

My father's side

John and Anne Nunn

John and Anne Nunn were my great-grandparents. How they met I have yet to discover. John was a Tailor and Hatter from Colchester and Anne was a farmer's daughter from Billericay in Essex who used to go to Romford market with eggs from the farm. These eggs were in panniers one on each side of a horse that she would ride home again. Could it be that they met in Romford while she was selling eggs and he, John, was buying cloth and leather? I must find the truth of this one day. I must try to find the church in which they were married. I should think it would be somewhere in or near Billericay.

Anne and John had three children, Henry, John Edwin and one daughter. Edwin married Harriet Watson of Butt Lane Colchester and became our grandfather. He and his two brothers carried on with the tailoring business after their father, John died. He, Edwin carried on with the

Lots xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx more to come here

Edwin my grandfather

He was a short, Pickwickian, type of man with a round head with curling brown hair, blue eyes and a cleft chin.

He had big ideas, and talked in thousands of pounds, venturing into many different businesses, sometimes winning, and sometimes losing. He loved a gamble - which was his undoing in the end.

At the time of the birth of my father, Edwin senior and Harriet were living in Merrick Crescent.

My grandparents family

The family consisted of Edwin senior, Harriet my grandmother, and the 4 children, Ophelia, the only daughter and three brothers, Edwin Grimston, William, known as Willie, and the youngest, Josiah, or Joey, as he was called.

Family Fortunes

The Law Suit

When my father was about 2 years old, Edwin and his brothers Henry and John were fighting a law suit on behalf of some distant cousins, Henry Grimston, from Tasmania. A great deal of money was involved in the law suit, many tens of thousands of pounds.

So, in order to be near the Law Courts in London, my grandfather rented a house at Carlton Hill in St. Johns Wood. For this he paid the sum of £2.00 per week!

The Tasmanian cousins were from Hobart, reputed to be the wildest part of Tasmania. While the law suit was in progress, they came to England to stay at St. Johns Wood with my grandparents, bringing with them their pet kangaroo. The old lady would sit on the front door step of this rather elegant house with her kangaroo, smoking a clay pipe. Harriet was mortified! These things were not done in St. Johns Wood!

The law suit dragged on for some time, but in the end was decided in favour of Henry Grimston and his wife. They returned to Tasmania, Henry apparently being quite happy there with his life as a ferryman in Hobart. But before going he rewarded Edwin Nunn senior with

£30,000 for his trouble, which Edwin shared with his 2 brothers John and Henry. With their combined resources they bought the old Theatre Royal in Queens Street in Colchester. This was kept going until 1888 with Henry ending up as the sole owner, the other 2 brothers having bowed out previously.

Henry and John profited by their share, but unfortunately Edwin was not so resourceful in the management of money. Edwin later involved himself in a farm in Wivenhoe, but this was also unsuccessful and later he became bankrupt.

My Grandfather

Edwin, the elder, died in the early 1890's. He was a bell-ringer in a local church and after getting rather hot one day he went outside into the cold air and catching pneumonia, he died within three days.

Family Fortunes

In spite of the riches of the early years of my father's life, he and his younger brother Josiah were to plumb the depths of poverty in their lives, but this did not impair their health, as can be seen by the fact that they both lived to be over ninety years of age before they died. They both had helpful and loving wives who stuck to them through thick and thin.

But neither men had a trade or profession. Although Harriet tried to suggest that they should take something up, it seems that my grandfather did not regard this as necessary, apparently believing that they would never have "the need to earn a living"!

Edwin (my father) did want to follow in the footsteps of his cousin XXXX's footsteps and become a chemist, and he did have a go at this in 19?? at 19??. But he had a stammer which seems to have hindered him in this, although his stammer seems to have left him at the age of 25 or so.

My grandmother Harriet had a little money herself and through the years received several small legacies. With this money she set up both my father and my uncle Joey in businesses of their own.

Joey had a newsagents and tobacconists shop in Crouch Street in the early 1900's.

My father was supplied with 3 horses, 2 dainty governesses carts, and a van for removals. With this he made a comfortable living until his horses were commandeered by the army for the Boer War.

My Grandparents home

The Nunns lived in a house in Maldon road called "Diamond Place", so called because all its rooms were odd shapes. Not one was really square. On the rare times when my sister and I have gone back to Colchester, we have looked at it and tried to imagine how it must have been nearly one hundred years ago when my father's family lived there.

Harriet my grandmother

She was a very good dressmaker and a wonderful cook, so my father told us. She was generally pessimistic, in contrast to grandfather, an eternal optimist.

Her father, William Watson, had a boot and shoe shop in High Street in Colchester. Physically he was tall with a thin boney face. In later life he took to visiting the sick, and reading the bible to the dying.

He was very musical, being able to play the flute, the organ, the piano, and the concertina.

Ophelia - The Bankruptcy - The connection between the Nunns and the Browns

In 18?? Ophelia Nunn became a short stay boarder in Eliza Brown's school at Tor House.

Although Ophelia lived in Colchester in the family home in Diamond Place, the Nunn's were having as sticky time financially, owing to Edwin's father, (also Edwin) having involving himself with a law suits, a farm in Wivenhoe, and the Old Theatre Royal in Queen Street, Colchester, he became bankrupt. As they were expecting the bailiffs in any day, it was decided that it would be better if eight year old Offie was spared any troublesome events. and they thought it best for her if she was elsewhere at this time, so she went to Eliza's school as a boarder.

At the top of Diamond Place was a rumpus room for the boys that went over the whole house. Before the arrival of the Bailiffs, into this room went all Harriet's precious things, ranged on one side. These included a set of Hepplewaite chairs and tables, china and cabinets. Then these were bricked in by George Bone, their houseman-handyman, safely hidden until all danger had passed. The many garden statues were buried in the garden. Harriet was mortified by all these trials and tribulations.

Ophelia's arrival resulted in a friendship between Ophelia and Nelly that lasted all their lives, and later Nelly married Ophelia's eldest brother, Edwin, when she was twenty four and he was thirty two.

Edwin my father

Edwin was always called "Brother". In all the letters that passed between them he was addressed as "Dear Brother". When young he was called Edwin but after a while he became for some known as "Grimston", Grim, or Grimmy. Nelly, his wife called him Grim.

Edwin was, as I have mentioned before, a quiet man who enjoyed learning for learning's sake. He liked Latin, but was not so fond of French, so he and a school friend who also went to the Colchester Royal Grammar school, one Charlie MacLoughlan put their heads together for a solution. Grimmy did all their Latin home work and Charles did all their French home work.

In those days Saturday School was compulsory, and although Wednesday afternoons were free, the boys were not supposed to leave the school grounds. However this did not deter the boys leaping over the walls and going home. Grimmy had only to leap over one wall to be in his own garden, and this he did on many occasions. Yet he was, all told, a very law abiding fellow. The Headmaster, the Rev. Acland, tried to get Grimmy to join the school and Chapel choirs. This he did and it seemed to help him with the stammer with which he was plagued. However he left after a few weeks, for being a very earnest boy, he could not stand the fooling about that went on between the other boys in the vestry. He always said that there are three sort of boys:

"Good boys, bad boys, and choir boys, And the choir boys are not by any means so angelic as they look."

He had a good tenor voice and a beautiful whistle like a lark. We loved to hear him whistling. Even now I think a melody tunefully whistled is as enjoyable as any voice singing a song. He would sing and whistle old Victorian and Edwardian songs such as,

"In the days when we went gypsying a long time ago..",

"Oh, my Jane, my pretty Jane, thou has never looked so shy..",

"When you and I were young, Maggie...."

as well as all Gilbert and Sullivan songs from their operas.

The rough and tumble of Life seemed to be to much for him at times. He would sit quietly cogitating, and when asked what he was thinking about, he would say he was "just collecting his thoughts."

As bed time neared he would say,

"Now let us sing the Doxology..." and would begin by chanting,

"Lord, now lettest Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word"

While at school he played some minor parts in the various stage productions presented.

He was interested in music, but his playing was limited to the mouth organ. At one time he started to study the piano, but gave this up after a year or so.

Diamond Place

When little Offie went home to tea on Sundays to her home in Diamond Place, she often took Nelly, my mother, with her. Nelly loved the free and easy lifestyle of the Nunns, and at Diamond Place there were trees to climb, dogs and rabbits to fondle, and a pony to ride. In the house there was a rumpus room like an attic going over the whole of the house, and there were seats ranged round for the boys to do their school home work home. Outside there were dogs, cats, rabbits and a pony. The rabbits belonged to young Joey.

Dad's brothers and sisters

Willie had a odd streak in him. When my father had a removal job to do he would enlist his help, despite the fact that this nearly always led to friction between them. For instance, once when manoevering a piano down stairs Grimmy found that Will was using one hand only, so once out in the street Grimmy gave his brother a clout. This seemingly trivial event, probably forgotten by Grimmy after the event, was to return as a worry later on.

Will married a girl from Stoke-on-Trent through, I believe, an agency somewhere. The girl, Marie, was a dark pretty girl - like all the Nunns, Will had an eye for a pretty girl. She had some money of own, her father being a shareholder in a Railway company. They went to live in Brightlingsea, but the relationship did not turn out as happily as one might have hoped.

Although very handsome, with dark curly hair and deep blue eyes, he was, as I have said above somewhat odd. Perhaps nowadays one would say that he was merely eccentric, and let it go at that, but at the turn of the century people had different ideas. One of his notions was that sheets on a bed should be turned back at the bottom of the bed as well as at the top, in order to allow a current of air to pass through the bedclothes. Poor Marie used to freeze!

Once a neighbour accused him of trying to listen in to her conversation while he was in the back garden. This so annoyed Will that he threw a bucket of cold water over her. Perhaps nowadays he might have been bound over to "keep the peace", but after so many years of keeping the peace herself, Marie had him committed to Severalls Mental Institute in Colchester, where he stayed for some years, eventually ending up somewhere in Wales. He used to go home for Christmas and other holidays, but he preferred to go back afterwards to Wales where he was regarded as a "trusty". Here he died during the 1914-1918 war.

He and my father corresponded at times but he used to maintain that he was not really Grimmy's brother, but rather the son of someone called Sir Percy Nunn. Poor fellow!

He used to remind Grimmy of the occasion when he, Grimmy clouted him for lifting the piano with one hand in his pocket and one hand under the piano. He was very reproachful over that incident, and could never accept that he had been at fault. The reproach hurt my father, who never liked to hurt anyone at all, whether physically or mentally.