

The Smiths of High Littleton

A Family History

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Early Beginnings

The Smith family of High Littleton and Farmborough in Somerset can be traced back to the 1730s. The original ancestor of this family was **James Smith**, who hailed from Littleton, a small agricultural hamlet located between Winford and Chew Magna some distance to the northwest of High Littleton. **James was the son of Timothy and Rebecca Smith** and was baptised at Chew Magna on **20th February, 1708**.

In 1736 James was examined by the parish overseers of High Littleton regarding his recent arrival in the parish. Though a reference to this examination appears in High Littleton parish records, from which his Chew Magna origin is established, the examination record itself has been lost. It is now not possible therefore to determine why James had moved to this parish from his previous location. Under the existing Poor Laws it was not possible to move freely from one parish to another to take up permanent residence. A newcomer like James was required to appear before the parish overseers, who were responsible for administering parish relief to the needy from the rates, in order to satisfy the overseers they could support themselves and would not be a burden on the parish. Evidently James's examination was satisfactory for he remained in High Littleton and became a permanent resident.

The International Genealogical Index compiled by the Church of the Latter Day Saints lists a **marriage of a James Smith and a Martha Heale at Camerton, Somerset on 21 June 1731**. I have been unable to trace this marriage in Camerton parish records at the Somerset County Archive & Record Office, Taunton. The entry of this marriage on the IGI derives from a private source, which must have originated from research of relevant parish records of some kind. Prior to her marriage **Martha Heale (c1710-1748)** bore a son to **James Smith (c1708-1774)** who was christened **John at Timsbury, Somerset on 27 February 1731**. The parish baptismal register refers to John's parents as "James Smith of Camerton, and his wife Martha" even though they were not then apparently married. If this baptism suggests that James and Martha were living in Timsbury prior to their wedding the following June at nearby Camerton, they later moved to the adjacent parish of High Littleton, where their subsequent children were baptised.

As no other James and Martha Smith appear in records of the Camerton-Timsbury-High Littleton area for this period, it seems reasonable to assume that the James and Martha married at Camerton in June 1731 were the same husband and wife whose children were baptised at High Littleton between 1739 and 1746. The burials of James and Martha Smith are found in the High Littleton parish registers, and the baptisms, marriages, and burials of their descendents occur regularly in High Littleton and Farmborough records over the next 250 years.

1) Life Under The Poor Law

Compiling a family genealogy for its own sake has little value unless, that is, the motivation is to find links to the nobility or the otherwise rich and famous, notorious and infamous. That certainly doesn't apply here to the Smiths. If one is to avoid ending up with a list of names, it is helpful in bringing names to life if something of an individual's living circumstances can be established. The records of the High Littleton overseers accounts and related sources enable this to be done to some extent. They reveal a Smith history not without its element of pathos and even at times of tragedy.

James and Martha suffered the loss of two (possibly three) of their first children in infancy: **Elizabeth (baptised 1736, buried 1740) and James (buried c1737). John (who had been christened at Timsbury in 1731) also may have died before his parents came to High Littleton. Two other children, Betty and Joel, survived into adulthood (see n.1). Martha died in 1748.** James *remarried in 1761* (then around 53), but in rather scandalous circumstances. His new bride was **Mary Tyler** who was known to the parish from having illegitimate children by two different men of the village in 1750 and 1755. In 1761 Mary was again pregnant but by James Smith. Possibly under the threat of imprisonment (the overseers record a payment for the pregnancy examination of Mary Tyler and "mittimus" for James), James agreed to marry Mary. The circumstances of their marriage were not good. Both husband and wife were in regular receipt of parish relief for the rest of their lives. The reason for this is not explained in the records. But it must have been because James was unable to support his family. Presumably, up to the time of his second marriage he must have been able to do so from his work. Had he and his family become a burden on the parish at an earlier stage, the overseers would have taken steps to send the family back to Chew Magna (see below). Possibly following his marriage to Mary Tyler, James became too ill to work - a condition not at all uncommon in coal mining, which may well have been his occupation after coming to the parish. In any event he and Mary became dependent on relief for house rent, clothes, medical treatment, and payment for "distress" and "want" among other things. They also received occasional aid from the local Mary Jones charity. **James died in 1774**, the cost of the burial (16/-) paid for by the parish.

Without adequate means of supporting herself, **Mary**, now a widow, continued to receive regular parish relief until **her death in 1796**, over twenty years after that of her husband. Mary's personal circumstances were evidently exacerbated by the loss of one of her legs. The parish had paid for a wooden leg for her in 1758/9 and again in 1778/9 and 1785/6. Her child **Richard (by her marriage to James)** also suffered from "lameness." Mary received regular payments for clothes for Richard and her other children. **Richard (1764-73)** died having hardly passed into his youth and was, like his parents, buried at the expense of the parish.

James Smith had a daughter **Betty (born c1742)** from his first marriage to Martha (Heale). In **1768** Betty (then about 26 but unmarried) became pregnant by a man called Tucker. **Her child, Martha**, resulted in Betty receiving regular parish relief (rent, etc.) which included payments for Martha's upbringing. These payments continued until **Martha's death when she was about seven years old (in 1775)**. Shortly after Martha's death Betty again became pregnant, this time by **Edward**

Barnett. He, however, was persuaded by the overseers to marry Betty, the **wedding taking place at High Littleton in 1777.** This may have been a ploy to rid the parish of the couple. Under the law a woman's right of settlement did not at her marriage pass to her husband if he did not belong to the parish, as was the case with Edward. In effect Betty's marriage meant she forfeited her right of settlement. The couple may well have been unaware of the consequences of this when agreeing to marry. Thus in January 1783 Edward (he and Betty having had another child in the meantime) was examined by the overseers. He explained that he was born in Calne in Wiltshire and, aged fourteen, was apprenticed as a weaver to a man in Chippenham. He served only about four years of his ten-year bond and absconded. He came to the Midsomer Norton area looking for work and eventually took up residence in High Littleton. The fact that the parish paid for his and Betty's wedding (£5. 8. 9) - which may have been an inducement to their marrying - suggests that Edward wasn't in employment. Faced with the prospect of having to support a family, and particularly another of Betty's illegitimately conceived children, the overseers may have wanted to get shot of the family altogether, which they were able to do because Edward had no right of settlement. An order for removal was obtained and the family removed to Chippenham.

These instances of illegitimacy, and of others mentioned below, are given without making moral judgements about the individuals concerned. Illegitimate childbirth and the marriages of pregnant brides simply show that pre-marital sex was as common in the past as it is in the present. The difference then was the absence of any form of contraception, which inevitably penalised women more so than men. An unmarried woman who conceived might be considered undesirable by other potential suitors if the father of her child could not or would not marry her. Her reputation might suffer, but that didn't mean it was necessarily deserved.

Forcible removal under the Poor Law was not uncommon at this time, and continued well into the following century. Between 1725 and 1862 the parish overseers instituted proceedings to have one hundred and nine persons (figures which don't include the occasional spouse and children, as in the case of Edward Barnett) removed from High Littleton alone. Moreover, during this general period (1759-1863) a further one hundred and one persons, together in some instances with their families, were removed to High Littleton. In the light of what follows it is relevant here to point out that around a fifth or twenty percent of this latter total (22) concerned removals to High Littleton from various industrial areas of South Wales. Cases of removal could reveal tragic circumstances.

Joel Smith (1778-1836, possibly known also as Joseph) was the **grandson of James and Martha (Heale) Smith. In 1803 he married Jane Evans at High Littleton. Of their eight children, two sons, John (born c1804) and Joseph (born c1825),** moved to different areas in South Wales.

In 1841, John (then around 38 years old) was examined by magistrates at Crickhowell. He told them he came from High Littleton in Somerset. As a youth he had worked with his father (Joel) as a **miner** at Paulton till he was nineteen. He then went to South Wales, first working as a miner at Risca and later at the Beaufort Iron Works. Around 1830 (when about twenty-seven) he **married Jane Flook** at the parish church of Monythusloyne, Monmouthshire (that is Mynyddislwyn in the

vicinity of Abercarn). Following the birth of their first child, **Silas**, the family was removed to High Littleton by order of the magistrates at Bedwelty (Monmouthshire) because they had no entitlement to settlement there. For some time prior to this John had been suffering from “asthma,” of which written confirmation was presented by the Ebbw Vale Iron Works surgeon. This would almost certainly indicate the onset of the dreaded “miners disease” silicosis. This condition prevented John from working, which the surgeon’s note confirmed, and which explains why the parish overseers concerned wanted rid of a family likely to become regularly dependent on relief.

John appears to have been mistaken in his account, possibly because he wished to mislead the magistrates. According to High Littleton records John and his family were removed in 1831 not from Bedwelty but from Llangattock in Brecon. When working at Beaufort Iron Works John and Jane seem to have been living at Rassau in the vicinity of Beaufort/Ebbw Vale, in the parish of Llangattock. The overseers there took action in 1831 to have Jane and baby Silas removed to High Littleton because they had no right to settlement in Llangattock parish. John is’nt mentioned in the order and may have absconded, as would seem to be indicated by the reference in High Littleton overseers accounts to payments to Llangattock which included expenses incurred in “apprehending” John. He may have wished to hide this when appearing before Crickhowell’s worthies in case it prejudiced the outcome of the 1841 hearing.

Despite their removal from Llangattock in 1831 by 1833 the family was back in Wales, now living in the parish of Machen, situated to the west of Risca - the area where John had first worked as a collier and where he had married Jane. In April 1833 the Machen overseers obtained an order for the removal of **John, Jane, Silas (aged 2), and Charlotte (8 weeks)** to High Littleton. It seems that Jane may have gone to Somerset without her husband - perhaps he was too ill to travel - for there is a reference in the High Littleton overseers accounts of July 1833 of a payment of 9/- to Jane to “go to Wales”, and a further payment in September of 1/- for transporting Jane to Bristol.

Despite the removal from Machen, the family once again returned to Wales. In 1841 they were removed by order from the parish of Llangynider, an adjoining parish to Llangattock, from where the family had been removed ten years earlier. This indicates that if John’s misleading account of this earlier removal was designed to gain a favourable outcome from the Crickhowell magistrates the attempt was unsuccessful.

In **1842 Jane and her children (Silas 11, Charlotte 8, Ann 6, and Martha 2)** were receiving weekly relief of 3/6 from the High Littleton overseers, but they threatened to stop this because of John’s absence, describing him as an “impostor” - meaning, presumably, his absence was an imposition on his family and the parish.

In February 1843 John Smith was admitted briefly to the Clutton Union Workhouse, evidently ill from asthma. He discharged himself after a few days. In the 1851 census the family, now consisting of **John (aged 48), Jane (39), Ann (15), Martha (12), Lydia (5), and Samuel (2)** is residing in Clutton parish, which adjoins High Littleton.

John Smith’s younger brother **Joseph (born c1825)** also went to South Wales, presumably to find work as a collier. He had married there, and at some point prior to

1856 lived at Merthyr Tydfil. In May 1856 the Merthyr overseers obtained an order to remove to High Littleton Joseph's wife, **Mary**, and her **three children**. The children are unnamed in the order and merely referred to as Mary's "two legitimate children and her illegitimate child." However a later record refers to the two former children as **Elizabeth and Sarah Ann (aged about 7 and 1 year respectively in 1856)**. The reason for the order being that Mary and her children had been abandoned by **Joseph, who "had gone to America"**, and therefore become ineligible for relief having no right of settlement at Merthyr.

Although Mary and her children are recorded as being delivered to High Littleton in July 1856, the two children Elizabeth and Sarah Ann are found back in Merthyr two years later (what became of Mary's third child is unknown). As it seems unlikely that Elizabeth and her baby sister could have returned to Wales on their own, they probably returned with Mary. But if so, somehow they had become separated from her. In September 1856 an order for removal to High Littleton by the Merthyr magistrates was made for the two children (aged 9 and 2), who clearly were not then with their mother. Mary is only referred to in this order as a means of identifying the two children and she is not included in the removal. What subsequently became of Mary and the children is unclear. There is no further mention of them in High Littleton records. It is possible that like his older brother, John, Joseph had married a local woman after coming to Wales, and that Merthyr may have been Mary's home. This might explain the return of the two children (and Mary?) to Merthyr. It is also possible that Mary may have died at Merthyr shortly after returning, but there is no mention of this in the Merthyr order for removal.

2) Coal

The move of James and Martha to High Littleton in the 1730s may have been connected with employment in agriculture or mining, more likely the latter. The earliest reference to the occupations of the men and older boys of the Smith family occurs in 1811. The High Littleton census for that year refers to three Smith families. All three family heads are listed as **colliers**. In fact the census shows that some one hundred and seventeen males of the total male population of around two hundred and eighty were engaged in coal production. It is difficult to determine exact ratios regarding these figures as the larger figure includes an unspecified number of male children too young to work. A more accurate picture can be seen from the 1841 High Littleton census (excluding the adjoining Hallatrow) which gives a total working population of two hundred and thirty-one and of which one hundred and thirty-five were coalminers: some 58.4 per cent of those in work. The oldest miner is aged sixty-nine, and the youngest a mere ten years old. In fact there were then around ten children aged between ten and thirteen working as miners.

It became common around the early part of the 19th century for entries in the baptismal register and the like to include the relevant male occupation. Thus the baptismal entry of **1815 of James Smith**, refers to his father (also James) as a “collier”, the occupation of most of the Smith men and their sons of this and later generations. As has been seen above, Joel Smith and his son John had worked as miners at Paulton in the early 1800s. The **James Smith (1781-1847) described in 1815 as a collier, was married to Martha (Drury) and was the grandson of James and Martha (Heale) Smith**, who had moved to High Littleton around 1736. There is no reference to this James in the 1811 High Littleton census - he and Martha must have then been living elsewhere. But the **1811 census for the parish identifies the household of his younger brother, George, also a coalminer. George Smith was my great, great, great grandfather** (see accompanying Smith genealogy).

Coal has been mined in North Somerset, particularly in the Mendips, for centuries, possibly going back to Roman times (see n.2). Mining developed as a significant industry in the area to the north and west of Midsomer Norton in the 17th century, with major pits near Farrington Gurney and High Littleton, and others in the Timsbury and Paulton area. It is estimated that by the late 1600s the Mendip coalfield was producing between 10,000 and 50,000 tons per year - annual tonnages fluctuated depending on conditions. A steady increase in local demand for coal took place in the 1700s. This was connected with the production of lime for building and agriculture, and of coke used for drying malt in breweries. But most coal production was for domestic fuel for the growing villages of the Mendips, for towns like Glastonbury and Shepton Mallet, and particularly for the city of Bath. A rail and canal system was developed to transport coal, and roads were substantially improved. This resulted in a more direct link between the area and Bristol by rail and by road. For example, by 1875 a horse-drawn omnibus service from Bristol to Clutton-High Littleton-Timsbury was operating on each Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

Mining in the High Littleton area in the 19th century was principally associated with two pits sited close to each other at **Greyfield**, which came into operation in the 1830s, and at Mooresland in the following decade. Both were owned by the Earl of Warwick. Output from these two pits was later combined, and by 1860 modernization

at Greyfield-Mooresland had increased annual output to 60,000 tons, making it the leading pit in the Somerset field. By the early 1900s however **Greyfield** was virtually exhausted, and it **closed in 1911**.

Smith men and their sons probably worked at Greyfield pit during the 19th century, and my grandfather, **Frederick George Smith**, and his two brothers, **Farnham and Alfred (“Jack“)**, may have worked there up to the time of its closure in 1911. Earlier members of the Smiths may have worked at the **Mearns pit**. Mearns, located at the end of Rotcombe lane, is a hamlet of High Littleton. Several related Smith families lived there in mining cottages during the 19th century and continued to do so into the 20th century. Mearns pit has a claim to fame in the early history of British geology. In 1792 the surveyor, William Smith (no relation), visited Mearns. He reported a small workforce of sixteen men and some six boys, which may have included **Joel Smith (1746-1809) and his son James (1781-1847)**. It was during his pit inspection that William Smith (“the father of British Geology”) noticed the distinct geological formations as he descended down the pit shaft. He later connected this observation with the deposits (fossils) that were unique to each geological strata, and thereby discovered geological time.

3) Smith Households 1841-91

During the 19th century Smith names crop up regularly in the parish records of High Littleton and Farmborough, and occasionally of Clutton also. This reflects some Smith migration between these parishes, but it is mainly explained by local parish boundaries. The northern end of what is now the village of High Littleton was in the 19th century the meeting point of three parish boundaries. People living near to each other in this area - most of whom probably were part of the mining community dependent on Greyfield pit - might be residing within three different parishes: High Littleton, Farmborough, or Clutton. At various times from 1840 on there were Smiths (and a related Bridges family) living in **Scumbrum and New Road**, both of which, though socially part of High Littleton, belonged to Farmborough parish even though Farmborough village lies some distance to the north. For this reason individual Smiths of the same family are sometimes found in parish records for either Farmborough or High Littleton (and occasionally for Clutton). It is not uncommon therefore to find Smith parents married in one parish and their children baptised in another, or even to find the same variation in the baptisms of children of the same household. Also, because the 19th century censuses were compiled on a parish basis, households that were part of the same residential and working community might actually appear in different parish censuses.

Between 1841 and 1891 a Smith household is regularly listed in the High Littleton parish censuses at Mearns (also referred to as “Ridings”), where it formed part of a larger batch of collier families inhabiting the cottages of Mearns and Rotcombe. Most, if not all, of the men and older boys of these households probably worked at Greyfield, some one mile or so away (Mearns pit had closed around 1815).

The **1841 High Littleton census** records the household at **Mearns** of my **great, great, great grandfather George Smith (1788-1843) and his wife Grace (Gullick)** as follows:

George	Smith (aged) 52 male - coal miner
Grace	“ 50 female
Christiana	“ 25 f
Hestor	“ 23 f
Harriott	“ 20 f
Elijah	“ 14 m
Joice	“ 10 f
Jacob	“ 5 m
Hestor	“ 3 f
Abraham	Purnill 42 m - coal miner (presumably a lodger)

The infant **Hestor** was **George and Grace’s grandchild, the daughter of the unmarried Christiana** and named after her sister. Abraham Purnill was the family lodger, probably a friend and workmate of George. A person of this name is found on the 1811 High Littleton census, living with a female. He is referred to as in agricultural work. The 1811 census does not give individual ages or the names of other occupants of a household apart from its head. If this Abraham is the same person referred to as the one living with the George Smith family in 1841, he would have been only around ten or twelve in 1811. I have found no record of his baptism

or burial in High Littleton records. Abraham was still part of this household in 1851, possibly by then having formed an attachment with **George's widow Grace (1790-1863)**.

Although George Smith is described as a coal miner he may not have been in regular work. Between 1815 and 1841, he received regular aid at Christmas from the Mary Jones charity ("blankets, etc.") and was in receipt of parish relief in 1842. The weekly payment of 6/- was reduced to 4/- by the overseers because his claim was regarded by them as "a gross imposition - his wife can work, & his daughter."

In 1851 George Smith had been dead some eight years and the Smith household at Mearns was now headed by his son **Elijah (1827-91)** and Elijah's wife **Kezia (1822-91)**. The **1851 High Littleton census** lists the following members of this household:

Elijah Smith		24 male - coal miner
Kezia	"	28 female
George	"	6 m - scholar at Dame School
James	"	3 m
Grace	"	61 f - pauper
Jacob	"	19 m - pauper (cripple)
Abraham Purnill		50 m - lodger, coal miner

In 1847 Elijah had married his first cousin Kezia, the daughter of George Smith's brother, James. Two of Elijah's older sisters had married (in 1841 and 1844) and the third, Christiana, died in 1844 shortly after the death of George (1843). Nothing is known of what happened to Joice (aged 10 in the 1841 household). The reference to Elijah's son, **George**, being at school is the first indication of any Smith obtaining formal education in High Littleton. Elijah's household of wife and two children also included his widowed mother Grace, his younger **brother Jacob**, and the long-standing lodger Abraham Purnill. Jacob's age in the census returns is given as "19", but this is a mistake. The previous census records his age as "5" and this fits with his baptism **at High Littleton on 9 April 1837**, thus making him around fifteen in 1851. Jacob is also referred to as a "pauper", meaning he was unemployed. The term was usually applied to the elderly or infirm of a household who had no independent means or occupation - as in the case of Jacob's mother, Grace. Jacob's physical handicap (a "cripple") probably was too severe for work as a collier. There is no record of him ever having worked in that occupation.

By 1861 Jacob, then aged about twenty-four, had left the household at Mearns but is not recorded as living elsewhere in High Littleton. A "James" Smith of the same age as Jacob was then living at Sleight Farm, Timsbury in the household of the Parsons' family. Though in another parish, Sleight Farm was not far from Mearns. James is described in the 1861 Timsbury census as a "carter", and as having been born in High Littleton. There does not appear to have been a "James" in any of the Smith households in High Littleton that would fit someone of this age and name. But "Jacob" is a variant of the name James, deriving from the Latin name "Jacobinus" (the period associated with the reign of James 1 is called "Jacobean"). **It seems then that Jacob Smith was also on occasion known as "James" and that he appears as such**

in the 1861 Timsbury census working and living at Sleight Farm.

The strongest indication that Jacob was working and residing there in 1861 is that the woman **he later married, Elizabeth Gregory**, was then also living at the farm. She is described on the Parsons' household list as a "servant" aged nineteen. Elizabeth came from "Stoke Lane", the old name for Stoke St Michael in the Nettlebridge/Leigh-on-Mendip area of Somerset, and was the **daughter of Joseph and Nancy Gregory**. In the 1851 Stoke Lane census Elizabeth (aged 10) is living with her parents and her five brothers and sisters at Giddy Lane. Joseph Gregory (38) is described as a weaver.

Jacob Smith and Elizabeth Gregory were married at Timsbury in April 1862.

It is not known where they first lived after the marriage, but the following year when their first child was born - **my great grandfather Elijah** - Jacob and Elizabeth were living at Mearns, probably in a cottage near to that of the longer-established household of Jacob's brother Elijah. However, by 1871 Jacob (34) and Elizabeth (30) had moved to the neighbouring parish of Farmborough. He was employed as a farm labourer, and the family household had four children: the sons **Elijah (7), George (5), and Farnham (2), and a baby daughter Mary Ann (5 months).**

4) Elijah Smith (1863-1931)

In 1871 there was a **Bridges** household at New Road (actually part of High Littleton but in Farmborough parish). This consisted of Henry Bridges (50), his wife Melinda (49), and their young grandchildren Emma (11) and Caroline (6), both of whom were the children of Henry and Melinda's two unmarried daughters, Louisa and Martha. By 1881 Emma Bridges (21) had married Thomas Carter (22) and the newly-weds were living near to Emma's grandparents at Scumbrum. Thomas and Emma had no children at this time, but the household included a lodger, **Elijah Smith (aged 19)**, the eldest of Jacob and Elizabeth Smith's children. Elijah probably was Thomas's friend, but unlike Thomas, who was a miner, Elijah was a farm labourer, like his father. Elijah may have been living with the Carters for another reason - his interest in Emma's young cousin **Caroline**, then aged sixteen.

When the 1881 Farmborough census was compiled (from which the above details are taken) Caroline **Bridges had become pregnant by Elijah**. The couple were **married** shortly after the census at **Farmborough church in June 1881**, and their first child, **my grandfather Frederick George, was born three months later on 29 September**. At the time of Frederick's baptism, oddly enough at High Littleton church (the family were living at Scumbrum in Farmborough parish), Elijah seems to have changed his occupation. The baptismal register records him as a "miner." In fact there is a later record which describes Elijah as a "colliery horse driver below ground." This would suggest that Elijah utilised his experience of horses in farm work (his father Jacob had been a "carter") for the better paid and usually more regular colliery work. Given the proximity of Greyfield pit to where Elijah was living at Scumbrum, he probably worked there along with his in-laws Thomas Carter and Henry Bridges, and his **cousins James and Jesse Smith**.

At some point during the next ten years Elijah returned to the land and had moved with his family from Scumbrum to Greyfield farm, to the immediate north of the pit, where he worked as a farm labourer. **In the 1891 Clutton census Elijah and Caroline are living at the farm with their four children: Frederick George ("Fred," 9), Henry Farnham ("Farn," 7), William (5), and Florence (2)**. The change in Elijah's work may have been due to fluctuations in the Greyfield workforce. But another factor may have been his health. Later medical records show that Elijah was an epileptic and that this condition - particularly the onset of seizures - was exacerbated by excessive alcohol consumption. A proneness to epileptic seizure brought on by drink may have compromised his suitability for work underground. If this was the reason for his change of employment it didn't prevent Elijah later returning to mine work.

Caroline and Elijah had **seven children** in all. In addition to the first four referred to above there were **Alfred (b. 1894), Annie (b. 1897), and Elsie (b. 1899)**. But **Caroline** did not live long after the birth of Elsie, **dying in 1903 aged just thirty-nine**. The responsibility for bringing up the younger children (particularly Annie, 6, and Elsie, 4) and coping with the general running of the household after the loss of Caroline probably passed to young **Florrie** (aged around 13 in 1903). This may be reflected in the fact that Florrie never married and continued to live with her father until **Elijah's death in 1931**. A recent publication on the history of High Littleton contains a photograph of Florrie taken in 1911 of the local Methodist "Afternoon

School” officers and teachers, of which she evidently was one (p.122). Just prior to Caroline’s death, the family was living at a cottage towards the centre of the village and off the High Littleton main road near the old site of the village post office. **In the 1920s Elijah and Florrie shared the cottage with her married sister (Elsie) and husband and their daughter Lorna.** Just before Elijah’s death the family had moved to one of the new council houses in the **Batch (no. 5).**

By 1926 Elijah’s health had deteriorated and he was experiencing severe mental problems. His excessive drinking brought on bouts of hallucinations and agitated behaviour. He became so uncontrollable that he was admitted to Wells Mental Hospital on three occasions between 1926 and 1930.

In December 1926 when first admitted Elijah is described in the hospital record as “plump and well-nourished” with blue eyes (one of which was effected by a cataract), grey hair and a grey moustache. He was five foot three inches tall and weighed just under twelve stone. Aged sixty-three on admission, Elijah is described as a miner in the admission register, but he could hardly have been in employment given his condition. Consulting the hospital record at the Somerset County Records Office at Taunton, which I and my cousin Colin Smith were able to do when researching the Smith family history, proved to be a revelation. Apart from the information in the Wells Asylum record of Elijah’s admissions, Colin and I discovered photographs of Elijah taken at the hospital when he was admitted in 1926 and 1928. These are the only known photographs of our great grandfather. Having died years before our births we hadn’t known him as children and had no idea what he looked like until seeing the photographs that day at Taunton.



Elijah was admitted in 1926 in a delusional and excitable state, believing he was underground in the pit and in fear of his life. Prior to this first admission to the hospital, Elijah’s eldest son Frederick George had become aware of his father’s condition, probably via his sisters Florrie and Elsie. Frederick was then living at **Blackwood** in South Wales, having moved there with his two brothers, Farn and Jack, sometime around **1912**. It seems that Fred must have travelled to High Littleton to deal with the crisis, for it was he who provided the hospital with the details of his father’s condition. Tragically, **Fred** was himself seriously ill from silicosis and preceded Elijah to the grave, **dying of the condition in 1930 at the age of just forty-eight.**

For the first weeks after his admission Elijah had bouts of extreme agitation accompanied by delusions. These were mainly about believing himself underground in a flooding pit and unable to get his pit ponies to safety. This may in fact relate to the severe **flooding** of Greyfield pit in **1909** which occurred shortly before it permanently closed. Once Elijah had recovered (probably from the effect of alcohol) he became calm and rational, presenting no problem to the asylum staff. He continued in this more stable condition for the next few months, though having occasional epileptic attacks. He was discharged in March 1927.

Elijah's condition had stabilised long before his release from Wells, but his mental state had not really improved. Added to this were signs of serious physical disorder, later diagnosed as kidney damage, chronic heart and chest problems, and failing eyesight. His return to High Littleton was relatively short, for fifteen months later he was re-admitted to Wells asylum again in an agitated state. He remained confused and unresponsive to treatment - which seems to have amounted to little more than keeping him under general surveillance - throughout the twelve months of this second stay and experienced regular and severe epileptic seizures. He was discharged without improvement in July 1929. Elijah returned to the asylum in December 1930 suffering from severe hallucinations brought on by heavy drinking. His physical condition seriously weakened a few weeks later, but he recovered temporarily. He was generally passive once the initial agitation of his first two admissions to Wells had passed, but on this third occasion he became irritable and even violent when being spoken to by staff or when he was examined. By the end of April **1931** his condition deteriorated, and he **died** at the hospital of heart failure and bronchitis on **6 May**.

5) Frederick George Smith (1881-1930) and Alice Rosina Millard (1883-1979)

Young Fred was the first of Elijah and Caroline's children to receive elementary schooling under the education reforms of 1870, which led to the founding of the National school at High Littleton in 1874. From the brief record in the school registers Fred did not seem to progress well. Following an undetermined period at infant school, he was admitted to the National school in **August 1888** some eight weeks before his seventh birthday. He **left the school in September 1893** just weeks before his twelfth birthday, having only completed standards 1 and 2 of the six yearly standards. By contrast his younger brother Farn (admitted 13/7/91 when 7) completed all six standards by 1896, when he presumably left, aged thirteen. According to the school register, although Fred left at the beginning of September to become a farm labourer - probably working with his father at Greyfield farm - he was re-admitted to school just seventeen days later. This probably was because the law required children to remain at school until they reached thirteen. There is no record of Fred's eventual completion of his schooling but it must have been in late 1894, around the time of his thirteenth birthday.

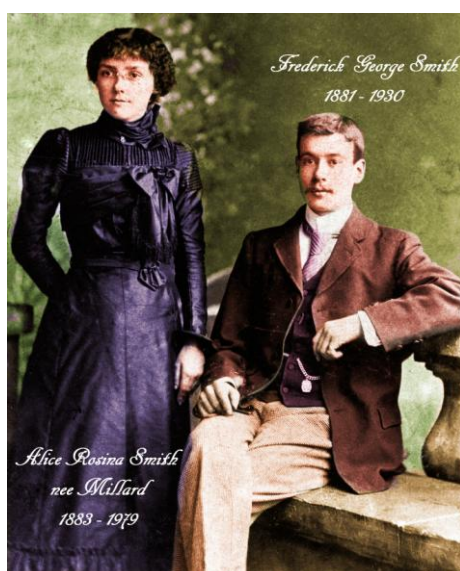
During his time at school Fred is mentioned twice in the school record in connection with problems of attendance. In April 1890 he was sent home from school for failing to bring his school money - a weekly sum not exceeding nine pence was required. It was unusual for the teacher to take such action. She did so in this case because Fred had consistently failed to bring the weekly amount. In the event Fred didn't return to school during the following three weeks. In September 1892 he is reported absent chasing off crows for the farmer at Rosewell farm!

Although young Fred seems to have followed his father Elijah into farm work on leaving school, he later became a miner as had his father. The 1901 High Littleton census finds him living with the family - now removed from Greyfield farm to a cottage in the village near the old post office - aged nineteen and working as a "coal hauler below ground." He may have been working with Elijah, who is described on the census as a "colliery horse driver below ground," transporting coal from the workface to where it could be hauled to the surface.



The following year (1902) **Frederick George married Alice Rosina Millard**. The wedding took place in October at the Bath Registry Office. This unusual step had

been taken some seven months earlier by Fred's brother **Farn, who married (Hannah) Maria Norman at the Registry Office in February 1902.** Indeed, the temporary address in Bath used by Farn and Maria immediately prior to their wedding is identical to that later used by Fred and Alice when they married. Why Farn and Maria opted for a civil wedding as against the customary church ceremony in the bride's parish is unknown. But in the case of Fred and Alice the probable reason for this was that their first child, **William Arthur**, was born just eight weeks later. Alice's state of pregnancy probably determined the civil ceremony at Bath so as to avoid the embarrassment of a local church service at **Saltford**, near Keynsham, from where Alice came. It is not known how Fred and Alice met and courted - High Littleton and Saltford are not neighbouring parishes - or why the wedding was delayed so far into Alice's pregnancy. Possibly there were parental objections to the match, and this may also explain why Farn and Maria's earlier marriage took place at the Registry Office.



My grandmother **Alice** was the child of first and second generation migrants from different parts of Wiltshire to the Saltford-Keynsham area, which lies a few miles to the south of Bristol on the Bristol-Bath road. **Alice's maternal grandfather** was **Edward Haines**. He was born at Corsley, Wiltshire, about **1820** and came from farm labouring stock. His father, **John**, was a shepherd, the occupation also of Edward. In **1839 Edward married Fanny Prior of Westbury, Wiltshire**, probably at the parish church there. I write "probably" because what may be the entry of this marriage in the Westbury parish register (21/5/1839) gives Fanny's maiden name as "Smith" not Prior. But her death certificate and the birth certificate of **her and Edward's daughter, Ellen**, consistently give her maiden name as "Prior." I have not been able to resolve this anomaly.

When the 1841 Westbury census was undertaken Edward (20) and Fanny (20) were living next to **Edward's elderly parents John and Mary Haines (both aged around 60).** **Mary's maiden name was Snelgrove and she married John at Corsley in 1802.** This marriage is recorded in the Corsley church register, but I found no record there of Edward's baptism or of the christenings of any other children John and Mary may have had. Some time between 1820 and 1837 Edward had moved with his parents to Westbury, where he later met and courted Fanny Prior. Their first two

children (**John and Sarah**) were born in Westbury, but by the birth of the third child, **Mary in 1847**, the family had moved to **Keynsham in Somerset**. Over the next three decades the Haines family regularly moved from one abode to another in the Saltford-Keynsham area. This must have been due to changes in Edward's work as a shepherd. In each of the four censuses between **1851 and 1881 the Haines family is living at different addresses: at Saltford Hill, Saltford (1851); Bakers Lane, Keynsham (1861); near Avon Mill, Keynsham (1871); and at Mill House farm, Mill Lane, Keynsham (1881).**

By April 1881 Edward and Fanny's children had left home. The youngest, **Ellen (b. 1862)**, married **Thomas Millard in February 1881**. **Thomas (b. 1857)** was, like his father-in-law Edward, a migrant from Wiltshire and had moved to Keynsham to find work. His family came from rural **Nettleton**, near Chippenham. Thomas may have been the only member of his family to migrate to Keynsham, the rest of the Millards seem to have remained for some time in the Nettleton area. **Thomas and Ellen Millard had seven children between 1881 and 1897**. The second of these was my grandmother, **Alice Rosina**.



Tunnel Bridge House – Alice worked here as a servant

6) Movement and Migration

Households of course evolve and change as their children grow into adulthood, marry, and form their own families. The availability of work and housing generally determine where new households can be started. In mining and agriculture housing and work were often directly linked, and this could lead to movement from one place to another and even significant migration at the beginning of a marriage or later, as seen in the example of Edward and Fanny Haines and of individuals like Thomas Millard. This process tended to dramatically increase over the course of the 19th century, especially in movement from rural to more urbanised settings.

Jacob Smith had left home at Mearns in High Littleton to take up farm work nearby, but later (around 1863) moved back to Mearns with his wife **Elizabeth**. By 1871 Jacob and Elizabeth and their family had moved to Farmborough. Over the next years they settled at different places in **Farmborough**, spending most of their later life at **Hobbs Wall**.

James Smith, the son of Jacob's brother Elijah, moved to **Farrington Gurney** in the 1860s, but whether to work at the local pit there or as a consequence of marrying is not clear. **James married Mary Ann Rogers** of Farrington Gurney at the parish church in **1867**, and the couple set up home there. Their three children were baptised in the parish and the family lived for a period in Pity Lane. By 1881 however the family had moved to High Littleton and was living next to James' parents at Mearns (or Ridings as Mearns seems to have called in the 1881 census). Ten years on and James and Mary are still at Mearns, living next to the **elderly Elijah and Keziah Smith and their unmarried disabled son Elijah (aged 42)**. At Mearns these two Smith households had been joined by 1881 by a third, that of **James' younger brother Jesse, his wife Clara, and their children**. Descendents of this branch of the Smith family continue to live in High Littleton in the 21st century.

A major breach in the Smith connection with High Littleton occurred just prior to the First World War. **Elijah and Caroline's third son, William (b. 1886)** for some unknown reason left the area altogether and migrated to **Halifax** in Yorkshire, where he eventually worked as a bus-driver. He married a Halifax lass, **Mabel**, and settled there permanently. **Lorna Blacker, the daughter of William's sister Elsie**, recalls staying with her uncle and aunt in Halifax when she was around ten years old (around 1930). This visit was arranged because of the difficulty Lorna's parents and her Aunt Florrie were having with her grandfather, Elijah. His drinking and its disruptive impact on the household led to Lorna being sent off to Halifax, where she stayed for some six months. Lorna recalls that when, prior to Elijah's death, William and Mabel came to High Littleton to visit they refused to stay at the house, but boarded somewhere in the area. Lorna attributes this to snobbery, but a cottage which contained four adults and two children probably had no ready means of accommodating visitors.

Whether William's departure was connected with the closure of Greyfield pit in 1911 is unknown, but this seems to have been instrumental in the migration of Elijah's three other sons to South Wales - in fact to the general area their ancestors John and Joseph Smith had migrated to some seventy or so years before. After their **marriage**

in 1902, Fred and Alice had an established household at Batch cottage in what is called the Drung in High Littleton. By 1911 there were four young children in the household: Arthur (b.1902), Gladys (b. 1904), Ernest (b. 1905), and my father Bertram (b.1909), and elsewhere in the village Farn and Maria, and their daughter Clarice, were living in a cottage near his father, Elijah.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.

The contents of this Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, or in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

Number of Schedule *LC 3*
(To be filled up by the Enumerator after Census)

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF FAMILY	AGE AND SEX	PARTICULARS AS TO MARRIAGE		PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION		BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER	NATIONALITY	INFIRMITY
			Married	Single	Profession or Occupation	Industry or Service			
1. Frederick Geo. Smith	Head	29	Married	Coal & River	150	Wether	Lowestoft, Suffolk		
2. Alice Maria Smith	Wife	27	Married				Lowestoft, Suffolk		
3. William Arthur Smith	Son	8					Lowestoft, Suffolk		
4. Gladys Emily Smith	Daughter	7					Lowestoft, Suffolk		
5. Albert Ernest Smith	Son	5					Lowestoft, Suffolk		
6. Bertram Smith	Son	1					Lowestoft, Suffolk		

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

I declare that this schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: *Frederick George Smith*
Printed Address: *Batch, High Littleton, Bristol*

Possibly because of the difficulty of finding suitable work after the closure of Greyfield pit, **Fred, Farn, and the younger brother Jack decided to make a permanent break with High Littleton and make a new start in South Wales.** The three brothers were then aged around thirty-one, twenty-eight, and eighteen respectively. Some time around **1912** the three men and their families moved to **Blackwood in the Sirhowy Valley**, settling in three adjacent houses in **Gordon Road**. The brothers all found work as colliers in the local area. The families of Fred and Farn put down permanent roots in this area of South Wales. Their daughters married locally and their descendants continue to live in the vicinity of Blackwood.



(l-r) Arthur, Fred, Alice, Irene

Unfortunately for Fred and Farn, the decision to move to Blackwood proved to be fatal to their health. Both died of **silicosis** within a short time of each other: **Fred in 1930 aged forty-eight, and Farn in 1933 aged forty-nine.** Fred was buried locally at St Sannans, Bedwelty and Farn at High Littleton, to where his body was brought

after his death. Thus a father and two sons were laid to rest in the short period between June 1930 and February 1933. Using gold sovereigns paid to Frederick George as wages, Alice gave each of her children each a gold sovereign in memory of their father. In a further ironic twist, Alice was given £300 compensation for the death of her husband from silicosis at the end of her life in the 1970s. Typically, she shared it out amongst her 3 surviving children. She continued to receive her NCB coal allowance until the day she died.

A local newspaper - the **Merthyr Express** - carried this report in an edition of June 1930:

INQUEST. - An inquiry ... was held at the Police Station on Thursday ... concerning the death of **Frederick George Smith (48)**, miner. Deceased had resided at **44, Bloomfield-road, Blackwood**. It was stated ... by his son that deceased had been employed at **Abernant Colliery** for the past 17 years, but failed to work after April 17, 1929, and later received compensation as suffering from silicosis. **He died on Friday June 6.**

There also is a reference to my grandfather's condition in a publication of the Institution of Mining Engineers on "Silicosis and Coal Mining" (1931). One of the contributors to the discussion of this subject refers to a list of cases taken from inquest notes and reproduced as "Table IV." Case 16 in this table (page 22) refers to **"F.G.S."** aged 48, indicating **he had worked on "hard headings" with hand and pneumatic drills. The coroner/pathologist diagnosis is summarised as: "Failing health past 4 years. Right lung collapsed in lower part. Dense fibrous adhesions. Marked anthracosis in both lungs. Dense fibrous consolidation due to silicosis, chiefly in upper lobes Emphysema marked"**

The reference to **"hard headings"** refers to a geological formation. It was thought that the dust produced by drilling in these headings contained the concentrations of **silica** which, through regular inhalation, led to **silicosis**. The density of the fibrous adhesions caused by breathing the silica dust increasingly limited the passage of air through the lung and into the blood stream, thus causing extreme shortage of breath and a consequent inability of the body to function properly.

This condition was once graphically illustrated to me during a visit to London in the late 1950s by my uncle **Ernest**, my father's elder brother. My father and mother were then living in **Kilburn** and Ern had come up from **Walmer**, in Kent, where he and his wife **Ethel** lived. Ern had worked as a miner (probably at **Abernant-llanover**) when he left school, but some time after his father's death he moved to Walmer and worked at the **Betteshanger** pit. On the Saturday of his visit I took Ern to see a football match between Chelsea and Blackpool at Stamford Bridge. We arrived in the vicinity of the ground in good time and, having parked the car, continued on foot. We didn't get into the ground until the start of the second half, for it had taken us an hour to walk the shortish distance from the car to the game. Every few yards Ern had to stop. He was utterly exhausted just as if he'd run a mile at a sprint. This was probably the last match he saw. **He died of silicosis not long after aged just fifty-five.**

7) Blackwood, Walmer/Deal, and Keynsham

My father's older sister **Gladys** was the first of Fred and Alice's children to **marry**. This took place at **Bedwelty near Blackwood in February 1922**. Gladys's husband was a Devonian, **Reuben Leonard Tancock**. Reuben's family came from the **Ashburton** area and, like the Smiths, part of the family had migrated to South Wales in the early 20th century. After their marriage, Reuben and Gladys set up home in **William Street in Blackwood** and produced a substantial family: **Gwendoline Rosina ("Gwen" b. 5/8/22), Reuben John ("Jack" b. 21/12/24), Royston ("Roy" b. 24/5/27), Margaret Jean (b. 20/12/30), Marlene (b. 4/7/34), Terence Leonard ("Terry" b. 27/5/37), and Frederick Keith ("Keith" b.9/9/38)**. The Tancocks put down firm roots in this area of Wales, marrying locally and producing families of their own.

The locus of the Smith family, however, shifted from Wales to Kent following the **death of Frederick George in 1930**. Fred's widow **Alice, her two older sons (Art and Ern), and the two younger children born to Fred and Alice in Blackwood, Fred and Irene, moved to Deal in Kent**.

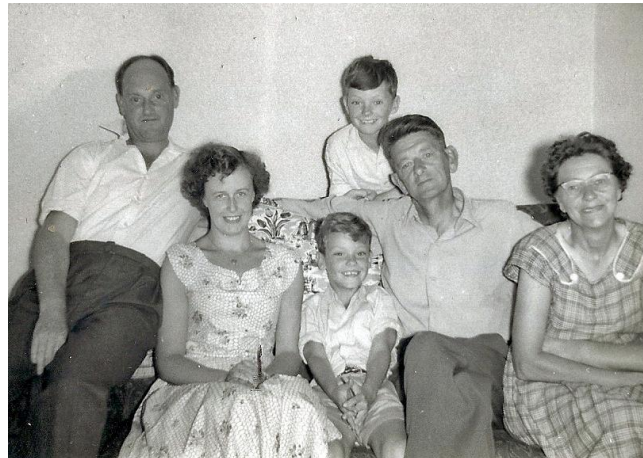


(l-r) Fred, Irene

The move may have been initiated by Art and Ern, both miners, and by their knowledge of available work at Betteshanger Colliery in the Kent coalfield. The family move to Deal, where housing was available for newcomers, was augmented by the move from Blackwood of Alice's brother-in-law, Jack Smith and his family.

Art and Ern both married around this time: **Art to Nancy Brookfield** (a miner's daughter). Ern's wife, Ethel, originally came from the Forest of Dean area, and they met, I believe, when Ethel was visiting friends or relatives in Blackwood. The two couples and Alice's small family (**Fred and Irene**) lived near to each other at **Downs Road in Walmer**. Ern and Ethel had only one child, **Robert Derek** - known to his own family as "Bob," but to his grandmother, uncles and aunts and his cousins as "**Derek**," a name he rather disliked. Ern's son was the first of the Smiths to really

benefit from his schooling. After the war he went to college and became a school teacher, spending his working and married life with Yvonne and daughter Lesley in Plymouth. He died in Plymouth in 2008.



(l-r) Fred, Yvonne, Terry, Colin. Ern, Ethel

At some time during the war my grandmother Alice decided to leave Walmer and return home to Keynsham, near Bristol, where she had grown up. It is thought that there was a real threat of a German invasion into Kent and repeated fighter attacks by German aircraft in that part of Kent. Alice and Irene went to live with Alice's elderly mother, **Ellen Millard, at 79 Temple Street**. Fred followed about a year later in **1942 or 3**, initially coming on a visit to his mother but not returning. It is thought he met **Eileen Tame** in the **London Inn in Temple Street**, where Eileen's sister-in-law, **Rene Tame (the wife of her brother Ronald)** worked as a barmaid. He later went to work at Bristol Aeroplane Company in Whitchurch Airfield building Beaufighters.



(l-r) Eileen, Irene, Alice at 79 Temple Street Keynsham

In **1944** Alice was visited from Deal by her son **Arthur**, who suddenly became seriously ill, possibly from food poisoning, and **died, aged forty-one**. He was buried at High Littleton in **April 1944**.

My father's younger brother **Fred (b 1920) married Eileen Tame (b 1919) on October 25th 1944**, and settled at **50 Little Paradise in Bedminster, Bristol**, sharing the house with her mother **Florence (Florrie) Ada Tame (nee Halse)** and father **Henry (Harry) John Tame**.



After being being conscripted into the Army in 1946, he spent most of his 2 years in Egypt as driver. From 1948, he worked for 33 years at **Charles Hill & Sons (Shipbuilders)** initially as nightwatchman, then a crane driver until 1981 when the shipyard closed as a result of Bristol City Docks being shut down for redevelopment. He **died of leukaemia at the young age of 61 in 1981; Eileen died aged 78 in December 1997**. Fred and Eileen had two sons, **Colin (b 1949) and Terry (b 1951)**, brought up from 1951 in the Hartcliffe area of south Bristol. Colin, with whom I undertook this research of the Smith family, was the first of the Smiths to go to university, attending what was then Portsmouth Polytechnic.



(l-r) Colin, Fred, Terry

He has been a Labour councillor in Bristol first elected for the Whitchurch Park Ward (2002-6) and latterly Bedminster Ward (2007-date) for a number of years. In 2010-11 he served as Lord Mayor of Bristol. **Colin married Elizabeth (Chard) in 1974 and this marriage produced 3 children: Graham Neil (b1980), Ian Robert (b 1982), and Heather Alice (b 1985) who served as Lady Mayoress of Bristol in 2010/11.**

For many years, **Terry** worked as an electrician, later a maintenance man but **died aged 55 of lung cancer in February 2007**. He and his first wife, **Pauline (Bennett)**, had 2 children, **Catherine Louise (Kate) b 1980 and Chris(topher) James b 1982**.

Alice's young daughter, **Irene**, married a Keynsham man, **John Hanney**, after the war. They lived with Alice at **79 Temple Street**. Tragically, **Irene died in 1956 aged 33** after suffering from kidney failure, having had no children. She had previously had a miscarriage.



Irene, John, Colin

Alice also lost her son Ern in the early/mid 1960s. Alice had thus endured over some thirty years the loss of a husband and three children, and this in the context of the upheavals she had experienced of the moves from High Littleton to South Wales, from Blackwood to Deal, and from Walmer to Keynsham. In her latter years, when she could no longer care for herself (she was a long term Type 1 Diabetic, requiring injections of insulin on a daily basis) she lived firstly with her daughter Gladys in Blackwood, then later with Bert & Isabel in High Littleton, where she died. She is buried with her daughter, Irene, in Keynsham Cemetery. John Hanney died in 2008.

Alice, who died in 1979 aged 96, was twenty-eight years married and virtually fifty years a widow.



Alice in 1970s

8) Bertram Smith (1909-84) and Isabella McKenzie Allan Horne (1910-93)

My father **Bert's** life in **Blackwood** is rather a blank page. He left school there aged around fourteen (c1923) and joined his father and two brothers, Artie and Ern, as a miner. But he hated the work, and after a few months left the pit and became a shop-boy in a local drapery - the first of a long line of miners to break with the tradition. One of the few stories I recall my father telling about this period concerned his new suit. In his teens, dad had a great liking for dancing and the girls. In pursuit of these interests he'd bought a suit in the latest fashion - a short "bum-freezer" jacket and bell-bottom trousers. Knowing his father would raise the roof if he ever caught Bert in this outfit, when going out dancing dad would sneak his suit downstairs and into the outside "privy," so he could change into it without Fred's knowledge. Regaled in his state-of-the-art togs he'd was out through the back gate and off for fun with the ladies.

At some point my father decided on becoming a cook - possibly because hotel work presented a passport to a wider world of occupational and social opportunity. Working as a hotel cook eventually took him to the seaside holiday town of **Swanage** in Dorset in the early 1930s. It was at the hotel that he met my mother, **Isabella**, who was also working there as a maid or waitress.

My mother came from the Scottish industrial town of **Motherwell**, a few miles south of Glasgow. Both of her parents were Highlanders from **Inverness**. Her father, **Alexander Horne, had married Isabella Allan in Inverness**, but shortly after the couple migrated south to Motherwell. This seems to have been to do with Alexander's work as an engineer-fitter. He had worked for the Highland Railway, but in Motherwell he found employment in the town's flourishing steel industry. Alexander and Isabella lived in the **Flemington** area of the town, mostly in a tenement in **Jack Street**, where my mother, named after her mum, was brought up. Mother was one of **eleven children** born to her parents during the first quarter of the 1900s. Most of her brothers and sisters remained in Motherwell, marrying there and starting their own families. But her eldest sister, **Charlotte**, migrated to **London** in the 1920s, where she worked as a family cook. This was to set something of a Horne trend. Through Charlotte my mother also came to London to join her sister as a maid in the same family household. Later, after the war, mum's brother **George** and her youngest sister **Margaret** also settled in **London** and started families there.

Like my dad, my mum liked to go to dances and have fun - in her case, of course, with the boys. This may have been part of the attraction of leaving home and going south to the bright lights. My mother had an early romance with a man, Peter, she met in London, becoming pregnant as a result. According to my mother's account her sister Charlotte was so enraged at this, she had mum "thrown into the street." Perhaps an embellishment of mum's inevitable loss of her job with the family. Her son, **Peter**, however seems to have been born in **London**. If so, mum must have found somewhere else to live until Peter's birth. My mother always claimed she would have married Peter's father but the fact that he was a Catholic meant her family would not have accepted the marriage. Baby Peter was later taken by mum to Motherwell, where he was raised in the Horne family household. For many years it seems that Peter believed his uncles and aunts were actually his older brothers and sisters. During Peter's upbringing **the Horne family had moved to the new borough**

housing in the Jervison area of Motherwell, to 12 Clapperhow Road.

After taking Peter home, mother returned south, working first for a family as a house maid before moving with her work to the hotel in **Swanage** where she and dad met. According to a story of my father's, he had a rival at the hotel who had also taken a shine to the recently arrived attractive and lively Scottish lass - in addition to a winning personality young Isobel was blessed with a mass of auburn hair. The issue was settled in a quite civilised manner over a game of billiards, with dad emerging the victor and his course set fair.

By **1935** mum and dad were living in different parts of west London, Bert having moved to another hotel and "Isa" to a job in another family household. They married at Hampstead Registry Office in June 1935. **Mum and dad lived at two different places in Kilburn before moving to our permanent home at Kilburn House, Malvern Place. Here my brother David (Bertram Allan), who was born in July 1936, and I, born September 1938, were brought up.**

Our upbringing, like that of so many children of that generation, was dramatically affected by the war. For a substantial part of it mum and dad were separated. **My father was conscripted quite late, around 1941**, joining the RAF as a cook. This was rather unusual. The service mentality being that if you had been a cook in "civvy street" you ought to be driver or become a camp guard once you found yourself in uniform! Dad spent the early period of his service in places like York before being posted overseas, first to Belgium, after the liberation of France, and right at the end of the war to Australia. He didn't get home until 1946. Mum spent most of the war in London, living with the ever-present danger of the bombing. Like so many women during the war and as an essential part of the "war effort" she had given up her normal work for the factory floor. And like so many other London kids David and I were evacuated. David went to live with a family in Northampton and I went to Wales to live with the Tancock family in Blackwood. As I could only have been around four years old then, I don't remember much about it, and I only have vague memories about our re-union as a family in London after the war.

My dad returned to hotel work and mum to part-time waitressing. Both tended to work long days. Dad usually left for work around the time David and I got up for school, and because he didn't leave the hotel until the restaurant closed around 9pm, he didn't get home till well after we were in bed. Mum worked lunch hours in town and often did evening work too. The immediate post-war period was difficult - a time of austerity, of rationing, of low wages and of struggle to make ends meet.

David and I went to the local school, which then combined juniors and seniors. In this latter guise it was **Percy Road Secondary Modern**. It has long since fallen victim to the bulldozer in pursuit of "urban renewal," which probably was no bad thing. It wasn't a bad school, just part of a bad system - one which offered little or no opportunity for its children to recognise their potential, let alone begin to achieve it. We seem to have been regarded as "factory fodder," and our education proceeded accordingly. Like all the other sec-mods there David and I left school without anything tangible to show for the years spent in its classrooms.

In 1951, **David** became **apprenticed in the printing trade**, working for a small firm

just opposite our old school playground - an addition to the school which came courtesy of a Hitler bomb during the war, thereby removing the houses that formerly stood there. Perhaps this could be regarded as an important Hitlerian contribution to our schooling, as we probably learnt more in the playground than in the classroom. I left school in **1953** getting a job with a mate of my brother's and **became a van boy**. I worked in a radio/tv shop helping to deliver purchases to customers for installation. I started on the princely weekly wage of £1.7.6 (£1.25) with the promise of an increase of 2/6 (25p) after a month if I proved satisfactory. Three months later the increase still having not arrived, I became a van boy in another radio/tv shop earning £2.10.0 (£2.50) per week.

Dave was more of a joiner than I was. He was one of a large group of neighbourhood friends. They formed their own football team and their own youth club, using a local school for the purpose. Once old enough, the lads became motorcycle enthusiasts - part of the 1950s "ton-up boys" or "rockers." Dave also had joined the Air Force cadets, so it was natural for him to enter the RAF when conscripted for National Service. **His period in the RAF (1956-58) overlapped with mine in the army (1957-59).** Dave spent most of this in Cyprus. As the service evidently had no use for someone with printing skills, he became a camp guard - a potentially risky job at a time when the island's Greek-speakers were clamouring for union with Greece and terrorism was common. But Cyprus also had its attractive side. Dave and his RAF mates acquired motorcycles and toured the island when opportunity allowed.

On leaving the RAF Dave returned to his earlier work, in this case at a print shop in the **Every Ready plant at Watford**, some distance from home. His transport was his Triumph Thunderbird. **Tragically, returning from work one evening in July 1959 he lost control of the bike and was killed. He was just twenty-three.**

During my teens, and through a school-mate who was to become my life-long friend, John Conroy, I became actively involved in the local church - St John's Kilburn, which has also succumbed to the bulldozer. It was as a direct result of this formative experience in my teens that, on completion of my National Service, **I joined the Church Army** - an organisation engaged in evangelistic and social welfare work. The two-years training provided something of an academic education, which became the springboard to my entering university as a mature student in the following decade. I left the Church Army in 1968.

It was around that time that mum and dad suddenly decided to up sticks and move to **High Littleton**, to where my dad had sentimental attachments - it was the place of his birth and where his eldest brother, Artie, was buried. The decision to move was a spur of the moment thing. Dad had chanced on a Bath newspaper at the hotel in Holborn where he worked, which carried adverts of houses for sale in High Littleton. This prompted a trip to Keynsham to see dad's mother, **Alice**, and a visit to nearby High Littleton to do some house-hunting. My parents quickly decided to buy the terraced cottage in **Chapel Barton**, my mother's life-savings providing the means. The cottage was bought for a cash payment of £2000 with an additional £500 for the building of an extra bedroom. **Mum and dad moved here in 1969.**

Thus this branch of the Smith family had come full circle, returning to its origins. My parents lived out their retirement here, dad dying in 1984 and mum some ten years later in 1993. And I came to live in what had become the family home in 1981 when I returned to the UK from a period at university in Australia.

Acknowledgements

It wouldn't have been possible to compile this family history without the help of others. My cousin Marlene (Tancock) Jones provided the initial stimulus from research she had begun, and another cousin, Robert Derek Smith, asked for my help in researching High Littleton records which were unavailable to him in Plymouth. These records were researched in partnership with my cousin Colin Smith of Whitchurch, Bristol: at the Family Research Centre of the Church of the Latter day Saints, Whitchurch; at the Somerset County Records Office, Taunton; and at the Wiltshire County Records Office, Trowbridge.

I am especially in the debt of the late Michael Browning. His collation and indexing of all relevant parish records for High Littleton was a real labour of love, the considerable fruits of which are now freely available online at www.highlittletonhistory.org.uk

Notes

1. The Smiths of this history are the direct descendents of the Joel Smith referred to here.
2. The standard work on the subject is: C G Down & A J Warrington, *The History of the Somerset Coalfield*. 2005. Radstock Museum.

The recent publication on the history of High Littleton referred to in connection with Florrie Smith is:

Michael Browning & Keith Trivett, *High Littleton & Hallatrow A Pictorial History*. 1999. High Littleton Parish Council.



(l-r) John Hanney, Reuben Tancock, Gladys Tancock, David Smith, Irene Hanney, Terry Smith, Ernest Smith, Alice Smith, Eileen Smith, Colin Smith, (inset) Fred



Ethel, Fred, Irene, Alice, Arthur



Alice, Colin, Irene, John Hanney



Fred, Irene