laughton, another day, having more than our share, tough and can cope
22-Sep-44	19440922	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
25-Sep-44	19440925	JLW-PW	Two warnings Sunday night, 5am, went off somewhere local
28-Sep-44	19440928	JLW-PW	Card party with the boys. Visit tmrw, just Reg left on guard

“Dear Phyllis”

Date of Letter	Catalogue No.	From-To	Content of interest
03-Oct-44	19441003	JLW-PW	Bad back, journey home, two doses of rum, pains in right side
04-Oct-44	19441004	JLW to PW	All quiet, Mum in Wales, orders busy, Rum & milk
05-Oct-44	19441005	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
06-Oct-44	19441006	JLW-PW	Warning, watched and listened, sweet music, big red glow, explosion, SE London, three nights running, don't come home yet. Mum and Reg 4 winners.
10-Oct-44	19441010	JLW-PW	All windows in and lot of work done, tucked in for winter
15-Oct-44	19441015	JLW-PW	Quiet, spasmodic, not worth troubling over. Old clothes – look after foreigners, toe rags. Lighting in house sorted, ready for end of War. Orders too much, not worried about losing customers
22-Oct-44	19441022	JLW-PW	Jerry still trying to entertain us, we are not pleased with their visits. Business busy, could do with twice the staff
24-Oct-44	19441024	JLW-PW	Reports suggest war must be nearing end. One large lump fell at 3am
26-Oct-44	19441026	JLW-PW	Len is going to his hospital
30-Oct-44	19441030	JLW-PW	Len will be slow progress, 12 months, various stages – hospital. Mum and Reg at Harringey, small profit
01-Nov-44	19441101	JLW-PW	RWR, Visited Len, visitors allowed every other Sunday. Miles of orders, keeps wolf from the door
03-Nov-44	19441103	JLW-PW	Letter from Len. Mum at Pictures twice this week. Dogs on Saturday
04-Nov-44	19441104	JLW-PW	Quiet. Len settled. Written on Wenborns Scientific Supplies Co. letter head
05-Nov-44	19441105	JLW-PW	Quiet. Grateful to Tommy and gangster pals leaving us in peace. Len visiting, numbers allowed not known
07-Nov-44	19441107	JLW-PW	Rocket at 5pm, crashed Highgate near bus station, Tommy and gangsters still trying
08-Nov-44	19441108	JLW-PW	Len asking for Jam and butter, waiting for visitor numbers
09-Nov-44	19441109	JLW-PW	Despatched nice gold brooch, 15 carat, Mum at Pictures. You may be home for next visit to Len?
10-Nov-44	19441110	JLW-PW	Cold weather, unexpected bomb shook us a little, nobody takes notice, just carry on
12-Nov-44	19441112	JLW-PW	Few alerts and occasional rocket
16-Nov-44	19441116	JLW-PW	Hectic, visitors being rockets, 3am hit Stoke Newington. Len his brilliant self, full of beans
17-Nov-44	19441117	JLW-PW	Five rockets far away. Two visitors allowed for Len, need to toss coins
19-Nov-44	19441119	JLW-PW	Three winners, swell the Wenborn coffers. Three rockets, far away
21-Nov-44	19441121	JLW-PW	Wireless reports, things going very bad for Jerry Hitler
22-Nov-44	19441122	JLW-PW	Quiet time, appreciate Jerry for his kindness
22-Nov-44	19441122	Len-PW	Letter from hospital – no indication whats up – might be let out for a day next summer.
24-Nov-44	19441124	JLW to PW	Brit Drug Houses got hit, few casualties, we only lost couple of windows. Len ok
27-Nov-44	19441127	JLW-PW	Visited Len by train
30-Nov-44	19441130	JLW-PW	RWR, Orders priority for various Military medicinal use
17-Dec-44	19441217	JLW-PW	War is quiet, hope continues, sending you a parcel, hope meets with approval
18-Dec-44	19441218	JLW-PW	Chicken and Roast beef for Christmas
22-Dec-44	19441222	JLW-PW	Visiting Len Boxing Day, Mum now happy. All quiet in the War Game
03-Jan-45	19450103	JLW-PW	Rockets still arriving, will be better when Jerry base has been put out of action
04-Jan-45	19450104	JLW-PW	Jerry doing his utmost to keep things warm, rocket arrived Muswell Hill, pretty hectic
05-Jan-45	19450105	JLW-PW	Visited Len, train from Guildford. Please get me some Rum, help with cold spell
06-Jan-45	19450106	JLW-PW	Still enjoying the rockets Jerry is sending
09-Jan-45	19450109	JLW-PW	Rockets still coming, Moving to your new abode. Mum Jim Reg at Pictures. Me with Thomas in front of fire
10-Jan-45	19450110	JLW-PW	Surprised at events at West Street. Snow. Rockets. Plenty of orders
12-Jan-45	19450112	JLW-PW	Snow = no rockets. Len progressing well. Awkward for you flitting around?
15-Jan-45	19450115	JLW-PW	Fixed up abode. Len progressing, still on back. North London still receiving presents. Rockets miss us every time.
17-Jan-45	19450117	JLW-PW	Phyllis playing table tennis. War is nearly over?
18-Jan-45	19450118	JLW-PW	Back at West Street, Suggest come home to visit this weekend
19-Jan-45	19450119	JLW-PW	Visit soon – tickets for West End, pretty safe here now.
22-Jan-45	19450122	JLW-PW	Believe the Russians will finish it off and save us a lot of bother. Mother has a nasty cold

"Dear Phyllis"

Date of Letter	Catalogue No.	From-To	Content of interest
23-Jan-45	19450123	JLW-PW	Few explosions, folk unconcerned. All the windows are in, prepared for anything. Thomas the Puss getting bigger
01-Feb-45	19450201	JLW-PW	RWR, Mothers cold better, don't think this war racket will last much longer
02-Feb-45	19450202	JLW-PW	Rockets pretty regular, had a beauty at 830am, far away. Love the pleasure of your company in near future
04-Feb-45	19450204	JLW-PW	Sunday hectic – 6 rockets. Visiting Len next week
08-Feb-45	19450208	JLW-PW	Visiting Len in Godalming
09-Feb-45	19450209	JLW-PW	Mum Pictures, me looking after Thomas. Beauty fall at Kings X – felt the blast at the factory
12-Feb-45	19450212	JLW-PW	Saw Len, perky full of jokes, Betty there as well
13-Feb-45	19450213	JLW-PW	Didn't get much rest, Chingford getting a rare lot
14-Feb-45	19450214	JLW-PW	Look forward to your dance. Wood Green got a nasty one. Cheery letter from Len
15-Feb-45	19450215	JLW-PW	Rocket exploded in air miles up, shook all of London, expect war over by end of March, Thomas the black racketeer caught a mouse, left for Mum when back from Pictures
17-Feb-45	19450217	JLW-PW	Hope you're fit for Valentines dance. Off to Dogs ordered a Pantechian to bring winnings home
18-Feb-45	19450218	JLW-PW	Will be over end of March, Up the Russians
20-Feb-45	19450220	JLW-PW	Rockets come but far away, striving to keep up with orders but they still overtake us
22-Feb-45	19450222	JLW-PW	Orders growing like snowball, bigger and bigger
23-Feb-45	19450223	JLW-PW	Off to see Len at Godalming, expecting shoals of money from poor bookmakers
26-Feb-45	19450226	JLW-PW	All quiet, no loud bangs, up the Russians
28-Feb-45	19450228	JLW-PW	Thanks for eggs from Mrs Darby, all quiet, Up the Russians
03-Mar-45	19450303	JLW-PW	Getting back to normal, old houses missing, result of Jerry's kindness. Harringey on Saturday
04-Mar-45	19450304	JLW to PW	Len merry, Robots very lively
05-Mar-45	19450305	JLW-PW	More bombs. Don't get enough bottles for our standing orders.
10-Mar-45	19450310	JLW-PW	Harringey, rockets overhead during 5th race. Thinks war over by March?
11-Mar-45	19450311	JLW-PW	Didn't win on dogs but won on horses, no loud bangs, no news from Len
13-Mar-45	19450313	JLW-PW	Still hectic, we can take it. Dentist charging PW much – should bump him off
13-Mar-45	19450313	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
14-Mar-45	19450314	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
15-Mar-45	19450315	JLW-PW	Only one rocket but one too many for someone
16-Mar-45	19450316	JLW-PW	Our boys dropping 10 ton presents, will increase to 20 tons, can't last much longer
16-Mar-45	19450316	JLW-PW	Rockets and robots getting scarcer – expect they have sold out. Will join you soon in your famous guest town
18-Mar-45	19450318	JLW-PW	Dogs – winners. Bombs on our rest day. Will send Lens next letter on
19-Mar-45	19450319	JLW-PW	Mum gone to seaside, no riots, no fun what so ever
20-Mar-45	19450320	JLW-PW	Worried to hear of you being accosted by drunken louts. Come see us, bring eggs, will go well with the bacon
21-Mar-45	19450321	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
22-Mar-45	19450322	JLW-PW	Miles of orders, enough to see this war racket over
23-Mar-45	19450323	JLW-PW	Had usual amusement – there is no charge for this extra fun, most kind of them to come
25-Mar-45	19450325	JLW-PW	Reg and I went dogging, backed three winners. No news yet from Len
26-Mar-45	19450326	JLW-PW	Friday is Hot X bun, upto Trevor to pass them around
27-Mar-45	19450327	JLW-PW	Had hectic night, not long now, Jerry is running away. Mum and rest all top hole
28-Mar-45	19450328	JLW-PW	Off to see Len Easter Monday
30-Mar-45	19450330	JLW-PW	RWR, shut factory till Tuesday, give men long weekend. I am at factory on my own in case any bottles coming
30-Mar-45	19450330	JLW to PW	War nearly over
03-Apr-45	19450403	JLW-PW	Good report from Len. You can come home as things near normal
04-Apr-45	19450404	JLW-PW	War is on the wane, all over bar the shouting. Len trying different cure, may take upto Oct but news is good
05-Apr-45	19450405	JLW-PW	Looking forward to final finish of Hitler, things here back to normal, pleasant time awaits you at no.10
06-Apr-45	19450406	JLW-PW	Perhaps manage to come for our next visit to Len. War news is excellent, any hour war will be over

"Dear Phyllis"

Date of Letter	Catalogue No.	From-To	Content of interest
07-Apr-45	19450407	JLW-PW	Sorry to hear you being bundled about at no.21, soon be over. Mum and I still winning on gee gees
10-Apr-45	19450410	JLW-PW	War is over less the shouting
17-Apr-45	19450417	JLW-PW	Thanked PW for visiting
17-Apr-45	19450417	Len to PW	
19-Apr-45	19450419	JLW-PW	PW phone call via Mrs Harris
20-Apr-45	19450420	Len-JLW	From Geo V Sanitorium, Godalming. Adolf should make most of Friday because he wont be getting anymore birthdays
25-Apr-45	19450425	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
04-May-45	19450504	Len-JLW	In King George Sanitorium, Godalming, in a wheelchair, wating to see surgeons, ask Dad to put bets on for me
08-May-45	19450508	JLW-PW	War is over, things have stopped, no business till Thursday. Shall be pleased to see you in near future
21-May-45	19450521	JLW-PW	Went dogging to Harringey, rained had to swim home
31-May-45	19450531	JLW-PW	Orders busy. Did you say WR, mention of Yarmouth
21-Jun-45	19450621	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
26-Jul-45	19450726	JLW-PW	When is PW leaving Stratford. Been buffeted about there.
30-Jul-45	19450730	JLW-PW	Escorted Len around the grounds - all dressed up.
01-Aug-45	19450801	JLW-PW	City Road works are still going. Not much excitement.
04-Aug-45	19450804	JLW-PW	Holidays Yarmouth. Pleased coming home for good soon.
10-Aug-45	19450810	JLW-PW	Jim and Reg been to Yarmouth. Betty bilious again. Off dogging.
15-Aug-45	19450815	JLW to PW	War over, Len ok, won at dogs
25-Aug-45	19450825	JLW-PW	Hope long stay from native town is coming to an end.
01-Sep-45	19450901	JLW-PW	Rabbits. Thomas Cat doing well. Arranging all sorts of visits.
02-Sep-45	19450902	JLW-PW	Len expected home in next 5 weeks.
10-Sep-45	19450910	JLW-PW	At Lynmouth on holiday, favourite pastime watching tennis, been to Ilfracombe. Mother dancing a lot
28-Sep-45	19450928	JLW-PW	From Lyme Regis, on holiday. Charles picking Len up from hospital next Wednesday
01-Oct-45	19451001	JLW-PW	RWR, Len here next Wednesday
14-Oct-45	19451014	JLW-PW	Len at work - picking up thread with De Havilland. PW still hasn't said when returning.
29-Oct-45	19451029	JLW-PW	Phyllis's friend lost lodgings as landlady's husband demobbed and returning
30-Oct-45	19451030	BM-PW	Sent parcel. Come home once got the ok.
06-Jan-46	19460106	JLW-PW	Up the Gunners Reading 2 Arsenal 0, better next time, Thomas killed a bird, another Adolf
07-Jan-46	19460107	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
18-Jul-48	19480718	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
21-Jul-48	19480721	JLW-PW	Won at Dogs - details of Odds and Stakes
14-Jul-49	19490714	Stan to PW	Includes nice picture of both
01-Aug-49	19490801	JLW-PW	Enclosed little present, commemoration of your Mum and Dads 45 years happy marriage
01-Jan-50	19500101	Arthur-Reg	Letter from a friend - knows Reuben
17-Apr-50	19500417	Stan to PW	
04-Aug-50	19500804	JLW-Reg	On Holiday in Devon, near Dartmoor, St Austell
13-Aug-50	19500813	JLW-PW	Holiday Devon, Mere Hotel, Chagford, been to Falmouth, reading papers and betting odds
03-Sep-50	19500903	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
07-Sep-50	19500907	JLW-PW	Off to Yarmouth. Arsenal won 3-1, penalty helped
12-Sep-50	19500912	JLW-PW	Holiday report from Yarmouth, Brunswick Hotel
13-Sep-50	19500913	JLW-PW	Len coming to Arsenal on Saturday, Up the Gunners
21-Jan-52	19520121	Hur & Clifford	To JLW, please call Mr Hur asap
11-Jun-52	19520611	JLW-PW	Pleased sun came to the wedding, hope Devon is looking after you. Business is good, Jim is carrying on good show.
15-Jun-52	19520615	JLW-Reg	Reg and Beryl heading off to Lynmouth on holiday
18-Jun-52	19520618	JLW-Reg	Mentions Father Time twice, pleased Reg & Beryl enjoying them selves
30-Jun-52	19520630	JLW-PW	Mum has accepted Stan as your friend.
05-Jul-52	19520705	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
08-Jul-52	19520708	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest

"Dear Phyllis"

Date of Letter	Catalogue No.	From-To	Content of interest
10-Jul-52	19520710	JLW-PW	Mum doesn't like phone – got her on at last. Holiday camp soon. Mum had TV on – fast asleep in front of it
19-Apr-53	19530419	Lorna-PW	You've sold the house and got a flat. "has the absolute come through yet?"
22-Jun-53	19530622	Stan-PW	Phyllis at Yarmouth, Gorleston – Stan at work and betting. Took Mother for a whisky at the Bell
23-Jun-53	19530623	Stan-PW	Phyllis on holiday with Mother. House contracts ready to exchange.
24-Jun-53	19530624	Stan-PW	Electric bill wrong, Income Tax codes outstanding. Fire in electric shop in Princes St
26-Jun-53	19530626	Stan-PW	Wish we were married, been some years but can't as things are – Electric bill, is partly yours?
30-Aug-53	19530830	Stan-PW	Wedding under circumstances will be quiet. Mother will come along but if difficult will understand. Stan working on the flat while Phyllis away.
31-Aug-53	19530831	Stan-PW	Phyllis at Barnstaple and Lynton and in doubles table tennis tournament. Stan going to Wembley. Getting married 10th Oct – quiet affair
01-Sep-53	19530901	Stan-PW	White Rabbits. Lost 2s at Wembley. Might got to Highbury v Sheff United
02-Sep-53	19530902	Stan-PW	Went to Army & Navy auction for furniture. Sorry about tournament, Lynton trip scrubbed
03-Sep-53	19530903	Stan-PW	Thank you for sending mother the cream. Won on Dogs
10-Nov-53	19531110	JLW-PW	Jim brought back lots of photos of our wedding party
11-Nov-53	19531111	JLW-PW	Pleased to hear you and Stan enjoying yourselves. Jim took all China back today. Billiard table is cleared, plenty of flowers in every room.
11-Nov-53	19531111	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
08-Jul-54	19540708	JLW-Beryl	On holiday at Gorleston, dancing
01-Sep-54	19540901	JLW-Reg	RWR, Reg Beryl at Gorleston again, Len working on bottle stocks, JLW off to watch Arsenal Everton at Highbury
02-Sep-54	19540902	JLW-Reg	Saving some business for you when get back to keep you out of mischief
09-Nov-54	19541109	Flo to PW	
10-Nov-54	19541110	Dby to PW	
10-Nov-54	19541110	Len to P&S	
21-Nov-54	19541121	Jff to PW	
04-Jul-55	19550704	JLW-PW	From Westcliff on Sea, Hotel food, service good. Disappointed you didn't come see us – misunderstanding? JLW watching diet and what eats – brain food.
06-Jul-55	19550706	JLW-PW	From Westcliff – not strolling with others, too tiring
14-Jul-55	19550714	JLW-PW	From Westcliff – sorry to hear builders have taken root
24-Aug-55	19550824	JLW-PW	Pain gone, medicine, brandy galore, first mention of Stan
26-Aug-55	19550826	JLW-PW	Sister Betty going to Arsenal, staying the night. No room for Stans mother in the car
29-Aug-55	19550829	JLW-PW	Nothing of interest
31-Aug-55	19550831	JLW-PW	RWR, Vicky enjoying her channel swims
01-Sep-55	19550901	JLW-PW	RWR, Vicky eating the profits – look forward to seeing you soon
18-Nov-55	19551118	Jackson Lab Eq	Sympathy for sad loss
18-Nov-55	19551118	Steinhardt	Sympathy for sad loss
18-Nov-55	19551118	Carnegies chemicals	Sympathy for sad loss
21-Nov-55	19551121	Morrisons chemicals	Sympathy –always cheerful and happy. Hope Reuben and brother will continue business
21-Nov-55	19551121	Aimer Lab products	Sincere condolences
21-Nov-55	19551121	Capital Motors	Next door neighbour 30 years, will miss him
21-Nov-55	19551121	British drug houses	Sympathy for sad loss
21-Nov-55	19551121	A Matthew	Sympathy for sad loss
21-Nov-55	19551121	Welkleen chemists	Kindly pleasant person, always endeavour to help, world not enough of his kind
22-Nov-55	19551122	Crookes Laboratory	Knew him for quarter of a century, have lost a very dear friend
22-Nov-55	19551122	Intl Bottle Co	Sympathy for sad loss

“Dear Phyllis”

Date of Letter	Catalogue No.	From-To	Content of interest
24-Nov-55	19551124	Charltons, Builders	Deeply respected him and his straightforward ways in business
03-Sep-56	19560903	Stan-PW	At Clacton, PW away with Vickie, Len at Highbury match (seats)
21-Aug-58	19580821	Stan-PW	PW away with Betty and children, Stan at home decorating – Dogs tomorrow
25-Aug-58	19580825	Stan-PW	Missing the children, going to Highbury tonight, finish painting the ceiling, supervisor on Friday – another 5s
17-Apr-60	19600417	Richard-PW	Susan died, brain tumour, very sad, spending time in Hull and Grimsby
18-Apr-60	19600101	Betty-PW	Betty's family news, sad about Lornas husband
13-Jul-61	19610713	Stan-PW	PW away, Stan got invited to dinner, went to Robin Hood at Enfield – three whiskies
05-Jun-74	19740605	Stan-PW	From chest hospital – Stan hardened smoker, Doctor allow him 5 a day as doesn't expect him to cut it out immediately
10-Jun-74	19740610	Stan-PW	Cut off nicotine and drink – shock to nervous system, will be better for body and mind, Benenden chest hospital, Maidstone
13-Jun-74	19740613	Stan-PW	Watched bits of Test match – visited church, will go to next service
17-Jun-74	19740617	Stan-PW	Hope sorry plight didn't upset you and Luke, my condition is necessary to get better, changing tablets hope to find right ones, breathing better, didn't ask Luke about his exams
29-Apr-81	19810429	Rev Esdaile-PW	thank you for preparing monthly music sheets. Good luck on move to Westgate
10-Dec-87	19871210	Naddy-PW	Must be lovely to be a granny, all the fun without the work
02-Oct-90	19901002	PW-Stan	Childrens address's, Stan in hospital, sounded breathless, PW cites church magazine, talks about Rick the dog
05-Oct-90	19901005	PW-Stan	Asked about Stans circulation. Luke taken to Newmarket by a client – must be doing well?
10-Oct-90	19901010	PW-Stan	asks about changing way of life when Stan returns.. Mentions dreadful Dartford tunnel
19-Oct-90	19901019	PW-Stan	Taken Rick for a walk, Ena surprised I cooked a joint for myself on Sunday

"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 19 - Letter 22nd August 1943, James Luke to Phyllis, (4 pages)

Aug 22-43 I 10 Highbury Terrace N5
Dear Phyllis
Thanks for your Welcome letter
pleased to hear you are quite well and
your new abode is satisfactory also
they seem to know you require feeding,
not starving as Darbys pet Mrs Jones
carried on fact of matter to settle this
Mrs Jones should be transported to
Siberia { Bow Wow } I should have
wrote you sooner but as you rung
and got first hand information
right from the source I had not
much to tell you. Please to hear
your big Sister Betta is O.K. News
Mum the boys and I went to
harringay Sat 2-30 afternoon racing
now we had a very nice time
had 4 Bets 2 Winners 50% per
cent not bad we all won
more ill gotten gains. We came
home had tea and what do you think
happened Mum and I crept off to
the pictures Astoria { Cheers }

I see by your letter ² you are coming home next Sat We shall be very pleased to see you Re Bananas Mum says What we have here you can take back with you as it would be too risky to send them to you. You can tell your friends 2 Horses for St Leger Ribbon Unidad Either can win the last of the Classic War is going on but will soon be over Italy will be out very shortly end of month will finish him. So they will then put paid to Tommy Hitler and if Jerry last this year of 43 shall be much surprised.

Pleased to hear your friend Betty is coming along We will teach her a few lessons Billiards Table Tennis Etc

Continuation from Page ³ No 2
in White & New Blue.

We have miles of orders
never was such times did
not occur to me that a
War could do so much
in the finances of Wemborn
Ltd. Its very comforting
to know you are helping
a good Cause. And most
important point off all
helping yourself which
is naturally very comforting
to our little gang Mum
and rest of gang very well
all working very hard
Reub went off last Monday
only had 4 long days
leave he must have been
travelling the balance
of his week leave I am
writing also to Betta
as I have not done any
writing lately and this
will not do as I must

Continuation from page 3

Keep my reputation up
as a noted correspondent
We still rise very early
fact I am in the factory
before 8 AM What a War
I leave at 6-30 PM Not
bad for a youngster
My second time on Earth
don't know what the
third time will be like
Expect same Racket as
this one less you do more
money for not doing it
you cannot work and
make money you can only
do one of the the two
So I am on the brain trust
Love from All Mum
Dad

"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 20 - Letter 22nd August 1944, James Luke to Phyllis, (2 pages)

Aug 22-44 10 Highbury Terrace N5
Dear Phyllis Thanks for ring Please to hear
you are quite well. So sorry missed
one letter to you but will catch it now
them and all the rest are all very well
nothing much happened lately
Of course we are getting these
Robots on and off but you know
we must have some amusement
sometimes and so this is the latest
novelty. Weather is much better
to day and belief we are going
all but for another spell of
Sunshine. I will deliver your
message to night to Beatty
Mrs Harris and Mr B Harris
still sleep in their Garden
Dug Out What Heroes have
ordered Pitty medals for them

"Dear Phyllis"

you know Beaty Wants Mum
and I to stay at Reading
Well you know Mum dont
want to stay away long its
really dont like the House
Vacant as there is so many
Gansters only Waiting their
chance to invade their selves
in So it is up to us to see that
they dont. { What A Racket }
you know We are right on
our toes here We have as much
at home to look after as these
Service men have on all fronts
Well here is to next mail
So Cherrio ^{Mum} Love From all Dad

Appendix 21 - Frank Gibbon - Death Certificate, 7th July 1963

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH

The statutory fee for this certificate is 3s. 9d.
Where a search is made without the entry,
a search fee is payable in addition.

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE,
SOMERSET HOUSE, LONDON

Application Number 29252

REGISTRATION DISTRICT Essex South Western
in the Sub-district of in the County of Essex

No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description, and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
473	Sevenish July 1963. Langdonne Hospital Langdonstone	Frank GIBBON	Male	85 years	8225 Upper Lane West Ham occupation unknown	(a) Cerebral arteriosclerosis (b) Infecting Syphilis (c) Cord infarction of left brain Certified by D K Roff H.B.	J S Chapman Causing the body to be buried Langdonne Hospital E.11	7 July 1963	L.H. Gibbon Deputy Registrar

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, SOMERSET HOUSE, LONDON, under the Seal of the said Office, the 18th day of April 1968.

DX 089590

This certificate is issued in pursuance of the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1953.
Section 34 provides that any certified copy of an entry purporting to be sealed or stamped with the seal of the General Register Office shall be received as evidence of the birth or death to which it relates without any further or other proof of the entry, and no certified copy purporting to be given in the said Office shall be of any force or effect unless it is sealed or stamped as aforesaid.
CAUTION.—Any person who (1) falsifies any of the particulars on this certificate, or (2) uses a falsified certificate as true, knowing it to be false, is liable to prosecution.



Mr. WENBORN senior

ANYBODY got a bottle needing a cork, or for that matter a stopper needing a bottle? We have discovered where to find both, and in so doing have made the acquaintance of a handful of London craftsmen who are entirely unique in their own line.

Wilfred, Walter and John Day own the only cork manufacturing shop in London. It is to be found in Farringdon Road, which, when their father was alive (he died at the age of 90), was known as Coppice Row, where Dickens once got lost on his way to the City.

The name over the shop door is Pleasant, which suits the brothers very well. "The Pleasant Days" we'd call them.

Inside their two small dusty rooms they make such things as table mats, bath mats, wheels, shuttlecocks, bungs, and those heavy-looking "billiard balls" which blossom magically between a conjurer's fingers.

During the war they worked out a way to make a replaceable cork top for whisky bottles, and produced cork boats and aeroplanes.

Done for love

These last were done for love (and 6d.) to cheer up the much-bombed children of the neighbourhood, and it is the only time the brothers have ever had a queue outside the shop.

The cork or bark (from evergreen oaks) arrives in sheets from Portugal, Spain and the Mediterranean. Then it has its "back" and "belly" shaved off, to a chorus of positively human squeaks! This must be done by hand with a wicked-looking notching knife; it is then sliced into strips as far as possible with the cracks and finally cut into squares of

roughly the size of the corks required. The corks are fitted to chucks and rounded on a cutting machine, then trimmed by hand and sorted.

Even if the pace in the shop were fast and furious instead of leisurely and friendly they would take about four or five minutes each.

Champagne corks are a great disappointment. They are merely straight rounds of cork (if you follow me) . . . The bulge on the top is caused after the boiled cork has been pushed into the bottle almost level with the top and wired down—the wine expands and pushes it out again as far as the wire will stretch . . . then of course we do the rest later. . . .

100 varieties

THE House of Wenborn, now in its fourth generation, also started in Clerkenwell, but today it operates on Mr. Micawber's home ground, off the City Road, near the Angel. . . .

When we first met Mr. Wenborn senior we thought we'd come to the wrong address, for he looks exactly like the sort of scientist whose drugs he caters for. He takes up where the Days leave off; when cork won't do, glass stoppers will.

That is, provided they are fitted exactly, a process which involves six hand operations for each bottle — and, although they've been trying for years, no mass-produced machine has been invented which is capable of doing this — for no two stoppers or two bottle-necks are alike.

The Wenborn products are exported ("by air" we were told proudly) all over the world, and just now especially China and Malaya. . . .

Altogether there are 100 different varieties, of which the rarest and most difficult to deal with are carboys (five gallon acid jars).

Mr. Wenborn, born in Benjamin Street behind the cork shop, was working "on the lathe" at fourteen.

In those days his father and

grandfather "used to walk about in their top hats," but by the time he was sixteen he had to learn to carry on without his father . . . "he'd be 120 if he were alive today."

Mr. Wenborn, who is 76, believes he's so youthful because he's not yet a grandfather and because of his evening cup of tea, made with hot milk (instead of water), to

which he adds sugar, whisky and butter!

We are willing to take his word for it, although we believe the answer lies elsewhere. It seems to us that from now on — whenever we take a cork out, or put a stopper in, we shall remember the Brothers Day and Mr. Wenborn — working away in frank enjoyment of their own skill!



A CLEAN SHAVE—Walter Day slices the cork

"Dear Phyllis"

Appendix 23 – Wedding Certificate of Stanley Gibbon and Phyllis Wenborn
7th November 1953 – Islington Register Office



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 13609261/2



1953		MARRIAGE SOLEMNIZED AT		IN THE		IN THE		IN THE	
DISTRICT OF ISLINGTON		ISLINGTON		METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON		METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON		METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON	
No.	When married	Name and surname	Age	Condition	Rank of profession	Residence at the time of marriage	Officer's name and surname	Rank or profession of father	Rank or profession of mother
139.	Seventh November 1953	Stanley Gibbon	36 years	Single	Executive Officer (Public Health Department)	17a Parkhill Road, Hampstead	Frank Gibbon (deceased)	Insurance Clerk	
		Phyllis Wenborn	33 years	Single	Office Secretary (Public Health Department)	10 Highbury Grove, Islington	Duke Wenborn	Officer	

Married in the presence of the Registrar, Stanley Gibbon, and Phyllis Wenborn, according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England.

This marriage was solemnized between us, Stanley Gibbon and Phyllis Wenborn, in the presence of us, M. L. Gibbon, Superintendent Registrar, Islington.

by certificate signed by me, W. Phyllis, Superintendent Registrar, Islington.

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of Islington

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 2nd day of March 2023

MXJ 606846

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE. © CROWN COPYRIGHT

WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

233863 (M2) APS/SLP

Overleaf, back cover – a portrait of James Luke Wenborn, entitled “Benevolence”. This was exhibited at the City of London and Cripplegate Photographic Society’s 40th Anniversary Exhibition in 1952. Photograph by Frederick C Smith of Holloway, London.

James was well known for paying his employees at Wenborn’s a fair wage, often above the national weekly average wage. “Benevolence” would therefore be an apt and fitting title to this portrait.

