

Samuel Appleby and Emma Lambert (my great-great-grandparents): Samuel was born 30 November 1822, baptised in St Matthew's Church, BG, on 25 December 1922 with siblings Elizabeth and Mary Ann.

He married Emma Lambert, daughter of John Lambert (b.1790) and Amelia Carpenter (b.1797) on 25 December 1841 in St. Martin's in the Fields Church, Westminster. I have a copy of their marriage certificate and it shows that they were both of full age, a bachelor and a spinster. He was an orris weaver living at 5 James Street. She has no occupation and seems to be living at 52 (unclear) Fuller Street. His father is listed as John Appleby, an orris weaver, and her father is listed at John Lambert, a carpenter, They were married by banns and their witnesses were William Keater and Chas Perks (not very clear writing).

The 1841 census (held on the night of 7 June, 1841) lists a Samuel Appleby, aged 15, weaver, Emma Appleby, also 15 (no employment), John Mason, aged 15, chairman, Martha Mason, aged 20 and John Mason, aged 4 months. The writing is very unclear, though it is obvious that the address is Abby Street, St Matthew, BG. Notes of the census show that rounding down of ages was carried out and that, for example, 15-19 year olds were listed as 15. Could these two then be our Samuel and Emma?

The 1851 census shows them living with their children, Emma and Walter, and Samuel's brother, George, an unmarried bootmaker of 18 years, at 13 South Street, St Matthew, BG.

Emma was born on 17 February 1823 and baptised in St Matthew's Church, BG, on 9 March 1823. Samuel died at 201 Victoria Park Road on 27 October 1872 and Emma some 12 years later on 29 November 1904 at 5 Gales Gardens, BG. (see right) Gales Gardens still exists and is very close to Bethnal Green tube station.



Their children were :

John George : no info.

Emma Elizabeth : born 16 Jan 1843, Princess Court, Thyssen (?) Street. Married Alfred Yeomans (born Norfolk) on 4 July 1863 in the Parish Church, BG. Her father is listed at Samuel Appleby, trimming manufacturer, and his as Robert Yeomans, innkeeper. At the time of the marriage, AY was living at 8 Prospects Place. EEA was living at 235 Bethnal Green Road. Witnesses to the marriage were Samuel Appleby and Emily Hay.

Walter : see below.

Lottie : born 1848.

Samuel : born 1849.

Anne : born 1853.

Laura : born 1859.

Alice Amelia : born 10 December 1866 at 1 Georges(?) Place, BG.. I had identified that she married Charles Attwood in 1895. (Margaret Adams has good details of this line, since these are her ancestors.)

Walter Appleby and Sarah Newley (though sometimes this looks like Newbegin) Watts : Walter was born on 3 October 1844, when Samuel and Emma were living at 1 Orange Street, BG. Samuel is listed as a silk weaver, though the writing on the original certificate looks very like milk dealer!!

Walter married Sarah Newley Watts on 20 December 1864. Both of full age, bachelor and spinster. He is listed as a trimmer manufacturer of 235 Bethnal Green Road, she has no occupation and is listed as living at

229 Bethnal Green Road. His father is, of course, Samuel with the usual profession of trimming manufacturer. Sarah's father is George Watts, a cheesemonger. They were married by banns and the witnesses are William Henry Brown, Charlotte Watts and Ann Appleby.

Sarah was the child of George Watts (b.1805, Southwark) and Elizabeth (b.1810, Paddington). She was born in 1845 in Stepney, one of four or five children. The family were living at 229 Bethnal Green Road in 1851, and were still there at the time of Sarah's marriage to Walter.

Sarah and Walter had three children (listed below) but, sadly, on 19 January 1875, aged only 28, Sarah died of phthisis pulmonalis (tuberculosis of the lungs) and the certificate notes that she had been suffering from it for two and a half years. She died at 10 Morpeth Road, where the family had been living. Her brother-in-law, James Brand, registered the death at which he had been present. Sarah is listed as the wife of Walter, trimming manufacturer.

Their children are :

Alice Maude : born 10 August 1865 in BG. Baptised 24 September 1865 at St John's Church, BG. Her godparents were J H Brand, C E Watts and S E Appleby. The family address is given as Approach Road, Victoria Park. Alice died on 27 March 1881 at 1 Chisenhale Road, BG. Cause of death is given as phthisis (18 months). She was 15 years old.

Walter George : born 7 May 1868 at 4 Morpeth Terrace, Hackney.

Ada Florence : born 31 Dec 1870 in Hackney. The family were living at 41 Rutland Road, South Hackney, at the time of the birth. Ada died, aged only 21, on 29 January 1892 at Bankside, Avenue Road, Bournemouth. Cause of death is shown as phthisis pulmonalis (12 months) tubercular. Walter was present at the death of his daughter, though his address is shown as Cordelia Villa, Wood Green, London.

Walter the manufacturer : Walter is always listed as a trimmings manufacturer obviously an extension of all that silk weaving in the family) until late in his life. Then there appear a few random occupations, such as traveller, embroiderer (blouse industry) and, finally, costumier. I think these were simply distortions of what his company was doing at the time. He certainly had what I have always known through the family as 'the tassel factory' all through the early 1900s. A little closer investigation revealed a company called Walter Appleby & Company, Trimmings Manufacturer, listed in telephone directories throughout the early 1900s – it was at 110 Mortimer Road, N Kingsland, (Dalston), East London. The telephone number was Dalston 3552. I don't think it is still there, though the pub next door certainly is. I am hoping to visit the area and do a little exploring soon.

Walter and Agnes Mary Tugby (my great-grandparents) : Walter and Agnes were married by licence on 2 January 1876 at the parish church of South Hackney. He is listed as of full age and she is listed as a minor. She is a spinster and he is, of course, a widower. Again, he is listed as a trimming manufacturer and she has no occupation. His father is the same as on previous documents, hers is called Sharp Tugby and is a licensed victualler. Agnes was born in Whitwick, Leicestershire. She died on 23 May 1885 at 6 Henry Road, East Barnet. The cause of death is given as acute phthisis (four and a half months) and Walter, who is shown as "in attendance at the death" registered the death four days later.

Their children are :

Lottie : born 1878, Hackney.

Harry Frank : born Q4, 1881, BG.

Albert Ernest Lionel (my grandfather) : see below.

Walter and Mary Ann Gibson : Mary Ann was the widow of William Gibson, whom she married on 16 November 1879 in the parish church of St Peter le Peor, London. . William Gibson died (before April 1886) and Walter and Mary Ann were married on 22 April 1886 in the Emmanuel Parish Church of Forest Gate. Walter's father was, of course, listed as Samuel Appleby, trimming manufacturer, and Mary Ann's father was Thomas Odam, licensed victualler.

The only child of Walter and Mary Ann was :

Vincent : born 5 January 1889, address 6 Tamworth Terrace, Forest Gate.. Married Sarah Auger, 3 August 1913. Vincent is listed as a carman and Sarah as a domestic. My father told me that Vincent had a transport business around the meat markets in East London, guessing Smithfield then. Died aged 63 years, Q1, 1953, Brentwood, vol 4a, page 555.

By 1891, the census shows that Mary Ann is not living with the family, though Vincent (aged 2), Ada, Lettie, Harry, Berty, and Walter Jr are. The address show is Cordelia Villa, Beulah Place, Tottenham. Other addresses I have noted for Walter include Rutland Road, Hackney (1871 census), 1 Chisenhale Road, Bow (1881 census), 143 Grove Green Road (1901 census). Oddly, the 1901 census lists Walter as head, though his birth year and consequent age seem to have slipped by some 12 years. I wonder if this is a reflection of the increasing young ages of his wives and an attempt on his part to retain his youth. I must say I sympathise utterly!!!

I found Walter in the 1911 census, living at Nightingale Farm House, Oxford Street, Langdon Hills, Essex. He was listed as 66 years old. The only other residents of the house seemed to be a gardener and his family, presumably the housekeeper and their children. I have his GRO death certificate and he died on 7 December 1921 at 230 High Street, South East Hackney, though his business address and the address of Harry Frank, his son, are given as 110 Mortimer Road, Kingsland. This is the address of Walter's business premises (the "tassel factory"). Walter's cause of death is shown as (1) arteriosclerosis and (2) myocarditis.

Ernest Albert Lionel (my grandfather) : born 22 September 1884 at 36 Anne's Road, South Hackney. He told me lots of stories about his father who was, apparently, a cruel man who drank a lot and beat his children. (I always thought he must have been an awful person until I began this research. After I discovered that two (and, possibly, a third) of his wives died in their twenties of phthisis, and his two daughters died aged 21 and 15, of the same disease, I began to feel rather more sympathetic towards him. Obviously, we can never know the truth now, but Walter's life clearly had a lot of sadness in it.

My grandfather was once told to take a coin from Walter's pocket and go to buy a bottle of whisky. By accident, he took a guinea and, when he realised what he had done, he was too terrified to take it back and admit his mistake. He bought the bottle of whisky and then gave the change (a considerable amount, I believe) to all the poor children in the neighbourhood. His father was too drunk to notice and never found out. Walter had two houses, a townhouse in Dalston, London, for his family, and a second, Nightingale Farm, in Langdon Hills, Essex. The Essex house was where he entertained his (many) mistresses and, in addition, kept eight Borzoi dogs, which he fed on porridge. My grandfather and one of his brothers, Walter Jr, I think, hated their father so much that, when my grandfather was about 15, the two of them loosened the wheel of their father's carriage in the hope that it would crash and he would be killed. Then my grandfather ran away and joined the army – the artillery, I believe. He lost the tops of two fingers in a gun carriage and used to make me laugh with the stumps!! What a weird child I must have been!!

On 25 November 1906, he married Elizabeth Ann Wilkins, a twin and one of five children born in Southwark to Henry Charles Wilkins and Alice Wilkins. They were married by banns in the parish church of St Saviour, Walthamstow. Witnesses Sydney Grove and Rosina Eastwood. Fathers Walter Appleby, trimming manufacturer and Henry Wilkins, painter. Albert and Elizabeth's address at the time of the marriage was 103 Queens Road, Walthamstow.

At the time of the 1911 census, Albert (Berty) and Eliza were living at 5 Alric Avenue, New Malden, Kingston, Surrey, and Albert is listed as a plasterer. Their elder son, Walter, is aged 3.

I have also located the army record of Albert, though have no printed copy of it.

The children of Albert and Elizabeth (or Eliza as I believe she was known) are :

Walter Ernest : born 1908 at 53 Leasowes Road, Leyton. This Walter was my uncle and my father told me about him on a few occasions. He was absolutely mad about football and played whenever he could. One day he was out playing with some friends on wasteland and the ball went under a very low bridge. Walter ran under the bridge to retrieve it and hit his head. After that, he became progressively more and more sick and weak. My father told me that he had contracted some sort of sleeping sickness as a result of the blow to his head. He had worked as a boot and shoe manufacturer but, because he became so ill that, every time he sat down, he fell asleep, he was unable to keep a job. After a time he became so ill that he was put into a care home for geriatrics and

the chronically sick. My father was 15 when Walter died but, all his life, he hated church bells because they reminded him of being taken to visit Walter on Sunday mornings.

Recently, I obtained Walter's death certificate and, it seems, the situation was not exactly as I had been told. Probably, my father was so young that he hadn't really quite understood what was going on. Walter died from myocardial degeneration caused as an after-effect of encephalitis lethargica. There is an enormous amount of information about this condition on the internet, including a distressing video clip of a sufferer which has been posted on YouTube

It seems that there was a worldwide epidemic of encephalitis lethargica (a sort of brain swelling which caused crippling lethargy, coma and finally death) which took place around the time of the First World War, almost coinciding with the flu epidemic at the same time. It was initially thought that the two illnesses were connected, but that was later disproved. There have been many suggestions about what caused the EL, but it remains something of a puzzle even today. The most probable cause seems to stem from a streptococcal infection of the throat – very many people presented with this as a first symptom. Later, the disease progressed into a kind of 'sleepy sickness' (not to be confused with the sleeping sickness which occurs as a result of the bite of the tsetse fly). Sufferers became more and more lethargic until, finally, they passed into a coma and died. For a while, people thought that the disease had simply ceased to exist and it was not seen for many years – at least, people thought it was not seen. However, later studies have revealed that cases have occurred infrequently around the world and, today, there are a number of doctors studying it in the hope of understanding better what it is and how to treat it.

Walter died on 1st March 1937 at the Central Home, Leytonstone, a huge institution which developed out of the workhouse in Crownfields Road, Leytonstone. At the time of his death, there were 1800 inmates in this establishment.

Albert and Bess: When Eliza died in 1928, Albert found himself in the impossible position of trying to look after his son, Stanley, and carry on working to support them both and Walter, who was in the Central Home. After a short time, he met and married Eliza (Bess) Mary Richards (nee Maskell) on 23 January 1931. They were living at 7 Byron Road, Leyton, and he is listed as a house decorator. She had two grown-up sons by a previous relationship (Charles and Horace (Fred) Maskell), and a third son, Frank, by a marriage to a Mr Richards, who had died. Frank and Stan were very close in age and I have understood from my father that a prime motivation for the marriage was to provide a family for the two boys. It was not a happy experience for Stan, as Bess adored Frank and favoured him throughout her life. There were many sad experiences for him with Bess, though he and Frank always remained good friends.

It can't all have been bad though and I think they must have been quite naughty because on, one occasion, Frank and Stan, in possession of an air rifle, were playing target practice in a field near the house. A man was walking away from them in the distance and they bet each other to see who could hit him. My father hit him in the middle of the back and, though there was no serious damage, he certainly shouted very loudly and Fred (Maskell) appeared, confiscated the air rifle and bent it in half. It was never fired again. Fred was obviously no saint either though – he once put a firework in a henhouse and blew all the feathers off the hens. Ah well, something about boys will be boys!!! Certainly, Albert was a fine example to his family. He was using a paraffin paint-stripping lamp to prepare the front of the house for painting and decided to fill it without putting out the flame. Of course, the lamp caught fire, the bottle of paraffin caught fire and Albert, panicking, threw the whole lot into the middle of the road. The bottle smashed and the paraffin ran all over the road where it set fire to the tarmac and the whole surface of the road. I gather it provided some entertainment for the neighbours one Sunday lunchtime.

Stanley William Thomas (my father) : born 15 September 1922, at 53 Leasowes Road. My father's mother died, aged 43, in Whipps Cross Hospital when he was six, of carcinoma of the stomach. Late in his life, he told me how he remembered waiting at the window of neighbour's house for her to come home from work. He adored her and was devastated when she died. He told me once that she used to call him Billy (after William, I suppose). The rest of the world called him Stan.

Stan was a flour miller and he worked for the same company all his life. He began at Chelsea Flour Mills on the Embankment in London in 1930, when he was 18, learning to be a manufacturing chemist and ended up via a series of takeovers and mergers working for Spillers. He used to say he was a flour grader and wore a bowler hat (only those of you old enough to remember the advertisement will have the least idea what he was talking about!!). During the Second World War, he was in the RAF and spent what seems to have been a rather pleasant time in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).

Around that time, he also met my mother, Margaret Muriel Jackson, then a member of the Forestry Commission in the Land Army, stationed in Stafford. They were married on 20 January, 1945, at St Mark's Church, Harlesden – or the tin church as it was better known as a result of heavy bombing during the war. I was born on 12 January rather a long time ago in Hampstead, their only child and, during that time, we lived at 10 Clifford Gardens in north-west London. I remember going to the house of a neighbour in June 1953 to watch the Coronation on a television set – the first one I had ever seen!

In 1957, Stan was promoted and we went to live in Berkshire at Calcot Mill (now closed – not his fault, I hasten to say!!) This was a small mill, the last operational in a chain of mills built by the monks of Reading Abbey. It was a wonderful place to live as the mill and mill house were on an island in a tributary of the River Kennet.

In 1963, Stan was promoted again and we moved to Ware in Hertfordshire, where he managed a much larger mill until his retirement in 1987. Sadly, he was not to live long enough to completely refurbish our garden as he had planned, and he died on 9 September 1990, from carcinoma of the stomach. Margaret continued to live in Ware, though she visited us often in the Peak District, where I now live. She died in June 1997.