

REPORT ON THE FINCH FAMILY

This report was written when I was 16 just after the death of my grandfather John Sidney FINCH (1916-1982) to summarise the information that I had gathered about the Finch family of Clapham at that time. It is a hand-written document that I have scanned.

I have since been able to push the line of the Finches further back (see report 2) but it summarises well the information found about those who were known to my grandfather's generation.

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REPORT on the FINCH family

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Most of my information stems from things my grandfather J.S. Finch told me about his immediate family. He spoke of his aunts and uncles - two uncles called Harry and Jack - and four aunts called Harriet, Clara, Diddy and Ginnie. His father's name was George Williams. The wives and husbands were these:-

Harry - Ginnie CROUCH
Jack - ① _____ BARNETT
 ② Ella _____
Harriet - _____ PRITCHARD
Clara - Joe CLAYTON
Diddy - ① Harry DRY
 ② _____ BURKE
 ③ Harry FLYNN
Ginnie - Wally WARD

His mother's name was Sarah Ann GWYHER from Pembroke.

Of his paternal cousins he mentioned three children of Jack's, Jack, George and Alice. He knew of no children of Harry's. He thought that of Clara CLAYTON's children there were two sons and a daughter. The sons both died - one on board HMS Courageous during WW2. He said Diddy had several children - among them were Harry DRY, Bessie BURKE, Tommy FLYNN, Jimmy FLYNN. Harriet had 5 sons and a daughter and one of the son's names was Sidney. Ginnie had four daughters and a son - Ginnie, Nelly, Violet, Dolly, Wally.

He also told me the name of his grandfather. He was called John Sidney and his grandmother was Amy. On reflection he said her maiden name was PEARCE (but this was later found to be wrong) and that they both lived in White Square, Clapham.

With this last piece of information I looked up at County Hall the old registers for the church whose parish boundaries covered White Square. This turned out to be St. James', Clapham.

Although I searched right from 1875 to 1908 through the baptisms I could find only 1 relevant entry:-

24 aug 1898

Elizabeth, d of John and Amy FINCH of 57, Park Place,
dust collector, born 10 aug 1898.

Although the addresses did not tally and no Elizabeth was to be found on the tree, I attributed this entry to our FINCHES because :-

1. Some of the names were nicknames and need not have borne any resemblance to their real names.
2. The original information may have been wrong.
3. It was very unlikely that there was a couple called John and Amy FINCH living in the same area at the same time and
4. My grandfather mentioned his grandfather was a dustman.

However, there were still aunts and uncles missing!

Next I checked the registers of the largest neighboring parish. This was the parish of Holy Trinity, Clapham.

Starting at 1875 and stopping at 1897 I recorded 5 relevant entries: - (Finch abbreviated hereinafter to F).

27 May 1883

Harriet Amy F, d of John and Amy of 32, White Square, drayman.

9 Jan 1887

John Sidney F, s of John and Amy of 29, White Square, brewer.

22 Jul 1888

George William F, s of John and Amy of 29, White Square, brewer's servant.

8 feb 1891

Clara Elizabeth F, d of John and Amy of 29,
White Square, brewer's drayman.

26 feb 1893

Caroline Amy F, d of John and Amy of 29, White
Square, drayman, born 1 feb 1893.

Looking through you can recognise some of the names
my grandfather gave me - Harriet, John (he called Jack),
George William (his father), Clara. The name left over
could still be one of the nicknamed aunts Diddy and
Ginnie - or even one who died young and he knew nothing
about. Mary is not mentioned.

It is interesting to note he was having his children
baptised at Holy Trinity, even though he was living
outside the parish.

I now checked St. James' marriages for 1900 to
1932. Whatever John's reasons for baptising his children
at Holy Trinity, by 1898 he had moved to St. James. So
it is most likely that his children would be married
here. In all I found 5 relevant entries: -

4 oct 1903

Henry F, 23, bachelor, labourer living at 14, Park
Place, s of John F, also labourer.

to

Matilda Jane CROUCH, 24, spinster living at 14, Park
Place, d of William CROUCH, bricklayer's
labourer.

9 mar 1912

Joseph William CLAYTON, 22, bachelor, carman of 35,
White Square, s of William Richard CLAYTON,
painter.

to

Clara Elizabeth F, 22, spinster of same address, d of
John F, drayman.

28 Jul 1917

Henry James DRY, 29, bachelor, vat cleaner, s of
John Daniel DRY (deceased), stoker of 48,
White Square.

to

Elizabeth Clara F, 20, spinster of 35, White Square,
d of John F, stoker

(Witness Amy F)

1 Aug 1925

George Frederick SPURGEON, 26, bachelor, window
cleaner of 10, Ace Court, Clapham, s of
Frederick Coulhier SPURGEON, carman

to

Alice Barnett F, 20, spinster d of John Sidney F,
labourer of 7, White Square.

(Witness John Sidney F)

1 Feb 1931

Harry FLYNN, 35, bachelor, labourer of 37, White
Square, s of Thomas FLYNN, labourer.

to

Elizabeth BURKE, 33, widow of 37, White Square,
d of John F, labourer.

Among these names there are some familiar ones -
Clara Elizabeth F, whom my father said married Joe
ELAYTON. This was absolutely correct; Elizabeth Clara F
and later Elizabeth BURKE. This confirmed the odd baptism
at St. James' as being part of our family and also gave
me at last Diddy's real name - Elizabeth Clara F. But
this also posed a problem. The remaining daughter
unaccounted for is Ginnie. He was quite sure she was the
youngest, but the remaining name, Caroline Amy, was
5 years older than Diddy.

This means either:-

1. There is another as yet undiscovered baptism after 1898 and Caroline Amy died.
2. Ginnie was not baptised and Caroline Amy died.
3. My grandfather was wrong and Ginnie was not the youngest.

The first mention of Harry is in these marriages. According to my grandfather he married Ginnie CROUCH. Here the name is entered as Mahilda Jane CROUCH, so Ginnie was a nickname. Harry's age is here registered as 23, putting his date of birth around 1880.

Also present was the marriage of Alice Barnett F. She is registered as the daughter of John Sidney F. I think she is not the daughter of my grandfather's grandfather, but his uncle of the same name (whom he called Jack). My grandfather did remember that one of Jack's children was called Alice.

Among the certificates belonging to my grandparents is the marriage certificate of George William F and Sarah Ann GUYTHER. It took place in 1909 at Wardsworth Registry Office.

John Sidney F married Alice BARNETT in 1906 somewhere in Wardsworth Registry District. This information was obtained from the indexes of the National Register of Marriages housed at St. Catherine's House, ~~St. Catherine's~~ Aldwych. Unfortunately that is the extent of the available information - to get more you must buy the relevant certificate!

It is possible that of the remaining marriages, one or both is among the registers of Holy Trinity, Clapham but the registers for after 1977 are still being held by the church and can only be viewed by appointment.

The next step was to find the marriage place of John and Amy F. I tried Holy Trinity marriages for 1876 to 1888 and found nothing. Again I had to guess a neighbouring parish and check those registers. Eventually I found them at St. Paul's,

Clopham at the top of Clopham Manor St..

20 Feb 1881

John F. 20, bachelor, brewer of 36, Crescent Rd
s of George F. bootmaker
to
Amy MERRETT, 19, spinster of 29, White Square,
d of Henry MERRETT, bricklayer.

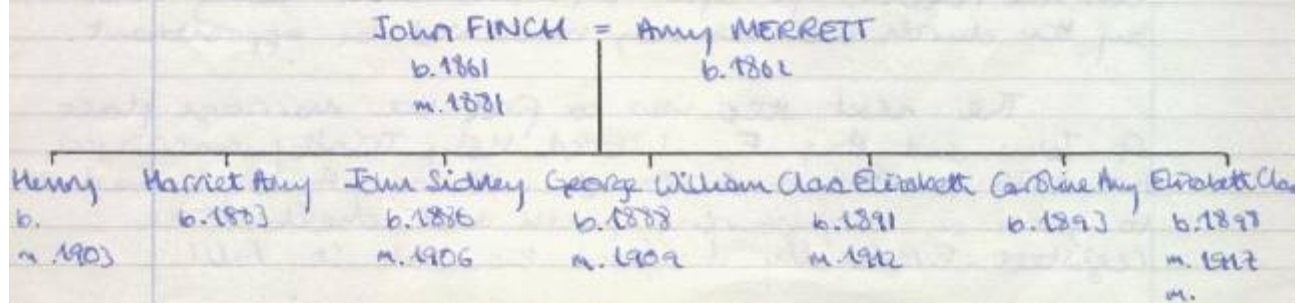
There are a few facts to notice here. The address given by the bride was the address they were to live at for 13 years from ~1884 to ~1897. It is therefore likely they moved in there after one or both of their parents died.

John's father's name is seen here for the first time - George F. He was a bootmaker.

Amy's father's name was Henry MERRETT, so presumably it was after him that my grandfather's uncle Henry was named.

According to Harry's marriage entry, he was born in 1870, suggesting he was illegitimate. I don't think this was so - it was not unheard of to lie about ages on marriage certificates to conform with the Victorian idea that the groom should be ideally a year or two older than the bride. (John himself was really only 19 at his marriage!) I think that Harry's is one such case and that he was only 21 or 20 at the marriage making his birth around 1882. However, without that relevant baptism, I cannot be sure one way or the other.

So the tree stands at this:-



Another interesting marriage entry at St. Paul's is --

16 Jul 1876

William CROUCH, 21, bachelor, gas-fitter of 16, Here Cottage, s of William CROUCH, labourer

to

Elizabeth Clara F, 20, spinster of 36, Crescent Rd., d of George F, bootmaker.

This seems to be a sister of John's from the address and father's name. It is also interesting to note she has the same name as John's daughter who was presumably named after her.

There are now more marriage entries for our FINCHES at St. Paul's.

I have checked the Census Returns for 1881, 71 and 01. The Census recorded names, ages, occupations and places of birth for everyone who was living in a certain house. I checked the relevant entry for 1881 and it read:-

George F, 50, head, shoemaker born Putney, Surrey.

Clara F, 51, w of head, born Algiers, Africa.

Any children have gone by now - this census was taken in April so John had be married two months. I checked the same address for 1871 and then it read:-

George F, 40, head, shoemaker born Putney, Surrey.

Clara F, 41, w of head, Laundress, born Algiers, Africa.

George F, 17, s of head, Labourer, born Clapham Surrey.

Elizabeth F, 14, d of head, born Hull,
Yorkshire.

John F, 9, s of head born Clapham Surrey.

Charles BOOTH, nurse child.

It mentions George F's wife as Clara F born
Algiers, Africa! From the age she was born about
1830. From George's own age he was born about 1831 in
Putney. Apart from John and Elizabeth whom we know
about, there is another son - George born about 1854.
He and John were born in Clapham, but Elizabeth
was born in Hull, Yorkshire! I have written to Hull to
ask if they had ever heard of him George ~~and Mary~~ in
trade circles or other areas, but that came up with
nothing.

I checked the baptisms for Holy Trinity (St. Pauls
was only founded in 1860) for children of George and
Clara. I found two relevant entries:-

27 sep 1863

John, s of George and Mary Clara F of Clapham,
shoemaker, born 17 sep 1861.

27 sep 1863

Albert Henry, s of George and Mary Clara F of
Clapham, shoemaker, born 26 May 1863.

Note that George's wife is called Mary Clara. It is
probable that she did not like the Mary and called
herself Clara and that is how the error occurred on
the census.

The other second son, Albert Henry, was not on the
1871 census and so I checked the National Register
of Deaths housed at St. Alexander House, Kingsway.
In the index for Jan to Mar 1864, Albert Henry F was
registered as dead in the Registration District of

Wandsworth.

I checked the 1861 Census for 36, Crescent Rd., but then they weren't there. However they were just a few doors away at N^o. 44. That entry read:-

John SHARMAN, 64, head, domestic servant and gardener born Ecarston, Suffolk.

Elizabeth SHARMAN, 63, w of head, born Newark upon Trent.

Albert SHARMAN, 14, s of head, scholar, born Clapham Surrey.

George F, 20, head, shoemaker born Putney, Surrey.

Clara F, 31, w of head, born Algiers, British Subject.

George F, 7, scholar born Clapham, Surrey.

Elizabeth F, 4, scholar born Hull, Yorkshire.

Sidney James F, 2, born Clapham, Surrey.

Another child is noted here - Sidney James F who doesn't appear in 1871. He probably died before then. John was not yet born by the census.

Our FINCHES were living with another family called the SHARMANS, who were considerably older than the FINCHES - perhaps they were George's parents in-law.

I checked Holy Trinity for the marriage of George and Mary Clara, but found nothing. But before I could do this I had to find out Mary Clara's maiden name. This is given on the birth certificate of any children. I chose to get Elizabeth Clara F's birth certificate to see if it would give me a clue as to why she was born in Hull.

When it came it gave the mother's maiden name as SHARMAN, and so the family with

with which George was living was most probably his father-in-law's. The father's occupation was given as "Bootmaker (Journeyman)". This meant that he was in the process of serving an apprenticeship and was thus a qualified man. It is likely he was self-employed in later years.

Elizabeth Clara F was born 25 Aug 1856 at an address in East Sulcoates, Hull - which was given as the permanent address of the parents. This means the parents were actually living in Hull at the time of the birth and not whilst en route for Jamaica etc.

With this information I was able to find the marriage entry at the National Register in 1853. Their read: -

4 Jul 1853

George F, 23, bachelor, shoemaker of 7, Union Street, Clapham, s of George F, shoemaker.

Mary Clara SHARMAN, 23, spinster of 16, Union Street Clapham, d of John SHARMAN, gardener.

By the bride's father's name, we are now sure that the John SHARMAN they were living with was indeed George F's father-in-law.

George's father's name was also George and he too was a shoemaker.

I have checked the registers for St. Mary's, Putney looking for George's baptism. It's very heavy going because the registers for 1829 → 30 were soaked by fireman's hoses during a fire in the church in 1874! Most of it is illegible but as far as I can see there is no entry for a George F son of George F, although FINCH is a common name in the registers.