

Roots in the Forest



THE BREMER CAR

WALTHAM FOREST FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

March 2024

ISSN 0143-215X

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www.wffhs.org.uk

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Roots in the Forest

The Journal of the Waltham Forest Family History Society

March 2024

| <i>Contents</i> | <i>Page</i> |
|---|-------------|
| The Wigram family of Walthamstow | 2 |
| Using war memorials as a research source..... | 13 |
| An unusual name..... | 22 |
| Chingford Mount Cemetery café | 22 |
| Cure of souls | 22 |
| The Douat fraud | 23 |
| Frederick Bremer | 26 |
| A-Z of family history | 28 |
| Ejournals | 29 |
| A grievous error..... | 31 |
| Diary..... | 32 |

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THE WIGRAM FAMILY OF WALTHAMSTOW – Mark Carroll

Introduction

Tim Valder-Hogg and I were busy transcribing and checking a marriage register from Walthamstow St Mary for the period around 1800, when we noticed an unusual entry (Fig 1) – it had 13 witnesses! Why so many, who were they, and why did some of the signatures look rather childish?

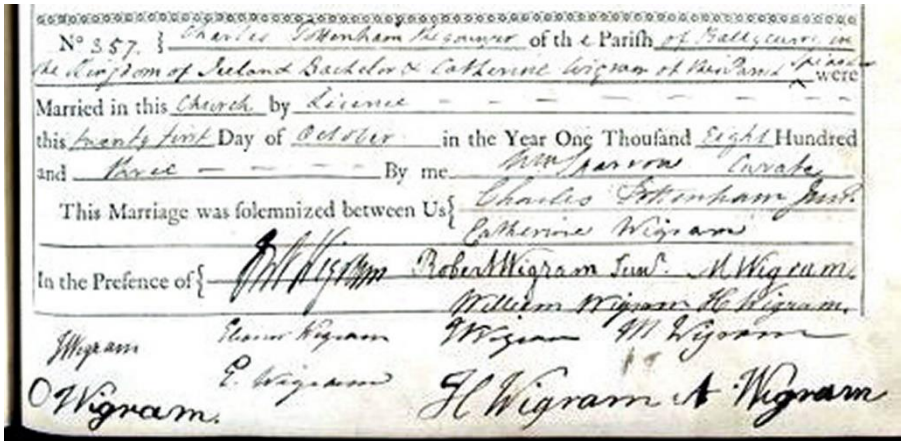


Figure 1. Walthamstow St Mary marriage entry, 1803

The marriage entry

The marriage took place by licence on 21st October 1803 between Catherine WIGRAM of Walthamstow and Charles TOTTENHAM junior of the parish of Ballycurry in the “Kingdom of Ireland” (actually in County Wicklow, 40 miles south of Dublin); both signed their name. Marrying by licence meant that no banns needed to be called in the parish church over the preceding three weeks. This approach to a wedding in the past was often adopted when both partners were in a hurry, or when they wanted to avoid the publicity associated with the calling of banns; it was also customary in the past for people of any rank except the most humble to marry by licence, which typically cost 2s 6d. The fact that both bride and groom in this particular wedding could write suggests that they had received a fair degree of education – another sign of relative wealth, perhaps.

So, who were Catherine Wigram and Charles Tottenham junior? The bridegroom, born 1st March 1768, was the son of Charles Tottenham senior, Member of Parliament for New Ross, County Wexford, Ireland (ref 1). Charles senior had married Frances, daughter and heir of Robert BOSWELL of Ballycurry. Charles junior succeeded his father as MP, but was described to the Irish viceroy in June 1804 as “a strange, odd fellow who never leaves home in the county of Wicklow ...” and who found it “inconvenient to go to England to attend Parliament”. He resigned his seat in 1805 and died in 1843. Thus, through the Ireland connection, the Wigram and Tottenham families were no doubt well acquainted with one another. Charles junior and Catherine had five children: Eleanor Frances (1806-1876), Charles (1807-1863), Robert (1810-1858), Frances Maria (1813-1829) and William Heathcote (1815-1857). As for Catherine herself, she was the eldest daughter of Robert Wigram of Walthamstow House, Essex, and his first wife; she was born in 1775, three years after her parents had married, and died in 1865 (ref 2). It must have been a hectic household, for Robert Wigram had a grand total of 23 children by his two wives (Fig 2)!

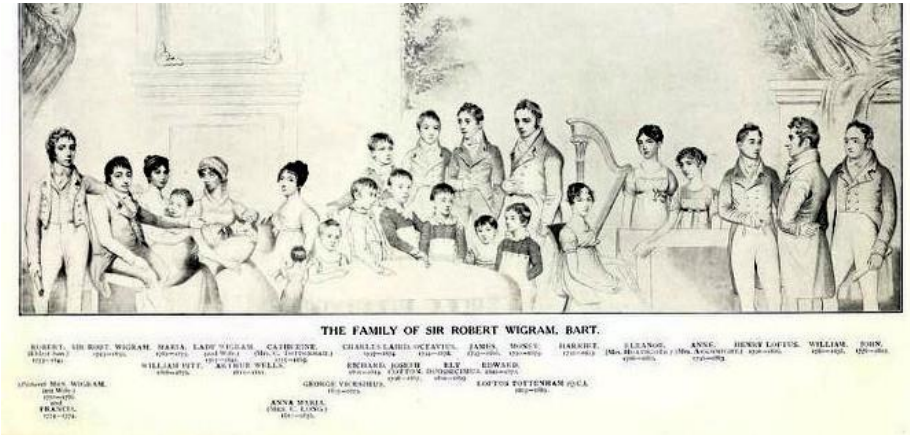


Figure 2. Family of Robert Wigram
(after 1803; modified from ref 2)

*Catherine is the fifth adult from the left,
her parents second and fourth from the left*

Walthamstow House itself was built c1772 near the junction of Shernhall Street and Clay Street (the present-day Forest Road) (Fig 3)

and was the only local pre-1840 mansion still standing in 1971. It was the home of the Wigrams from 1782 to 1842. The three-storey entrance front of nine bays had central steps leading to a Doric porch, flanked by bay-windowed projections rising to the full height of the building. It had enriched ceilings within and an 18th-century staircase (ref 3). The house is now the Holy Family Catholic School and Sixth Form College.



Figure 3. 1840 map of Walthamstow (modified from ref 3)

St Mary's Church is at Church End; Walthamstow House is just above it and to the right

Sir Robert Wigram

The patriarch of the family, Robert Wigram (Fig 4a), was a man of considerable distinction in his day: a successful merchant, an MP, a surgeon, a property developer and more (ref 4). He was born in Wexford, Ireland, on 30th January 1744, the only son of John Wigram of Bristol and Mary CLIFFORD of Wexford. His father died at sea when he was only two years old, and so he was brought up at Wexford by a maternal uncle, who was a doctor. At the age of 18 he was apprenticed by his mother to Dr ALLEN of Dulwich, near London, where he qualified as a surgeon two years later. His first employer was the East India Company, with whom he sailed as a ship's surgeon

during the period 1764-1772. Whilst in China he contracted an eye disease, ophthalmia, that led to his early retirement from medical practice; during that time, however, he gained an intimate knowledge of trade in India and China. His financial assets at the time of his first marriage in 1772 amounted to £3,000 (about £400,000 at today's prices – ref 5), and by 1774 his business at Cornhill, London, was “one of the greatest importers of drugs in England”. (*Author's note*: The main such drug might have been opium, which – in the form of the alcoholic tincture, laudanum – was widely used as a painkiller in Georgian and Victorian society.)



Figure 4. Portraits of a) Robert Wigram (left) and b) Eleanor, Lady Wigram (right)

Image 4a courtesy of Wikipedia; image 4b by permission of National Portrait Gallery, London

On 19th December 1772 Robert married Catherine BROADHURST of Mansfield, Notts. The couple had four sons and two daughters by the time of her death on 22nd January 1786 (refs 1 and 2): Robert (1773-1843), Francis (b/d1774), John (1778-1812), William (1780-1858), Catherine (1775-1865) and Maria (1782-1873). On his remarriage on 23rd June 1787, he moved to Knotts Green, Leyton, but later moved back to Walthamstow House. His second wife was a widow, born Eleanor WATTS of Southampton (Fig 4b). Together they had a further

17 children: Money (1790-1873), Henry Loftus (1791-1866), James (1793-1866), Octavius (1794-1878), Charles Laird (1797-1874), Joseph Cotton (1798-1867), Richard (1800-1819), Ely Duodecimus (1801-1869), Edward (1802-1870), Loftus Tottenham (1803-1889), George Vicesimus (1805-1879), William Pitt (1806-1870), Arthur Wells (1810-1811); and Eleanor (1788-1860), Harriet (1792-1823), Anne (1796-1863) and Anna Maria (1812-1856). Some of the boys were given unusual forenames, Latin words indicating that they were the 8th, 12th and 20th child respectively! Many of the daughters married well: their spouses included an earl, a knight, several clergymen, and a member of the wealthy HEATHCOTE family of Chingford.

Lady Eleanor Wigram was a philanthropist in her own right, as well as an influential adviser to her husband (ref 6). Indeed, Sir Robert once commented: “I never did undertake any business of moment without consultation with my wife, and I can truly say it has much promoted my fortune.” She was extensively involved with local charities and the church in Walthamstow. In 1807 she created an Anglican school there, and in 1818 she suggested to several local schools that they combine their resources to institute the area’s first National School. Eleanor set up the Walthamstow Female Benefit Society in 1815 and became its first patron. In 1824 she established a group of local women to support the Church Missionary Society.

Robert Wigram went into politics, though with no great enthusiasm – he felt more comfortable in the business world. He was though Tory MP for Fowey in Cornwall (1802-1806) and for Wexford (1806-1807) (ref 1). As a politician he was a staunch supporter of the abolition of slavery. As a shipowner he made a substantial contribution to the development of the Port of London: he helped establish the East India Dock Company, of which he became a Director in 1805 and its Chairman in 1810. On 20th October 1805 he was created a baronet. By 1811 Robert Wigram was reputedly worth “half a million” – equivalent today to about £65 million (ref 5). He was reported to have “... £100,000 in Meux’s brewery concern and £130,000 in the Blackwall Dock ... a large business in drugs ... [and] above £100,000 in East India shipping ...”. He was appointed High Sheriff of Essex for 1812-1813. He retired in 1819, by which time his business interests had largely been taken over by his sons William (his

favourite), Money and John. Sir Robert died at Walthamstow House (Fig 5) on 6th November 1830, aged 86 (ref 4).



Figure 5. Walthamstow House, 1802

Image courtesy of Wikipedia

Legal deeds and wills

Tim alerted me to the fact that he had put up on our Society's "Records" website some documents relating to deeds concerning property transfers involving Walthamstow residents (ref 7). The name of (Sir) Robert Wigram features prominently in these records. For example:

- 27th May 1828: Licence to Sir Robert Wigram to demise three parcels of land at the north end of Wood Street
- 27th October 1808: Lease from Sir Robert Wigram to Robert GRAVES: Maynard's Farm, Waltham Cross (96 acres)
- 2nd March 1814: Deed of Exchange between the Trustees of the Barking Road and Sir Robert Wigram, Bart: lands at West Ham [for the construction of the road to West India Docks]

There are many more such examples, and also later ones involving his eldest son and other descendants. Robert was clearly an active and successful businessman. He reputedly kept a quill pen, ink and paper

on his bedside table in case he woke in the night with an idea for a fresh business venture!

As might be expected for a wealthy man like Sir Robert Wigram, he left a will, proved on 31st December 1830 (ref 8). It is an extensive document with two codicils, running to 31 pages in all! He nominated his “dear wife”, Lady Eleanor, as his executrix and two of his sons as executors. In it he refers to provision previously made for many of his children, but he makes further bequests of investments to some of his sons. To his widow he left Walthamstow House with all its contents, including his carriage, horses and their tackle, as well as all her “jewels, watches, trinkets and other her paraphernalia”. In the days before the Married Women’s Property Acts came into force in the 1870s and 1880s, of course, all of a married woman’s possessions belonged legally to her husband.

The 1841 will of the widowed Lady Eleanor Wigram is a more modest document, running to only four pages with its two codicils and a schedule (ref 9). In it, she concerns herself mainly with domestic items, rather than property or business investments: jewellery, clothing, crockery, paintings, a piano and such like. However, she also grants lifetime annuities to several members of her Watts family and to her servants. The residue of her estate was to be sold and divided equally among her surviving children, whom she names.

Sir Robert Fitzwygram

Sir Robert Wigram’s eldest son, also called Robert, changed his surname to FITZWYGRAM – perhaps to distinguish himself from his father (Fig 6a)? He was born on 25th September 1773 and educated privately; however, he did not possess the paternal business acumen (ref 10). He initially became a partner in his father’s firm in the City, but left it in 1809 at Sir Robert’s insistence. By then he had moved into politics, with help from his father’s extensive connections. He replaced his father as Tory MP for Fowey over the period 1806-1818, and later was MP for Lostwithiel in Cornwall, 1818-1826. During that time he was also a Director of the Bank of England (1807-1821).

On 3rd August 1812 the then Robert Wigram II married Selina, the youngest daughter of Sir John Macnamara HAYES of County Clare in Ireland (Fig 6b). The couple had six sons and five daughters: Robert

(1813-1873), Selina Frances (1815-1890), Eleanor Maria (1816-1817), George Augustus Frederick (1818-1841), Augusta Catherine (1819-1893), Sophia Matilda (1820-1824), Frederick Wellington John (1823-1904), William Harcourt (1825-1832), John Fitzroy (1827-1881), Cordelia Anne (1829-1830) and Loftus Adam (1832-1904) (ref 2). Three of their children married members of the English aristocracy.



Figure 6. Portraits of a) Sir Robert Fitzwygram (left) and b) his wife, Lady Selina (right)
Images courtesy of Wikipedia

On 7th May 1818 Robert Wigram II was granted a knighthood, conferred on him by the Prince Regent at Carlton House, London. After the death in 1830 of his father, whom he succeeded as Second Baronet, Sir Robert changed his surname to Fitzwygram by Royal Licence on 22nd October 1832. However, this “fanciful alteration” was not adopted by other members of his extended family (ref 10). He died aged 70 on 17th December 1843 and six days later was interred in the family vault at St Mary’s, Walthamstow. In his will, proved on 12th January 1844, he leaves lifetime annuities and property to his wife, whom he also makes executrix (ref 11). To each of his daughters he bequeaths £10,000 – equivalent today to about £1 million (ref 5). Interestingly, he leaves his eldest son nothing, since the latter’s paternal grandfather (Sir Robert Wigram) had already “abundantly

provided” for him in his will, and he exhorts his son to accept that decision and to be amicable towards his mother and siblings. His widow, Lady Selina, survived him by a further 23 years without remarrying, before she too was interred with her husband on 27th August 1866, aged 75.

Back to the 1803 marriage register entry

The St Mary’s marriage register entry for the wedding of Catherine Wigram in 1803 had an impressive 13 witnesses (Fig 7). Who were they? From the above information one can tentatively identify some of them:



Figure 7. Signatories to the 1803 marriage register entry

1. Rbt Wigram: Robert Wigram I, the bride’s father
2. Robert Wigram Junr: the bride’s eldest brother
3. M Wigram: probably Money Wigram, brother (or possibly Maria Wigram, sister)
4. William Wigram: the bride’s brother
5. H Wigram: either Harriet Wigram, sister, or Henry [Loftus] Wigram, brother
6. J Wigram: either John or James Wigram, brother
7. Eleanor Wigram: either the bride’s mother or sister
8. J Wigram: either John or James Wigram, bride’s brother
9. M Wigram: probably Maria Wigram, sister (or possibly Money Wigram, brother)
10. O Wigram: Octavius Wigram, brother (aged 9 in 1803)
11. E Wigram: either the bride’s mother or sister, Eleanor
12. H Wigram: either Harriet Wigram, sister, or Henry [Loftus] Wigram, brother
13. A Wigram: Anne Wigram, sister (aged 7 in 1803)

From the young ages of two of the signatories, one can understand why some of the handwriting looks rather childish. However, in 1803 probably a majority of the population of Walthamstow was illiterate. It is not clear why so many of the Wigram family signed as witnesses, especially given the fact that several of them were minors at the time.

Other Wigram records

Both Lady Eleanor and Sir Robert requested that they be laid to rest in Walthamstow; their burials are duly recorded in the registers of St Mary's Church and their details are available on the WFFHS "Records" website (ref 7). The Wigram family vault is on the south side of the churchyard in area B, plot B9.11; 12 members of the extended family are interred there (Fig 8). Sir Robert was laid to rest there on 11th November 1830, aged 87 (ostensibly), Lady Eleanor on 29th January 1841, aged 73. The "Records" website also has details of other events relating to the Wigram family. Sir Robert is noted as being a resident of Walthamstow in the 1821 census, while Lady Eleanor was living at Walthamstow House in the Clay Street area of the parish at the time of the 1831 census. Frederic Edward, son of Edward and Catherine Wigram, was baptised at St Mary's on 18th July 1834. As well as the wedding of Catherine Wigram in 1803, her sisters Eleanor and Anne were also married at the same church, in 1813 and 1818 respectively.

Modern records show that the Wigram surname is still alive and well in England in 2023. It appears hundreds of times in current electoral registers, as well as in recent grants of probate (wills), and even in the online BT telephone book. How many of them are descendants of Sir Robert Wigram of Walthamstow House?

Acknowledgements

I thank Tim Valder-Hogg for helpful suggestions.

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Figure 8. Wigram family vault in St Mary's churchyard, Walthamstow
Photo credit: Lesley Drake

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USING WAR MEMORIALS AS A RESEARCH SOURCE

– **Tim Valder-Hogg**

One type of monumental inscription (MI) I have been taking an interest in over the last few years is those on war memorials. They are frequently the briefest of records of service or death giving only initials and a surname. Much more detail is available on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) website, so why are these monuments of interest? Given how brief they are, why were they ever considered satisfactory records of an individual’s sacrifice?

Apart from saving space, these people were known to the community who commemorated them, and in many cases their initials were enough to identify them to that community. All were commemorated equally, regardless of their service.

Other than the fact that a group of people cared enough to fund and erect a monument naming those who gave their lives, they provide

information for us about affiliations that we might not find for people from anywhere else. In some cases, they can be a clue to a place where someone lived which would not be otherwise known. In others it can tell you why they were there or more about their lives.

Sometimes these monuments record a sacrifice not in the usual records we consult. I was looking at names on the Halex war memorial, which was once at the plant at Highams Park, and is now at Hale End Library (Fig 1). I was trying to identify a T C EDWARDS in the CWGC records but couldn't find him. Thomas Charles EDWARDS appears on the 1911 census, a Xylonite Turner living with his family in Walthamstow. Xylonite was a kind of plastic similar to celluloid and made by Halex, so we know he worked for Halex. I found his pension record has survived. The records give a date of discharge from the RFA, and importantly, that he was medically unfit with pulmonary tuberculosis and that this was due to his war service. Surely, he should be in the CWGC casualty records, and his grave in Chingford Mount Cemetery should be marked. His grave isn't marked.



Figure 1. Halex memorial (K Unwin)

I made enquiries of Chris Hunt of the Western Front Association East London branch, which meets in Walthamstow, to see if he knew anything useful. Chris is conducting research into the approximately 2,400 WW1 Walthamstow casualties. From him I discovered that some of these people appear on multiple memorials. In Thomas's case he appears on the Shernhall Methodist Church memorial (Fig 2), so not only do we see that he worked for Halex in Highams Park, but he was likely a Methodist too. Curiously at enlistment he said he was CofE, but the fact that both he and his father are buried at Chingford Mount indicates that they were probably non-conformist, and so not members of the Church of England.

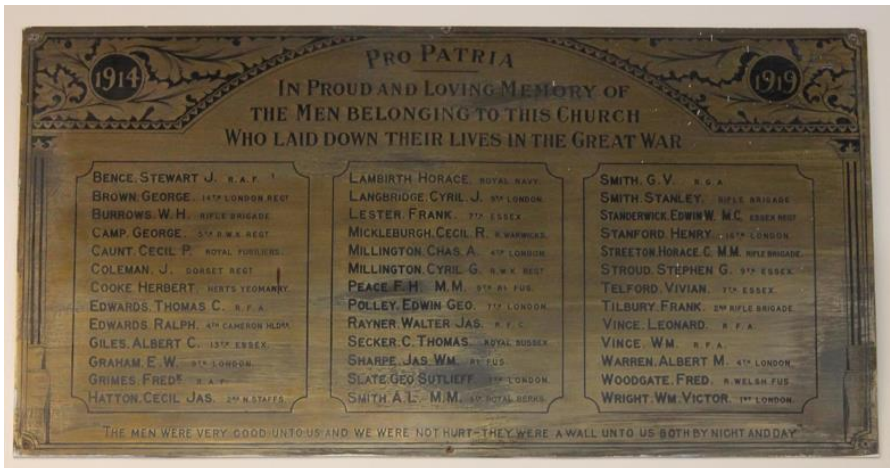


Figure 2. Shernhall Methodist Church memorial (Chris Hunt)

Harry SHAW also appears on the Halex war memorial. His association with Walthamstow is not immediately obvious as CWGC lists his parents as living in Clapton, but he also appears on the St Peter-in-the-Forest war memorial. A look at the 1911 census shows him with his family living on Forest Road.

The above are church and work affiliations, but there are others such as school and sport affiliations. Some will remember the talk by Malcolm Doolin a few years ago and his book about the boys who appeared on the Blackhorse Road School war memorial. Malcolm set out to identify and tell us about the boys who had attended the school and appeared on the memorial. Turning their names back into lives

makes it easier to understand what they gave up and continue the process of remembering.

A Leslie Arthur JOLLY appears on the Associated Equipment Company (AEC) WW1 war memorial which was originally placed at their Blackhorse Lane factory in Walthamstow (Fig 3). Among vehicles AEC manufactured was the Routemaster bus. The memorial was moved when the factory moved to Southall in 1927, and it is now in the London Bus Museum at Brooklands Museum. CWGC records show Leslie as living on Orford Road, probably in the catchment area for Queen's Road Boys' School, and indeed a Leslie Jolly appears on its Roll of Honour. Although he was baptised at the church of St Michael and All Angels, this association does not appear to have been kept up as he does not appear on the war memorial there.



Figure 3. AEC WW1 Memorial (Chris Hunt)

Some war memorials are not quite as obvious as inscribed monuments. The memorial tablet at St Peter-in-the-Forest tells us that the carved oak chancel screen and marble steps of the choir were erected in remembrance of those who gave their lives in the First World War.

Some memorials took the form of electric lighting or seating for a building or a whole building, like the Waltham Abbey War Memorial Hospital. In the case of the hospital, the names of casualties were recorded, and the inscribed tablets have outlived the hospital, but in many cases, no one saw the need to record the names of the individuals these items memorialised. This unfortunately means that after a generation or two, the names which the facilities were given in memory of are lost. When the Waltham Abbey War Memorial Hospital was demolished, the tablets with the names inscribed on were formed into a new memorial nearby (Fig 4).



Figure 4. Waltham Abbey memorial (VH)

The church of St Lawrence, Waltham Abbey, has its own war memorial (inside) with a very similar set of names on it. Further investigation might tell us about the difference in affiliations of those named. Were those not on the church memorial not members of the Church or England, or were the lists of names used to create the monuments different for some other reason?

At St Saviour's, Walthamstow, the original intent had been to create a monument as its war memorial. The relatively cheap-looking monument for High Church setting was due to a decision to put a significant portion of the sum towards the relief of the men's widows and orphans. One might see sons and daughters of the fallen as part of a person's memorial. Some were still in receipt of funds in the 1930s. Fortunately the names of the fallen were inscribed on a simple

memorial so that those without a direct family link can see their names.

Other memorials were of a less durable nature and given the way we look at printed material these days, we might consider them temporary at best. Printed material, however, allowed for a more detailed record at a lower cost. Local newspapers carried on-service lists and obituaries. Some schools had magazines, which meant that space was available for obituaries. Like other school records, the survival rate of these is variable. The Queen's Road Boys' School produced a memorial booklet as early as 1915 recording over 200 who served in the forces. A copy in the Walthamstow Libraries survived and is now in the Waltham Forest Archives (Fig 5).



Figure 5. Memorial Booklet (VH)

The Walthamstow Cricket Club remembered the 11 men from the club who lost their lives in the Great War by printing their names in their fixture list each year. The club clearly took pride in the sacrifice made

by its members, and this was a good way of keeping their names alive while the practice lasted. The East London Branch of the Western Front Association have held their meetings at the club since 2016, and desired to repay the club's hospitality. On 16th September 2021 a ceremony was held at Walthamstow Cricket, Tennis & Squash Club in which Mark Smith (who you may know as a medal expert on *The Antiques Roadshow*) unveiled a memorial plaque, donated by the WFA, to those men, so that their names are again seen and remembered (Fig 6).



Figure 6

Chris Hunt has carried out research into the men named on the memorial. This has revealed a number of connections with other local institutions, notably parish churches and the former grammar school, which all help to build a picture of the lives these men gave up.

A problem that war memorials have is, being a permanent reminder, they often outlive the buildings or settings they were erected within. This can lead to war memorials disappearing. Often, they are relocated in a way which makes some sense if you look at what happened to the community which created them. When St James, Walthamstow, was

closed in 1960 the parish was merged with that of St Barnabas, so the memorial was moved to St Barnabas church. When the Halex plant at Highams Park was closed, the memorial there was moved to the Xylonite works at Brantham, in Suffolk, which kept it with current employees. When the Brantham site closed in 2007, the copper plaques were kept for safety by the local council until members of the Highams Park Society sought them out and arranged for them to be erected in Hale End Library. The AEC memorial moved to the new factory before ending up in the Brooklands transport museum. Keeping track of monuments is one reason why the Imperial War Museum has created the War Memorials Register. Being an entirely voluntary register, it relies on interested people updating it when monuments are moved, and some have moved since their entries were created.

If you find a person listed on a war memorial, you might find them on others, and this can give us clues about a person's life.

If you look into the circumstances of a memorial, you may find that the real memorial is something else of common use or of value to the community left behind. Sometimes war memorials move, and some detective work can be needed to find them again. If this happens, you might ask:

- Was there a merger, takeover or assumption by another organisation or group?
- Did the organisation relocate?
- If the organisation ceased trading or existence, where was it located then?
- Which was the local authority (with an archive) or are there special interest groups with an archive which might have acquired records?

Back to T C EDWARDS, what happened there? It is possible to file a Non-Commemoration Report with CWGC. Currently they are about halfway through a five-year programme to address historical inequalities in commemoration, so they are quite busy at present. Some evidence is needed when submitting a report, and they will ask for more if it is needed. I submitted pages from T C EDWARDS' service record showing cause of death and was asked to provide a copy of his

death record. CWGC are happy to accept the non-certified entries from the GRO which makes this easier and cost less than obtaining a certificate. After eight months, I received notification that an adjudication had taken place and Corporal Thomas Charles EDWARDS would be commemorated. He appeared in the CWGC casualty list almost immediately, but it will take longer for a headstone to be erected.



*Grave CR8328, Chingford Mount
T C Edwards, two plots right of headstone in the foreground (VH)*

Hopefully I've shown war memorials to be an interesting source and shown how you might use them in family and local history research.

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The Boys of Blackhorse Road –Malcolm Doolin. ISBN-10:
0993501206

Cricketers Remembered article, WFA Bulletin Feb 2021 – Chris Hunt

CWCG War Dead database – www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/

Lost Hospitals of London – www.ezitis.myzen.co.uk

War Memorials Register – www.iwm.org.uk/memorials

WFFHS Records database & images – records.wffhs.org.uk

AN UNUSUAL SURNAME

– Mark Carroll

Whilst researching my Scottish ancestors, I came across an unusual surname: LYMBURNER. According to FamilySearch, it is an occupational name for a lime-burner, who heated limestone (calcium carbonate, CaCO₃) to make lime (calcium oxide, CaO). Lime was widely used in the past to make the mortar used in building brick walls. The surname has apparently died out in Britain, but it is still widespread in the USA and Canada, presumably as a result of immigration. In Scotland in the 18th century it was concentrated around the town of Kilmarnock in Ayrshire, as in my case: John Millar married Marie Lymburner on 31st March 1743 in Kilmaurs parish, two miles north-west of Kilmarnock. Does any other WFFHS member have an unusual occupational surname in their family tree?

CHINGFORD MOUNT CEMETERY CAFE

– Kathy Unwin

On the last Friday of every month Chingford Mount cemetery have a cafe in the hall of Chingford Old Church (All Saints). Tea and coffee are provided, and it is open to anyone. It is described as a local friendship group with discussions and opportunities for bereavement support, historical interest, volunteering and much more. I and Tim Valder-Hogg are frequent attenders and can recommend it if you are local.

CURE OF SOULS

– Tim Valder-Hogg

Transcribing a page of a 17th century Walthamstow marriage register, I noticed a new curate, Thomas Lincoln, performed a marriage. This was not of itself unusual, and indeed these days we expect that a curate will stay no longer than four years in parish, so they change quite often in a register. The unusual thing about this entry was that it was for “The Right Honourable James Maitland Esquire commonly called Lord Viscount Maitland”, and I wondered why a new curate would be conducting the ceremony. Was it really just one of the

curates of the parish wishing to hide their identity? There were more unusual things about this entry. It was by Special Licence, and it was performed in “the Dwelling House of A Todd Esq”.

Below the entry some kind person has put in a note for people like me who didn't immediately spot something in the name Lincoln. Thomas Lincoln was Thomas Thurlow, Bishop of Lincoln, being somewhat self-deprecating and merely saying that he had the cure of souls rather than using the term as we tend to use it today being someone who is assistant to the incumbent.

Other ecclesiastical terms have changed over time. The term “Perpetual Curate” went out of use in the mid-19th century. The term generally referred to the incumbent of a “new parish”, like St Peter-in-the-Forest, Walthamstow, who was the incumbent but did not receive any income from tithes like the incumbents of ancient parishes. His income was just a salary. Vicars and Rectors both received incomes from tithes, but while Rectors received incomes from both greater and lesser tithes, vicars only received incomes from lesser tithes, the greater tithes often going to a Lay Rector. In 1868 an Act of Parliament permitted perpetual curates to be called vicars.

At St Peter's, Tullie Cornthwaite mostly refers to himself in marriage registers a Perpetual Curate, and occasionally Incumbent, until he retired in 1852. Frederick Quarrington, who succeeded him, signs Perpetual Curate for a couple of years and then switches to Incumbent in 1854. In 1868, following the Act, he switches to Vicar.

THE DOUAT FRAUD

– Tim Valder-Hogg

On Friday 1st December 1865 a Mr Bernardi appeared at St Patrick's Cemetery in Leytonstone to order a grave to be dug, producing a certificate from the Registrar of Deaths at Plaistow for his friend Vital Douat to the sexton. He paid the burial fees and set Sunday as the day for the funeral. Having made these arrangements, he went to an undertaker in Mile End and purchased a lead-lined coffin and asked for the handles to be moved to the ends, as was common in France.

On the Sunday, Mr Bernardi surprised the undertaker by appearing to collect the coffin and obtained the assistance of two passing labourers to carry it to Shoreditch railway station (GER) where it was booked to be taken to Leytonstone. On arrival at Leytonstone, a cart was hired to take the coffin to St Patrick's Cemetery for burial. The coffin was taken to the chapel where the burial service was said over it by Revd McQuord in a solemn manner with all the ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church, and then buried. Mr Bernardi was the chief and only mourner.



The chapel, St Patrick's cemetery

Some weeks later, two policemen arrived with a licence from the Home Office to exhume Mr Douat, along with two gentlemen acquainted with him, and able to identify him. They came properly furnished with stimulants in case the effluvium from the body should require their use. When the coffin was opened, it was found to the gratification of the officers and the relief of the witnesses that it was empty other than an additional amount of lead to make up the weight. A warrant for Mr Douat was granted by the chief magistrate for offences under the Registration Act, and a search for him immediately begun. What had occurred?

Mr Vital Douat was a wine merchant in Bordeaux. He insured his life for 100,000 francs with one of the insurance offices in Paris. His business subsequently failed and he was declared to be fraudulently bankrupt to the amount of £24,000. He suddenly disappeared but about a month later his wife presented certificates of death and burial for him, having taken place in England, claiming the amount insured. Some suspicion arising in the minds of the officials in Paris, the insurance companies did not pay, and forwarded their suspicions to British authorities to investigate. The matter was placed in the hands of Inspector Williamson of the Detective Office, who directed Serjeant Druscovitch to collect full particulars of the case, as to when and where Mr Douat died.

Serjeant Druscovitch established that after leaving Bordeaux, Douat came to London and took up residence at Ford's Hotel in Manchester Street, under the name Roberte. After a few days he persuaded a French waiter to write him a certificate in English purporting to be signed by Dr Crittle, to the effect that Vital Douat had died of a heart aneurism on 29th November, though the waiter noted that it was two days prior. On 1st December Douat registered his own death as having taken place at Ann Street, Plaistow, and he, being a friend, present at the time, assuming the name of Bernardi. With the undertaker, he used the name Rudini.

It was discovered that Douat had departed for America and was therefore out of the reach of English law. However, by the following September he had been captured by the Belgian authorities at Antwerp. Unfortunately for Douat, Belgium had an extradition treaty with France, allowing his handover to the French government to be dealt with there for his fraudulent bankruptcy and attempted fraud on the Paris Life Insurance Office, which would attract far greater penalty than his offence of false registration in England.

It seems the cause of Douat's apprehension at Antwerp was that he had endeavoured to obtain money from insurance companies there by setting fire to goods which he had insured for a large sum. He had arranged for a ship to take five cases of goods (under the name Douatry), laces and clocks, to the value of more than £10,000. The insurers wished to look at the invoices and Douat showed copies made up by himself. Being suspicious, they insisted on inspecting the goods

and had the cases placed under embargo, and summoned Douatry to the Tribunal of Commerce, applying for an order to open the cases. The cases were allowed to remain on the quay overnight, but a few hours before the tribunal hearing, fire broke out among them. Unfortunately for Douat, the cases were not fully burnt and there was sufficient left to show that the cases were not valuable but contained rubbish and flammable materials such as gunpowder and coal. On 16th November, Douat was tried for forgery and attempting to set fire to a merchant vessel by shipping combustible materials. He was found guilty, but as the crimes he was convicted of took place in a dock, the President passed a sentence of death.¹ Thus, the Frenchman who followed his own coffin to the grave stood a great chance of having his coffin follow him to the scaffold.

Sources

Newspapers Apr-Dec 1866, using the British Newspaper Archive online, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> including the Birmingham Journal, London Evening Standard, Armagh Guardian, Bucks Herald, Yorkshire Gazette, Huddersfield Chronicle, Glasgow Evening Citizen.

GRO Death Index entry:

https://www.freebmd.org.uk/cgi/information.pl?scan=1&r=39571504:2961&d=bmd_1705870475

FREDERICK BREMER (COVER STORY)

– **Kathy Unwin**

(In the cover picture, Frederick is seen driving the car on the left.)

Frederick William Bremer was born on 12th July 1872 in Stepney; his father was a German immigrant. The family moved to 1 Connaught Road in Walthamstow, and at the age of 20 Frederick built the first British four-wheeled motor car with an internal combustion engine. He built it in 1892, with assistance from Tom Bates, in a workshop behind the family home. He drove it around the roads in Walthamstow

¹ It was thought likely that the Crown would commute the capital sentence on to hard labour for life.

and, as was the law in those days, he had to have someone carrying a red flag walking in front of him.

On the 1911 census Frederick is described as a motor car repairer. He ran the Bremer Engineering Company in Grosvenor Park Road, which from 1912 to 1926 was making motorcycles.

In 1912, the car was exhibited at Britain's first Motor Museum in Oxford Street, and then, when it closed, at Crystal Palace. The car was returned to Frederick Bremer after the First World War.



Frederick Bremer

Frederick married Annie Elizabeth Garner on 22 April 1916.

In 1933 Frederick donated his car to the Vestry House Museum where one could see it until recently. It has now been moved temporarily to the National Motor Museum in Beaulieu while Vestry House is being refurbished.

Frederick died in 1941 and he and his wife are buried in St Mary's churchyard in Walthamstow.

In 1964, after restoration, the Bremer car took part in the London-Brighton Veteran Car Run. It was listed as number 1. Unfortunately

the crankshaft broke after 17 miles, so it was unable to finish. The following year it was more successful and completed the 54 miles in just under 8 hours.

His name has been remembered in recent years, as in September 2008 Aveling Park School and Warwick Boys School were replaced by a new school named Frederick Bremer. I worked at the school until my retirement, having originally worked at Aveling Park. The school was built on the site of the Hawker Siddeley factory where huge power transformers were built. The small road leading up to the school was named Siddeley Road. For many years a replica of the Bremer car stood in the lobby of the school, but I believe this is now at the Pump House Museum in Walthamstow.

A to Z of FAMILY HISTORY

– **Barbara Harpin**

J is for:

Jewellery Quarter Research Trust – www.jqrt.org

Formed in 2009 out of the passion to discover and share Birmingham's rich heritage. A volunteer-operated, not-for-profit research group that shares the history of people and places in Birmingham's culturally rich Jewellery Quarter. They are partnered with *Everything To Everybody* project, which unites the Shakespeare Archive with the George Dawson Collection, many documents relating to the non-conformist preacher, lecturer and activist who founded the Library as part of a pioneering 'Civic Gospel' which helped make 19th century Birmingham a modern city.

The Jewish Genealogy Society Great Britain – www.jgsgb.org.uk

The JGSGB encourages genealogical research, promotes the preservation of Jewish genealogical records and shares information among members. It maintains a reference library, organises conferences, seminars and workshops, provides email and social media discussion forums, publishes genealogical guidebooks, a journal and members' newsletters. It also provides a general enquiries service. Its activities and facilities are open to the general public as well as members. It

says it is a society for Jewish genealogy, not a Jewish society for genealogy.

Meetings are held either on Zoom or at various locations, mainly London or Manchester. Their library is based at Kent House Knightsbridge, Rutland Gardens, London SW7 1BX.

K is for:

Kelly's Directories – www.historicaldirectories.org

The collection contains many directories for trade and streets by town and villages (equivalent to the telephone directories and Yellow Pages of today) for every English and Welsh county from 1850s, 1890s and 1910s. Some online and searchable by name. Good collection at Guildhall Library and Society of Genealogists and University of Leicester (special collections). <https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/>

EJOURNALS

– **Gill Nichols**

We receive ejournals from the following societies, found on our website (<https://records.wffhs.org.uk/journals/> – members only):

Aberdeen & North-East Scotland FHS

Airedale and Wharfedale FHS

Alberta FHS

Alde Valley, Suffolk, FHG

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Bedfordshire FHS

Berkshire FHS

Birmingham & Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry

Borders FHS

Botany Bay FHS

Bradford FHS

British Columbia Genealogical Society

Buckinghamshire FHS

Burntwood FHG

Caithness FHS

Calderdale FHS
Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire & Isle of Ely FHS
Canberra Heraldry & Genealogy Society
Central Queensland FHA
Central Scotland FHS
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Suffolk FHS
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West Lothian FHS
Weston-super-Mare & District FHS
York & District FHS
Yorkshire FHS

The following societies send us their journals in print form:

Cleveland FHS
Oxfordshire FHS
Sheffield & District FHS
Society of Genealogists
West Surrey FHS
Woolwich & District FHS

A GRIEVOUS ERROR

– Gill Nichols

Someone I have corresponded with over the years on Ancestry recently pointed out to me that I had the wrong parents for someone in one of my trees, which information I had obtained long ago through baptism records for the same county. She too had had those parents in her tree, then DNA proved she was wrong.

In putting the error right in my tree, I had to delete 305 people! I had unfortunately built a whole tree upwards through the incorrect parents, and downwards through those parents' children. I had all kinds of associated documents and photos relating to the wrong people, all because I had the wrong baptism record for one person. Admittedly I found it in my very first days of family history research when I wasn't so careful, but I should have checked.

It does pay to check and double check your facts before building your tree. This comes from someone who sadly knows!

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month

(except August) at 8 pm

**Either at Spruce Hill Baptist Church Hall, Brookcroft Road,
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DIARY

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 9th April | Talk: Family history through picture postcards (Zoom) – Linda Hammond |
| 14th May | Workshop: DNA tests – interpreting results and breakthroughs made (hall) – Kathy Unwin |
| 11th June | Talk: Women of East London (Zoom) – Joyce Hampton |
| 9th July | Workshop: Breaking through brick walls (hall) – Mark Carroll |
| August | Summer lunch and walk (details to follow) |
| 9th Sept | Talk: Errors, lies and misinformation (Zoom) – David Cuffley |

Waltham Forest FHS



The Society covers an area largely defined by the River Lea, M25 and A11/A104 roads, this includes the London Borough of Waltham Forest, comprising the old Essex metropolitan boroughs of Chingford, Leyton and Walthamstow, and extends to Waltham Abbey in the north

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Family History Society

If undelivered, please return to:
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