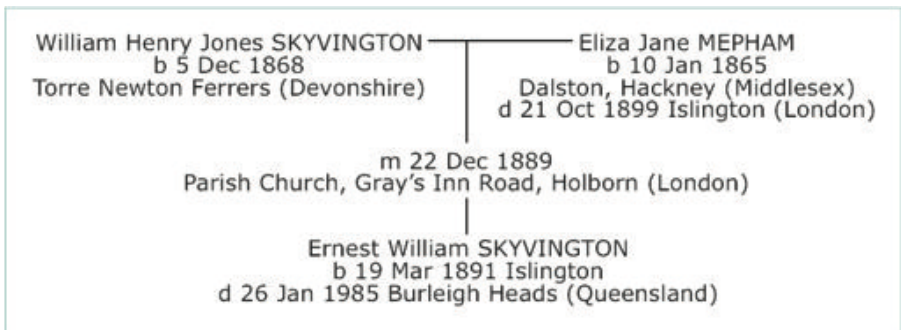


## 2

## Skyvington London

My grandfather Ernest William Skyvington—the only child of William Henry Jones Skyvington and Eliza Jane Mephram—was born in London on 19 March 1891.



Item 2-1: My grandfather's family in London.

In this chapter, I start by taking a look at Ernest Skyvington's childhood in the context of his mother's family in northern London. They lived in a nice neighborhood—nothing to do with notorious Victorian slums depicted by Dickens—that was referred to either as Hornsey or Islington. Later on in this chapter, I work back to the generation of Ernest's grandparents.

London childhood

Here is a copy of Ernest Skyvington's birth certificate:

REGISTRATION DISTRICT					131
1891. BIRTH in the Sub-district of Upper					H10
Columns:— 1	2	3	4	5	
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother
33/	Nineteenth March 1891 65 Evershol Road	Ernest William	Boy	William Henry Jones Skyvington	Elsie Jane Skyvington formerly Clepham
Islington					
Ward in the County of London					
6	7	8	9	10*	
Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration	
Father Goods Merchant's Warehouseman	E. J. Skyvington Mother 65 Evershol Road Islington	Twenty seventh April 1891	Ch. Butler Registrar		

Item 2-2: My grandfather's birth certificate.

The birthplace of my future grandfather was 65 Evershot Road, just to the west of Finsbury Park.



Item 2-3: House in Evershot Road in which Ernest Skyvington was born.

I took this photo of the façade of the house in 2007. (I am assuming that the street numbering has not changed over the last century.) Evershot Road lies two blocks to the south of Stroud Green Road, and runs parallel to that road. It is located north-west of the present-day Finsbury Park tube station.

## Chapter 2

Ernest's birth certificate indicates that his father was a warehouseman for a leather goods merchant. The 1891 census, carried out when the baby was a fortnight old, describes the father as a fancy-goods salesman.



Item 2-4: Ernest Skyvington with his parents.

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## Death of Eliza Mephram

Tragedy struck the Skyvington family on 21 October 1899 when 34-year-old Eliza Mephram succumbed to *phthisis*: an archaic term for tuberculosis.



Item 2-5: Eliza Jane Mephram.

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She was described on her death certificate as a dressmaker's assistant, while her husband was said to be a commercial traveler.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT <i>Islington</i>					
1899. DEATH in the Sub-district of <i>Upper Holloway</i>					
Columns:— 1		2	3	4	5
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation
328	<i>Twenty first October 1899 16, Marriott Road.</i>	<i>Eliza Jane Skyrington</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>34 years</i>	<i>Dress Makers Assistant Wife of William Skyrington a Commercial Traveller.</i>

in the <i>County of London</i>			
6	7	8	9
Cause of death	Signature, description, and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
<i>Pulmonary Phthisis 4 years. Valvular disease of Heart. Nephritis Syncope Certified by F. Whitaker. M.B.</i>	<i>Martha Mepham Mother Present at the death 42, Mount Pleasant Road, Hornsey</i>	<i>Twenty third October 1899</i>	<i>L. R. Butcher. Registrar.</i>

Item 2-6: Death certificate of Eliza Jane Mepham.

The certificate indicates that she had been afflicted with this contagious bacillus for four years. She suffered too from a valvular disease of the heart and nephritis (kidney inflammation), which were no doubt an outcome of her tuberculosis. At the time of her death, Eliza was in a state of syncope (unconsciousness).

The house in which Eliza Jane Mephram died, at 16 Marriott Road, was just a block away from the above-mentioned address of Evershot Road. I would imagine that it was some kind of a private clinic in which tuberculosis patients could be isolated.



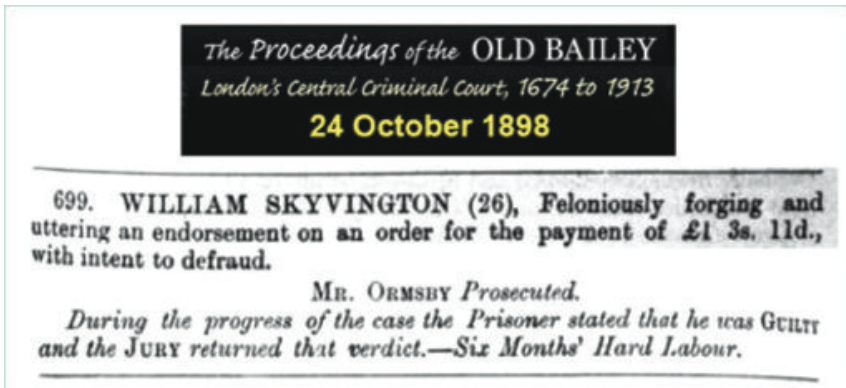
Item 2-7: House in Marriott Road in which Eliza Jane Mephram died.

## Child without parents

After the death of his mother, Ernest Skyvington lived in the Mephram home at 42 Mount Pleasant Road, Hornsey, not far away from the house in Evershot Road where he was born. He continued to reside at that address up until his departure for Australia towards the end of 1908.

Links between Ernest and his father William Skyvington appear to have been sparse. In a letter to me (dated 12 January 1980), my grandfather said that his father *"did not survive World War I"*. In another letter (17 February 1980), my grandfather reveals that he had corresponded briefly by mail with his father: *"Correspondence with father over the years was mostly as irregular as yours and mine because we lacked mutual interests to keep us together. He thought London as you think Paris, whilst I could only think rural Australia, without prospect beyond that..."*

Recently, on the Internet, I came upon an intriguing reference to a 26-year-old William Skyvington who was condemned at the Old Bailey in 1898 for fraud, and sentenced to six months' prison (probably at the notorious Newgate Prison in London).

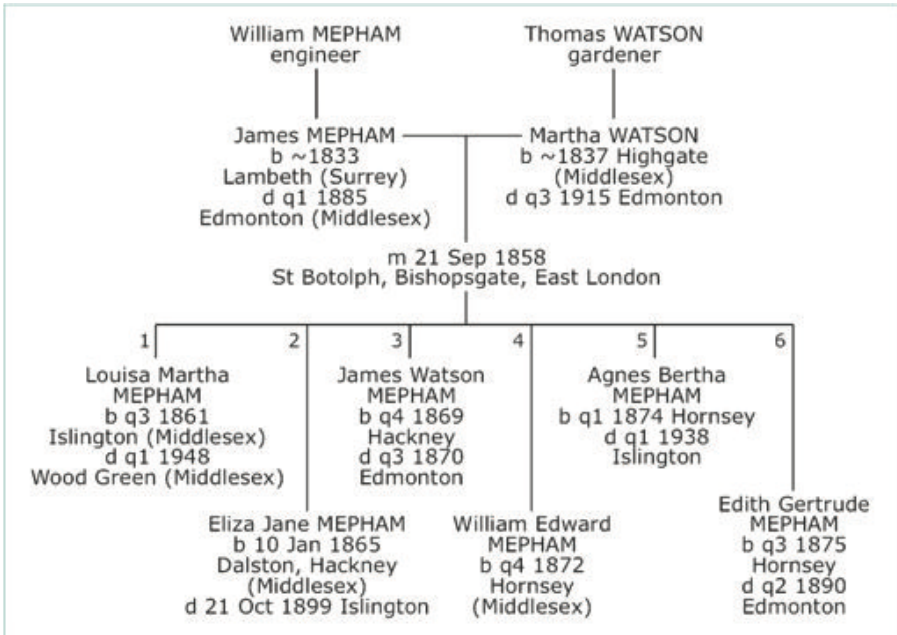


Item 2-8: Old Bailey 1898.

Was the condemned frauder my great-grandfather? There was a 3-year discrepancy in age, since Ernest's father would have been 29 in October 1898, and I found it hard to believe that the legal authorities would have made such an error. I shall return to this unexpected enigma later on.

## Mephams household in Hornsey

In the Mephams house in Mount Pleasant Road, Ernest had three women to look after him: his aunt Louisa (a dressmaker), her sister Agnes (a book-keeper) and their mother Martha Watson. The son William Mephams was working in the merchant navy. The father, the son James and the youngest daughter Edith had died before Ernest's birth.



Item 2-9: Mephams family.

The photos on the next page were taken, no doubt, around the turn of the century, when Ernest [seen at the bottom of item 2-11] was about nine years old. The pianist is surely either Louisa Mephams or her sister Agnes. I cannot identify the woman with the mandolina or the violinist. In the foreground of the first photo, we see the leather case of a Brownie camera (introduced by Eastman Kodak in February 1900). Maybe William Mephams, working on cargo ships, had brought this camera back from the USA, and maybe he was the person who took these snapshots.

It would be wonderful to enlarge magically these photos, enabling us to examine closely the framed portraits and landscapes (seascapes), the titles of the books on the shelves, the paintings, the sheet music, the dried flowers, the piano with its curious scallop-shaped woodwork and worn keys, etc.



Item 2-10: Louisa or Agnes Mephram at Mount Pleasant Road.



Item 2-11: Wide-eyed Ernest (lower left corner) at the foot of his Mephram aunt.

Here is a photo of Ernest's grandmother Martha Watson in front of her house at 42 Mount Pleasant Road.



Item 2-12: Martha Mephram, née Watson.

The old house still exists today, in a dead-end section of the street known now as Mount Pleasant Crescent. By examining enlarged images of houses displayed by Google Maps, and comparing them with the façade of Martha Watson's house, I have concluded that her place is presently numbered 72: the third-last house before the dead end to the left.



Item 2-13: Mephram house today, at 72 Mount Pleasant Crescent.

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### Aunt Louie

During the nine years between the death of Ernest's mother (October 1899) and his departure for Australia (November 1908), his unmarried aunt Louisa Mephram [1861-1948] seems to have become his foster mother.

During my childhood in South Grafton, I remember well that the name "Aunt Louie" was of a hallowed nature, as if she were an ancient and revered guardian angel in the Motherland who continued to gaze down upon her nephew Ernie, his wife Kit and all of their progeny. Indeed, up until I set about performing genealogical investigations in 1981, the mysterious spectre of my great-great-aunt Louisa Mephram was my unique but vague link with my paternal ancestors in the Old World.

These photos were sent to Australia by Louisa Mephram after the war:



Item 2-14: Ernest Skyvington's aunt Louisa Mephram.

By that time, Louisa Mephram had moved to a house at 56 Mount View Road, on the crest of Mount Pleasant in Hornsey. Already, after the death of her mother Martha Watson in 1915, the family house at Mount Pleasant Road had been sold, and Louisa had moved to a nearby address: 11 Trinder Road. Today, while the houses of Mount Pleasant Road and Mount View Road are still intact, the Trinder Road residence seems to have disappeared.

## Stroud Green school

My grandfather told me that he *“attended the Stroud Green Public School, retained a top half position in the 30 odd boy classes, best subjects arithmetic and soccer: happy memories”*. In the following class photo, Ernest is the boy without a coat in the third row (from the front), third from the left.



Item 2-15: Ernest Skyvington's class at Stroud Green school.



Item 2-16: Ernest Skyvington (left) and a school friend.

He is seen here (on the left, once again without a coat) with a school mate. They are both wearing boater hats, knickerbockers and sturdy boots.

## Woodstock Road

Ernest Skyvington's school is bounded by Woodstock Road to the east and Ennis Road to the west, with Perth Road to the north-west.



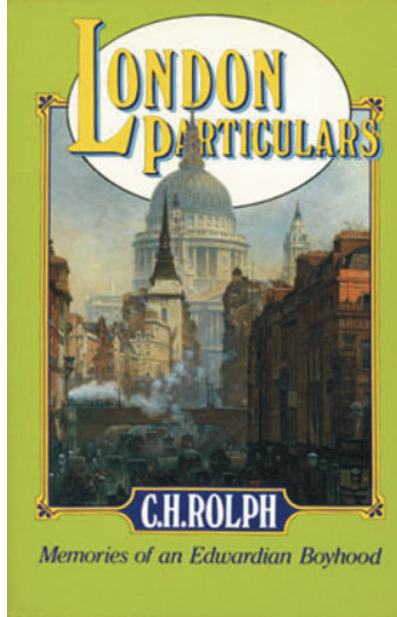
Item 2-17: Entrance into the boys' section of Stroud Green School.



Item 2-18: Façade of Ernest's school.

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The English writer Cecil Rolph Hewitt [1901-1994]—who signed his work as C H Rolph—was a schoolboy at Stroud Green at about the same time as my grandfather, and he has described his experiences in a book: *London Particulars, Memories of an Edwardian Boyhood*. He includes many anecdotes about places that my grandfather would have known well, such as Finsbury Park.



Item 2-19: Adolescent memoir of a schoolboy at Stroud Green.

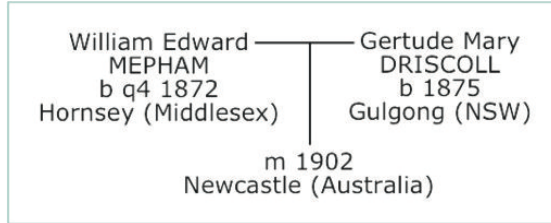
At one point in a letter to me, my grandfather said that *“the best my father could offer in launching me into the world was a trade apprenticeship”*. Then in another letter, he added: *“An apprenticeship in England was never contemplated for me. I believe that, from the death of my mother, it was understood that I would go to Australia under the auspices of Uncle Bill, and I grew up with romantic ideas of a life connected with horses, cattle and sheep.”*

My grandfather spent the first seventeen years of his life in London, but I had the impression that his immense enthusiasm for Australia had removed any imaginable nostalgia concerning his London birthplace. It was almost as if England had become an uninteresting blank in his memory.

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## Marriage of William Mephram

Ernest's "Uncle Bill" was out in the Antipodes when he married.



Item 2-20: Marriage of William Mephram and Gertrude Driscoll.

This photo shows William Mephram and Gertrude aboard the *S S Desola* at Newport News, Virginia (USA), on 20 August 1914:



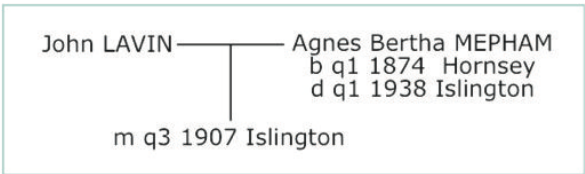
Item 2-21: William Mephram and Gertrude Driscoll.

In his letter of 12 January 1980, my grandfather said: *“At the earliest stage of World War I, Uncle Bill’s knowledge of navigating British ports attracted overseas interest, first to America for convoy work, and from which he did not return.”* I take this as meaning that William Mephram was lost at sea.

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## Marriage of Agnes Mephram

Ernest Skyvington’s “Aunt Aggie” married John Lavin in 1907.



Item 2-22: Marriage of Agnes Mephram with John Lavin.

My grandfather spoke of him in a letter of 17 February 1980: *“Aunt Louie just managed to survive the war. She refused to leave London, attaching much importance to housekeeping for her only brother-in-law, who was doing what was termed an important office job. He later settled in New Zealand, where I visited him, once with Ma, and once with Len Moore. He has since died.”*

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## Marriage of William Skyvington and Eliza Mephram

On 22 December 1889, William Skyvington married Eliza Mephram at the Holy Trinity Church in Grays Inn Road, London (which no longer exists).



Item 2-23: Holy Trinity Road, Grays Inn Road, Holborn (now St Pancras).

1889. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish					
No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession
281	December 1889	William Henry Jones Skyvington	22	Bachelor	Salesman
		Eliza Jane Mephram	24	Spinster	—

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the E-  
 This Marriage was solemnized between the William Henry Jones Skyvington in the Presence of us, Louisa  
Eliza Jane Mephram Agnes Bee

of Holy Trinity Church in the County of London		
Residence at the time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
36 Theobald's Road	Frank Skyvington	Market Gardener
42 Mount Pleasant Road - Crouch Hill	James Mephram	Widow

published Church, by Martha Mephram or after Agnes by me, F. Thomas  
Martha Mephram  
Martha Mephram

Item 2-24: Marriage of William Skyvington and Eliza Mephram.

A month and a half before the marriage, the groom had turned 21 (not 22). As for the bride, a fortnight after the marriage, she would be turning 25. On the marriage certificate, the groom's name was indicated as William Henry Jones Skyvington, and his profession was salesman. (We shall see that the name "Henry" had not in fact appeared on William's birth certificate.)

William's address was 36 Theobald's Road, which appears to have been the residence of his father and step-mother (since the 1901 census reveals that they were still living at that address). Frank Skyvington was described as a market gardener. Theobald's Road is located to the east of Russell Square Gardens, and it runs along the northern edge of Gray's Inn Field.

The bride's address was that of the Mephram home in Hornsey: 42 Mount Pleasant Road, Crouch Hill.

Two witnesses were mentioned on the marriage record: Louisa Martha

Mephram and Agnes Bertha Mephram, sisters of the bride.

Towards the end of this chapter, I shall return to Eliza Mephram, her birth, her parents and her possible ancestry. For the moment, I wish to work back through the recent genealogy of William Skyvington.

Birth of William Jones Skyvington

My great-grandfather William Skyvington was born on 5 December 1868 in the village of Newton Ferrers in Devonshire.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT <i>Plymouth</i>					
1869 BIRTH in the Sub-district of <i>Yealmpton</i>					
Columns:—	1	2	3	4	5
Age	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother
<i>5 1/2</i>	<i>5th December 1868 St Mary's Church Newton Ferrers</i>	<i>William Jones</i>	<i>Boy</i>	<i>Frank Skyvington</i>	<i>Mary Anne Bridgman Skyvington formerly Jones</i>

St Mary in the County of Devon				
6	7	8	9	10*
Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
<i> groom</i>	<i>Mary Anne Bridgman Skyvington Wife of Frank Skyvington</i>	<i>First January 1869</i>	<i>Richard Barnes Registrar</i>	<i>/</i>

Item 2-25: Birth certificate of William Jones Skyvington.

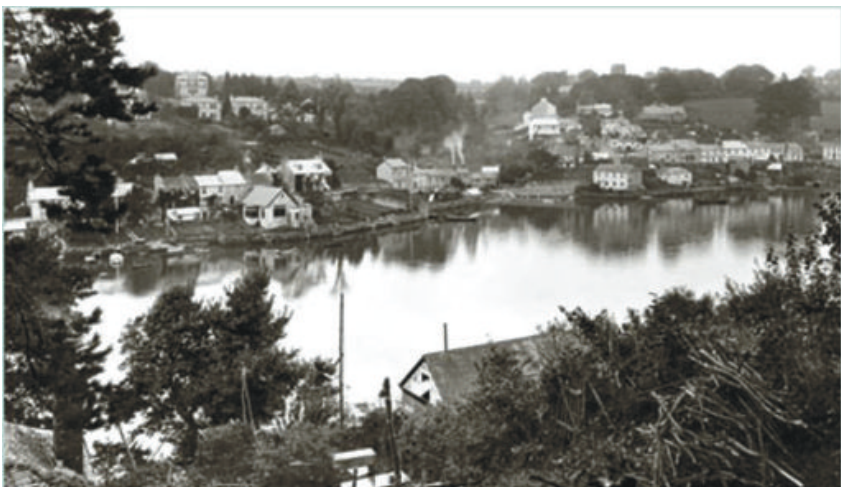
The child’s full name was William Jones Skyvington. The additional given name “Henry” that appears in William’s marriage certificate [item 2-24] was not in fact present in his birth certificate. When and why did he adopt this “Henry” name?

William's mother was designated as "Mary Ann Bridgman Skyvington formerly Jones". Was her maiden surname Jones, or rather Bridgman? As for William's father, Frank, he was described as a groom.



Item 2-26: Plymouth, Newton Ferrers and Yealmlton.

Newton Ferrers, 10 km south-east of Plymouth, lies alongside the estuary of the River Yealm. The term Torre (also spelt Torr), which appeared in the birth certificate, designated the neighborhood of a former hospital for poor children named Torre House, later transformed into a stately home.



Item 2-27: Newton Ferrers in 1890.

Marriage of Frank Skyvington and Mary Anne Jones

On 25 August 1868, Frank Skyvington of Yealmpton (Devon), a servant, married Mary Ann Jones in Stoke Damerel (western Plymouth). I obtained the following version of their marriage certificate back in 1981, when the General Register Office in the UK had the habit of manually retranscribing such documents.

Registration District				Stoke Da
1868. Marriage solemnized at The Parish Church				
in the Parish of Stoke Damerel in th				
No.	When married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition
77	25 August 1868	Frank Skyvington	24	Bachelor
		Mary Ann Jones	24	Spinster
Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies				
This marriage was solemnized between us,			in the presence of us,	
F. Skyvington			James E. King	
Mary Ann Jones				
merel				
e County of Devon				
Rank or profession	Residence at the time of marriage	Father's name and surname	Rank or profession of father	
Servant	Yealmpton	Charles Skyvington	Gardener	
—	Stoke Damerel	William Jones	Farmer	
mies of the Established Church licence after banns by me,				
Rospetter W.J. St. Aubyn, R.C.				
quell				

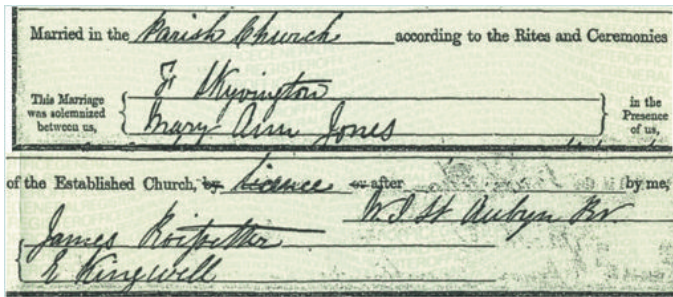
Item 2-28: Marriage of Frank Skyvington and Mary Ann Jones.

The bride was designated as Mary Ann Jones, with no mention of the “Bridgman” term that appeared later in her son’s birth certificate [item 2-25]. Her father was said to be William Jones, a farmer. Frank’s father, Charles Skyvington, is described as a gardener. Both partners were said to be “of age”.

This retranscribed certificate contains some gibberish that did not bother me unduly. In the line signed by the parish rector W J St Aubyn, we discover both the term “licence” and the expression “after banns”, which are normally

mutually exclusive. A couple wishing to get married would usually accept the traditional solution of *banns*, whereby a notice of their impending marriage would be posted four weeks prior to their wedding. On the other hand, if the future bride and groom wished to get married as rapidly as possible, there was an alternative procedure which consisted of their paying a certain sum of money to obtain a so-called *marriage licence*, which did away with the necessity of publishing banns.

I decided to request a photocopy of the certificate of item 2-28 (in fact, the standard technique employed these days by the General Register Office in the UK. Here is an enlargement of the questionable line:



Item 2-29: Enlargement of the lower part of the certificate.

As I expected, the only term that appeared explicitly was “licence”. In other words, Frank and Mary Ann had been married without the publication of banns. Comparing the dates in items 2-25 and 2-28, we see that the bride was over 3 months pregnant at the time of her marriage. It is possible that Mary Ann’s age, too, was another factor in their desire to be wed as discreetly as possible. Meanwhile, here is an drawing of the church at Stoke Damerel:



Item 2-30: Parish church of St Andrew and St Luke at Stoke Damerel (1881).

Birth of a second son

A year after the birth of William, a second son was born, named Frank.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT				PLYMPTON ST MARY U		
1870 BIRTH in the Sub-district of Yealmpton				in the County of		
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father
286	Thirteenth June 1870 Torre Newton Ferrers	Frank Herbert Frederick	Boy	Frank Skyvington	Marianne Bridgman Skyvington formerly Jones	Groom

UNION of Devon			
Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
Marianne Bridgman Skyvington formerly Jones Torre Newton Ferrers	Twenty-fifth July 1870	Richard Bottoman Registrar	Lowickworth R.C.

Item 2-31: Birth of Frank Skyvington (junior).

The mother was designated as “Marianne Bridgman Skyvington, formerly Jones”, and the baby’s given names were “Frank Herbert Frederick”.

## First tragedy in the Skyvington household

On 24 October 1870, some 10 months after the birth of their second son, the family was struck by a tragedy: the mother's death of "acute phthisis" (tuberculosis), from which she had been suffering for two months.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT				PLYM	
1870 DEATH in the Sub-district of Yealmpton					
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation
155	Twenty-fourth October 1870 Torre Newton Ferrers	Marianne Bridgman Skyvington	Female	21	Wife of Frank Skyvington Groom Domestic Servant

IPTON ST MARY UNION			
in the County of Devon			
Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
Acute Phthisis 2. months — Certified	X The Mother of Elizabeth Hurrell Present at the death Bold Venture Newton Ferrers	Twenty Fourth October 1870	Richard Coleman Registrar

Item 2-32: Death of Frank Skyvington's wife.

This death certificate provides several significant items of information. First, the deceased is referred to as Marianne Bridgman Skyvington, with no mention of the name "Jones" that had appeared in earlier certificates [items 2-25, 2-28 and 2-31]. We then discover the alleged age of the deceased: 21 years. She had died in the family's residence at Torre, in Newton Ferrers. The father Frank Skyvington was described as a groom, and the deceased as a domestic servant. The address of the informant, Elizabeth Hurrell, was Bold Venture, a hamlet of Newton Ferrers.

Second tragedy in the Skyvington household

Half a year later, a second tragedy took place: the death of the 10-months-old son Frank, who had been suffering from convulsions for a week.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT					PLYM
1871	DEATH in the Sub-district of Yealmpton				
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation
266	Second May 1871 Home Newton Town	Frank Albert Frederick Skyvington	Male	10 Months	Son of Frank Skyvington Groom Domestic Servant

PTON ST MARY UNION

in the County of Devon

Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
Convulsions 7 days Certified	At the Mouth of Elizabeth Hurrell Present at the death Baldwin Lane Newton Town	Fourth May 1871	Richard Coleman Registrar

Item 2-33: Death of the baby Frank Skyvington.

The informant was the same Elizabeth Hurrell who had been present at the death of the baby’s mother. We find the same indications for the father’s occupation as in Mary Ann’s death certificate [item 2-32].

Notice that an error has crept into the tragic context of the Skyvington family in Devon. The second given name of the deceased child was indicated erroneously as “Albert” instead of “Herbert”.

Notice too that the same registrar, Richard Coleman, had handled all the Skyvington birth and death events [items 2-25, 2-31, 2-32 and 2-33].

## Identity hypotheses concerning Frank Skyvington's wife

Today, I cannot claim with certainty that I have solved the problem of the genuine identity (surname and date of birth) of Frank Skyvington's wife. Let us start with the Jones hypothesis. There is indeed a certificate for the birth of a Mary Ann Jones in Devonport on 13 August 1843.

No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother
134	Thirteenth August 1843 at 30 Queen Street Devonport	Mary Ann	Girl	Henry Jones	Mary Ann Jones formerly Dunn

Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	N
Joiner	H. Jones Father 20 Queen Street Devonport	Thirteenth August 1843	Arthur Granville Registrar	

Item 2-34: Birth of a Mary Ann Jones in Devonport on 13 August 1843.

The given name of this girl's father was Henry, which might explain why my great-grandfather chose spontaneously to call himself, in his marriage certificate, "William Henry Jones Skyvington" [item 2-24], and to repeat this name in the birth certificate of my grandfather [item 2-2]. Our acceptance of this identity for Frank Skyvington's wife would mean that she was a year and a half older than her husband, whose birth certificate [item 3-14] indicates that he was born in Iwerne Courtney (Dorset) on 3 January 1845. We would also have to admit that Mary Ann was 27, not 21, when she died [item 2-32]. Besides, why would Mary Ann have claimed at the time of her marriage that her father was a farmer named William Jones [item 2-28] rather than a joiner named Henry Jones [item 2-34]?

Personally, I am not inclined to accept this Jones hypothesis. The death certificate of Frank Skyvington's wife [item 2-32] makes it clear, to my mind, that her maiden name was Bridgman, not Jones. There is a birth certificate for a Mary Ann Bridgman born at 1 Woodleys Court in Devonport on 15

Chapter 2

March 1853, the daughter of Samuel Frederick Bridgman, described as a coach smith, and Mary Ann Dean.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT					
STOKE					
1853 BIRTH in the Sub-district of St Aubyn					
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother
159	15 <sup>th</sup> March 1853 1 Woodlark Court	Mary Ann	Girl	Samuel Frederick Bridgman	Mary Ann Bridgman formerly Jones

DAMEREL			
County of Devon			
Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
Coach Smith	Mary Ann Bridgman Mother 1 Woodlark Court Stoke Newington	15 <sup>th</sup> April 1853	Registrar

Item 2-35: Probable birth certificate of Frank Skyvington's wife.

If we accept this data as relevant, then the circumstances of the marriage of Frank Skyvington and Mary Ann must be readjusted considerably. I have the impression that 15-year-old Mary Ann Bridgman, about to be married in August 1868, would have perpetrated a series of white lies with a view to avoiding the obligation to obtain parental consent. She would have told the rector that she was “of age”, imagined the idea of calling herself “Jones” and invented a rural father named “William Jones”. When her first child was born, the question of parental consent was no longer relevant. In her son’s birth certificate, Mary Ann inserted “Bridgman” as her second given name, while the expression “formerly Jones” repeats the information (false, to my mind) on her marriage certificate [item 2-28].

If indeed Mary Ann were the daughter of Samuel Frederick Bridgman, this would explain why the name “Frederick” was given to her second baby.

But why had she decided to include “Jones” in the name of her first son?

The parents of Mary Ann had married in 1849 in East Stonehouse.

Marriages Jun 1849 (>99%)				
<b>Bridgman</b>	Samuel Frederick	<a href="#">E Stonehouse</a>	9	<a href="#">368</a>
<b>Dean</b>	Mary Ann Allen	<a href="#">E Stonehouse</a>	9	<a href="#">368</a>

Item 2-36: Marriage of Samuel Bridgman and Mary Ann Dean.

Samuel Bridgman died in Stoke Damerel in 1863 (when his daughter Mary Ann was 10 years old).

Deaths Sep 1863 (>99%)				
<b>BRIDGMAN</b>	Samuel	<a href="#">Stoke D</a>	5b	<a href="#">210</a>

Item 2-37: Death of Samuel Bridgman.

His widow Mary Ann died in Plymouth in 1880.

Deaths Dec 1880 (>99%)				
<b>Bridgman</b>	Mary Ann	57	<a href="#">Plymouth</a>	5b <a href="#">163</a>

Item 2-38: Death of Samuel Bridgman's widow.

## Speculative conclusions

According to this Bridgman hypothesis, William Skyvington, by the age of 12, was an only child who had lost his mother and both his maternal grandparents. It is fair to say too, I believe, that the boy was probably losing already the genuine facts concerning his roots. Within the shambles of the family, would the father Frank Skyvington have thought it appropriate and necessary to inform his surviving son of the exact circumstances in which he had once married a 15-year-old girl named Mary Ann?

Before his marriage with Eliza Mephram [item 2-24], William Skyvington would have sought details concerning his origins. Maybe he discovered the birth certificate of Mary Ann Jones [item 2-34] and imagined (falsely, to my mind) that Henry Jones was his grandfather. At that moment, William might have decided spontaneously to add “Henry” to his own name.

## Remarriage of Frank Skyvington

On 19 June 1875 (when my great-grandfather William was a motherless child of 7), the widower Frank Skyvington married a Belgian woman named Maria Thérèse Libotte.

1875. Marriage solemnized at <u>the Parish Church</u> in the <u>Parish</u>					
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.
	19 3/10 June 1875	Frank Skyvington	31	Widower	Coachman
		Maria Thérèse Libotte	42	Spinster	

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Establishment.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Frank Skyvington and Maria Thérèse Libotte in the Presence of us, Henry H. St Aubyn and Stephen H. St Aubyn

of <u>the Parish</u> in the County of <u>Gloucester</u>		
Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
<u>the Parish</u>	<u>Charles Skyvington</u>	<u>Gardener</u>
<u>the Parish</u>	<u>Charles Libotte</u>	<u>Wagoner</u>

Witnessed Church, by \_\_\_\_\_ or after Frank by me, W. J. St Aubyn

Item 2-39: Second marriage of Frank Skyvington.

This marriage took place in the same parish church as for Frank's first marriage, 7 years earlier on, with the same rector: W J St Aubyn. This time, the clergyman would have found it easier to conclude that the bride, a dozen years older than Frank, was indeed of age.

## Later life of Frank Skyvington

The 1881 census indicates that Frank and Maria (also written as Marie) were residing with 13-year-old William in Chapel Lane, Yealmpton.

The 1891 census informs us that Frank and Maria had moved to London, while that of 1901 revealed that Frank Skyvington was a caretaker, residing at 36 Theobalds Road, Holborn. This was the address of William Skyvington when he married Eliza Mephram in 1889.

At the time of the 1901 census, my grandfather Ernest Skyvington was a 10-year-old boy living with his maternal family in nearby Hornsey. When I mentioned the name of Frank Skyvington to my grandfather, in 1981, he said he had never heard of this man.

After the death of Frank's second wife in Holborn (London) in 1906, he moved back to the West Country.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT					
1906 DEATH in the Sub-district of Holborn					
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation
135	5th August 1906 36 Theobalds Road	Marie Thérèse Skyvington	Female	76 years	Wife of Frank Skyvington Housekeeper (not domestic)

HOLBORN in the County of London			
Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
Debility Exhaustion Certified by Richard Paramore, M.D.	J. S. Kyvington Widower of deceased Present at death 36 Theobalds Road	5th August 1906	Edward James Comfort Registrar

Item 2-40: Death of Marie-Thérèse Libotte.

Chapter 2

The 1911 census found him living in Plympton St Mary. On 3 May 1916, he died of prostate cancer at the Charlton Nursing Home.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT <i>Ply</i>					
<i>1916</i> DEATH in the Sub-district of <i>Plymouth</i>					
Columns:—	1	2	3	4	5
No.	When and Where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation
<i>248</i>	<i>3rd May 1916</i> <i>Charlton Nursing Home</i>	<i>Frank Skyvington</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>71 years</i>	<i>Yealington S. Devon</i> <i>Retired</i>

<i>mouth</i> North in the County of <i>Plymouth C.B.</i>			
6	7	8	9
Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
<i>1. Cancer of prostate gland. 9 months.</i> <i>2. Cardiac failure &amp; some</i> <i>antified by</i> <i>George F Aldous M.R.C.S.</i>	<i>J. F. Lee.</i> <i>Causing the body to be</i> <i>buried</i> <i>The Mills Yealington</i>	<i>Fourth</i> <i>May</i> <i>1916</i>	<i>R. Mearo.</i> <i>Registrar.</i>

Item 2-41: Death of Frank Skyvington.

Frank Skyvington left a will (which can no doubt be obtained in London).

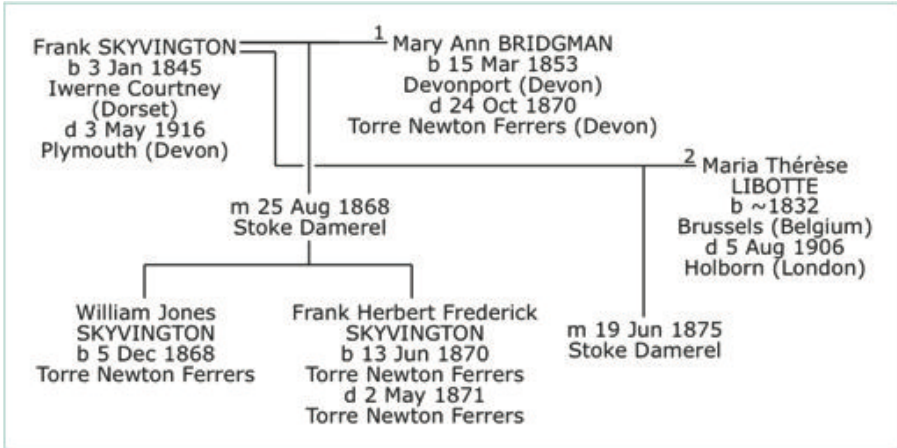
**FRANK SKYVINGTON** Deceased. Pursuant to the Statute 22 and 23 Vict. c. 35 All persons having any CLAIMS against the ESTATE of **FRANK SKYVINGTON** late of Yealington Devon Caretaker (who died on the 3rd May 1916 and whose Will was proved in the Principal Probate Registry of His Majesty's High Court of Justice on the 27th May 1916 by Samuel Fico Lee and Stephen Knight the Executors therein named) are hereby required to send written particulars thereof to the undersigned, Solicitor for the said Executors on or before the 22nd day of July next after which date the said Executors will distribute the assets of the deceased having regard only to the Claims of which they shall then have had notice, and will not be liable therefor to any person of whose Claim they shall not then have had notice.

Dated this 8th day of June 1916.  
J. P. DOBELL, 7 Frankfort Street, Plymouth.

Item 2-42: Probate notice for the will of Frank Skyvington.

## Summary

The following chart summarizes the context of Frank Skyvington on the basis of the Bridgman hypothesis:



Item 2-43: Family of Frank Skyvington.

At this point, I shall interrupt my presentation of Skyvington genealogy. This subject will be taken up again in the next two chapters... but in a rather different style to the way in which I have been presenting people and places up until now, for we shall be moving into relatively remote spheres, where there are no longer any family photos or BMD records. Meanwhile, let us return to my Mephram ancestors in London.

Birth of Eliza Jane Mephram

When Eliza Jane Mephram was born on 10 January 1865, the family was living at 14 Appleby Road, Dalston, Hackney (Middlesex), in today's north-east London.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT					
1865 BIRTH in the Sub-district of Hackney					
Columns:—	1	2	3	4	5
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother
	10th January 1865 14 Appleby Road Dalston	Eliza Jane	girl	James Mephram	Martha Mephram formerly Watson
Hackney in the County of Middlesex.					
6	7	8	9	10*	
Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration	
Unemployed washer- man	J. Mephram father 14 Appleby Road Dalston	10th January 1865	J. Mephram	Registered	

Item 2-44: Birth certificate of Eliza Jane Mephram.



This quiet little street is located just a block away from the vast park named London Fields. The Mepham house was probably the navy blue place. Eliza's father worked in an umbrella warehouse.

Item 2-45: Birthplace of Eliza Mepham.

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## Marriage of the Mepham parents



We shall now move back towards my grandfather's earlier ancestors. This would appear to be Ernest's maternal grandfather James Mepham. His facial features resemble those of Eliza Mepham [item 2-5].

Item 2-46: James Mepham (probably).

Chapter 2

James Mephram and Martha Watson were married on 21 September 1858 in London.

1858. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church				
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.
155	September 21	James Mephram.	25	Bachelor
		Martha Watson	20	Spinster
Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Cer				
This Marriage was solemnized between us, { James Mephram Martha Watson }				

in the Parish of St Botolph Bishopsgate in the County of London			
Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
Watchman	3 Long Alley	William Mephram	Engineer
	do do	Thomas Watson	Gardener

Solemnized in accordance with the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by		or after	by me,
John Evans		Ben	William Gill Vicar
In the Presence of us, { Geo Clark }			

Item 2-47: Marriage certificate of James Mephram and Martha Watson.

The profession of William Mephram, the father of James, is intriguing: engineer, which probably meant that he worked with steam engines.

At the time of their marriage, the young couple were apparently living together at 3 Long Alley. They were married in an ancient church (dating from 1725) whose full name is St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate. The parish designated as “without Bishopsgate” was located outside the former Bishop’s Gate, which was one of the seven portals in the wall surrounding London.

Long Alley runs diagonally across the center of the following old map, while the street called Bishopsgate is located in the lower right-hand corner. The location of the St Botolph church (which still stands today) is indicated by the black rectangle above Wormwood Street. Long Alley disappeared in

the construction of Liverpool Street train station.



Item 2-48: Old map of the Bishopsgate neighborhood in London.

Here is a 19th-century etching of the church, which was linked to the corporation of long-bow manufacturers.



Item 2-49: St Botolph in Bishopsgate Street.

## Watson ancestors

Louisa Mephram once sent her nephew a small copy of this engraving:



Item 2-50: Old church of the parish of St Mary in Hornsey.

The tower still stands in its ancient graveyard in Hornsey High Street at the center of the former village. Louisa wrote on the back of the card:

*I Bought this in an Antique  
Shop in Hornsey you can see it  
is a very old Print you will remember  
the Tower but the Church was  
before your time The Tower is still  
there A number of Mothers relations  
were buried in the Churchyard & a  
number were married, baptised &  
Christened there I sent you the Card  
of Frances Turner*

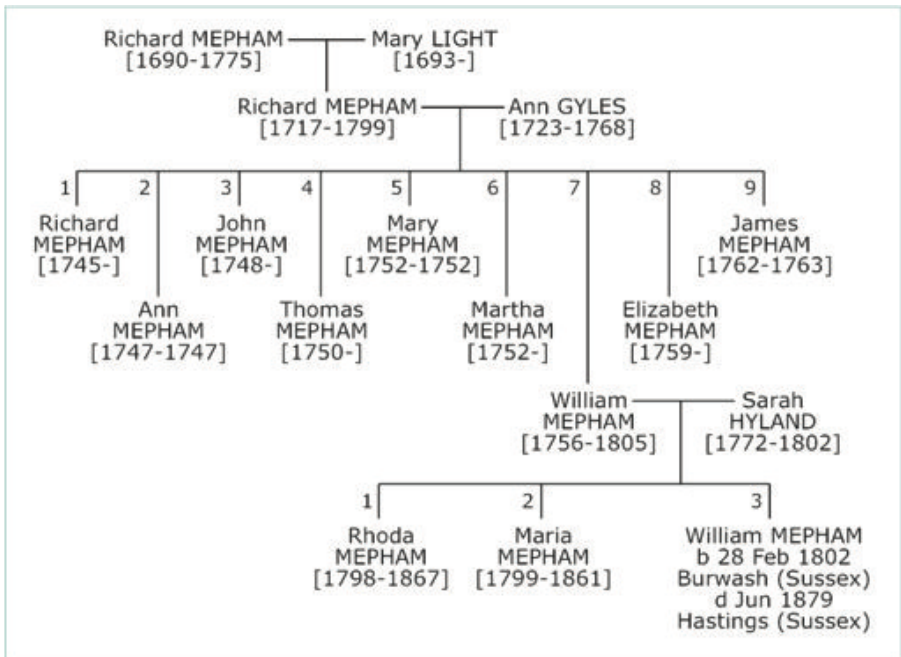
Item 2-51: Louisa Mephram's comments on the Hornsey churchyard.

Her comments suggest that the Watsons were a local family. Today, it is such a common surname that I am unable to recognize any of our ancestors in the crowds of Watson individuals mentioned on the Internet.

## Earlier Mepham ancestors

The marriage certificate of James Mepham [item 2-47] indicates that he was born around 1833 in the south London district of Lambeth, which was formerly in Surrey. There is a Mepham Street near Waterloo station, but I do not know if this locality is associated in any way with our ancestors.

The father of James, William Mepham, was an engineer. In researching these ancestors, I came upon people who lived in Sussex, in a town located midway between Royal Tunbridge Wells and Hastings.



Item 2-52: Mepham folk in Sussex.

Could this William Mepham (lower right-hand corner of the chart) be the father of our James? That part of Sussex had engineering traditions, since Burwash played a significant role in the so-called Wealden iron industry.

There is a town in Kent named Meopham, of Saxon origins (*"the place of Meapa's people"*), which may have been the initial settlement of our most ancient English patriarch.

## Celebrated Mepham personage

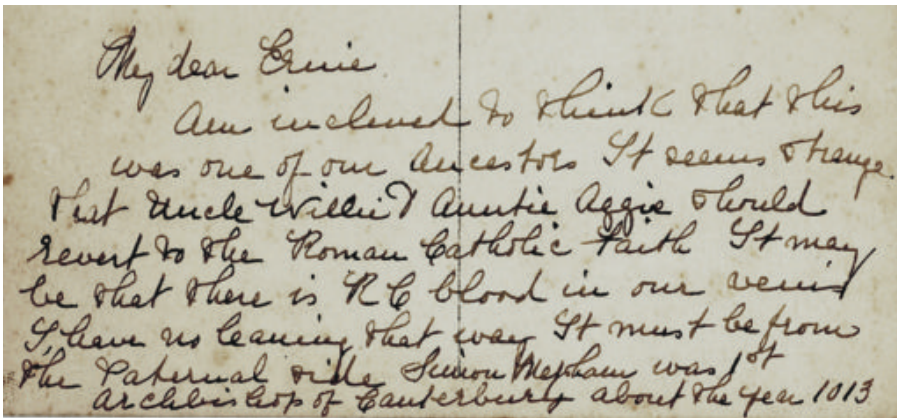
Simon Mepham (also written as Mepeham or Meopham) was the archbishop of Canterbury from 1328 until his death on 12 October 1333 (the same day of the year as my father's death). His magnificent back marble tomb can be found today in the cathedral.



Item 2-53: Tomb of Simon Mepham.

As a boy, I remember my wonder at seeing a postcard from England evoking the idea that we might have had an ancestor who was an archbishop.

Here are Louisa's comments on the back of the card:



Item 2-54: Comments concerning the archbishop's tomb.

I still do not know whether the 14th-century archbishop of Canterbury Simon Mephram was indeed an ancestor. When Louisa Mephram evoked an apparent decision of “*Uncle Willie and Auntie Aggie*” to “*revert to the Roman Catholic faith*”, I imagine that she was talking of her siblings, and that it was a matter of *conversion* rather than *reversion*. Today, I am amused by Louisa’s suggestion that “*the paternal side*” might have transmitted “*RC blood*” to Pop’s uncle and aunt. Religion in our genes!