

## LONDON BRANCH MEETING REPORT: MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup> 2018

**Our next meeting will be on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2018 when Gill Blanchard will be talking to the group on *Tracing a House History*. Same time, same place – 2 to 4 at the Society of Genealogists**

At our March meeting we had three short talks from members, taking us up and down various family trees and in some very interesting directions indeed – including cricketers, musicians, Jewish immigrants and the cost of church fonts in pre-Reformation Norfolk.

Les CROME began with a talk on the life of Adelaide Louisa CROME (1832-1905), who was the sister-in-law of Les's ancestor, James CROME (1818-1857), being married to his brother, John CROME (circa 1826-1879).

Although Adelaide is not a direct ancestor, her story proved intriguing. She married John Crome in 1853, at St. John's Church, Waterloo (then in Surrey) in 1853, giving her father as Naphthali ISAACS, a dealer in shells. The name Naphthali (or more correctly Naphthali) is certainly "Old Testament" but this and the surname ISAACS did not immediately prove Jewish ancestry.

Les was able to trace Adelaide's immediate ancestry from the IGI (as it then was). She was, in fact, from Norwich, and was baptised at St. Peter Mancroft in 1832, the daughter of Naphthali and Louisa ISAACS. Her father was working as a hatter.

Naphthali had married Louisa Martin ABEL in the same church, by licence, in 1824.

All census returns consistently show Adelaide's birthplace as Norwich. There are inconsistencies with Naphthali's birth date on various censuses and his 1877 death certificate, which suggest he could have been born any time between 1794 and 1801. His wife, Louisa, was probably born in Norwich (1851 census). They had another daughter, Ann Rachel, who was born in London in 1843 and baptised at St. Luke's, Old Street.

In 1851, the ISAACS family were living in Bloomsbury and the whole family have professions linked in to the straw bonnet industry. Les was unable to find any further information on Naphthali and Louisa beyond his death at St. George in the East parish in 1877. This may be

to do with transcription problems as the name is so unusual. In 1851, for instance, he is “Neptholi”.

Adelaide had eight children with her husband, John CROME. The family moved around between various London parishes – Whitechapel, St. Katherine Creechurch and Aldgate (in the City) and then Mile End Old Town, where they were living when John CROME died in 1879.

In 1881, Adelaide was living in Mile End Old Town with her youngest son, Arthur CROME. Six men shared the house as boarders. A few years later, in 1883, Adelaide remarried, at Whitechapel Register Office, to Benjamin Woolf PHILIPS, a widower and “undertaker” by profession, whose father, Moses PHILIPS was a “Hebrew writer”, allowing Les to conclude that Benjamin PHILIPS was Jewish, although probably not Orthodox. Conclusive proof was in Benjamin’s first marriage, to Dinah LEVY in 1848 at the Great Synagogue in the parish of St. James in the City of London.

Benjamin PHILIPS had led a life of varied professions. He was a tailor when he married Dinah in 1848, and “inspector of bills” in 1861 (which was probably of a theatrical nature, as when his son, Samuel, married in 1871, he gave his father’s occupation as “theatrical bill inspector”). In 1881, Benjamin was a “general dealer”, as he was in 1888.

Benjamin PHILIPS died in 1891, in Mile End Old Town, and the widowed Adelaide appears to have made a living taking in boarders. In 1901, she is “working on her own account” with one “boarder” and eight “lodgers” on census day.

Adelaide seems to have been using different names in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1901, on the census, she is R. P. PHILIPS (the second P possibly an error), and on her death certificate and grant of probate in 1905, she is Rebecca Adelaide or Adelaide Rebecca. Les has surmised that Adelaide was aware of her Jewish heritage, even though her father had converted to Christianity and in later life, after her marriage to Benjamin PHILIPS, she had adopted the name Rebecca to acknowledge this.

As a postscript – in 1903, Adelaide’s son, Arthur CROME and his wife Emma, were tried at the Old Bailey for six counts of breaking into shops and stealing clothing and other goods. Their co-defendant on one of the counts was Samuel PHILIPS, son of Benjamin and Dinah, and

Adelaide's stepson. Emma was acquitted, but Arthur CROME and Samuel PHILIPS were found guilty of receiving stolen property and sentenced to hard labour at Wormwood Scrubs Prison, Arthur for two years and Samuel for one year.

Susan PORRETT described how, many years ago, when she was researching her BROCK ancestors of Great Dunham, she found that many parish registers were still being held by the incumbent. At the NRO she was able to search some Archdeacons' Transcripts and found William BROCK and his wife, Ann (who were her 3x great-grandparents) living in Litcham for a few years at the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Ann was described on several of the baptismal entries of the children as "late Pilch, spinster".

Susan set out to discover more about the PILCH family. There was a noted Fuller PILCH (1804-1870), a blacksmith's son from Brisley, about seven miles from Great Dunham, who was a famous cricketer in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, who played for Norfolk and then Kent, and was termed "the straightest Bat in England". Returning to Ann PILCH, although Susan knew her approximate age from her gravestone, she was as yet unable to discover her baptism or the date of her marriage to William BROCK. The absence of the actual registers in the NRO made this difficult. Instead, Susan looked for PILCH wills, and found some early documents for a family in East Dereham, beginning with a Latin document for Robert PILCH in 1452, which mentioned a son, William. Susan visited the church of St. Nicholas in East Dereham, with its "Seven Sacrament Font". Alongside was a copy of the "Costs of the new Funte" account from 1468, where a William PYLCHE was paid *iiiiid* for "*making of a stole for the funte and keveryng of the same*". Other local men mentioned in the document were Thomas PLAFOTE, Robert CRANE (he carried the heavy lime and tiles from Norwich), Ric. WESTHAWE and Will. PLOMER (who was "ledyng" the font). Both the surnames CRANE and PLOMER may be reflections of a family trade. The whole cost of making the new font came to £12 14s. 9d.

The next PILCH will from East Dereham was made by Katherine, a single woman, who left religious bequests, including money for the "clocher" – the free-standing bell-tower – and for the repair of the "revyn bell". Katherine mentions several family members, including a brother, William, whom Susan surmises to be the William PILCH, a

cooper, whose will was proved in 1554, leaving property and lands to his sons William, Robert and Gregory. When his widow, Margaret, died in 1557, she left various coverlets, hangings, pewter-ware and a "best gown" with silver hooks and eyes. Their son, Gregory, a tanner by profession, died in 1572 at Belaugh, near Sparham. His will mentioned his wife, Alice, and six children, all under sixteen.

Susan was unable to take her own research further, until she was contacted by a NFHS member in America, who had employed a professional researcher to explore his PILCH ancestry. This enabled Susan to complete her whole PILCH line as well.

This began with Gregory the tanner and came down via several William PILCHES in Tittleshall, to James PILCH of Longham (1682-1731) and his son, also James, who was only 27 when he died and was buried in Little Fransham in 1752. He left, by his wife, Ann Phyllis DEY, a daughter, Frances, who gave birth to an illegitimate daughter, Ann Phyllis PILCH in Little Fransham in 1775, who, as "Ann PILCH" married William BROCK in 1798. Her full name was only used at her baptism. The name "Ann Phyllis" which occurs occasionally in Norfolk at this time is apparently a corruption of a medieval name, "Amphillis". But although Susan has traced her PILCH ancestry back to Gregory the tanner in East Dereham, she has yet to establish any connection to the cricketer, Fuller PILCH, who started it all!

Glynice SMITH talked to the group about her research into her MINNS ancestry. John MINNS was born about 1801 in Norwich, and his son, Thomas Walter was born in 1821 in Norwich (possibly Old Lakenham). Thomas Walter MINNS married Eliza WALTON in Manea, Cambridgeshire.

Another John MINNS married Elizabeth HILL and had a son, John, born in 1805 in Norwich St. Lawrence. He married Mary Ann BARDETT in November 1828 at Norwich St. Michael at Plea. His brother, Samuel William MINNS, was born in 1813 in the parish of St. Mary Coslany.

In 1841, a John MINNS was the innkeeper of the Queens Arms at 102 Magdalen Street, Norwich. He may have founded the pub, where he was listed as a wine and spirits merchant and grocer. By 1866, a John MINNS is living in a "porter shop" in Magdalen Street, which later

became a pub. In 1873, his nephew, William, took over the licence, followed by his wife, Ann Ellen, in 1894.

Samuel William MINNS married Sarah HARDINGTON and they had at least 10 children, whose musical occupations particularly captivated Glynice.

Elizabeth MINNS (born 1859, in Norwich) was a schoolteacher by 1891, and living with her brother, William, at the Queens Arms. Her brother, Edwin (born 1852, in Norwich) was a drawing master (Prof) in 1881, but by 1901 had become a Teacher of Science and Art.

Henry Jonathan MINNS (born 1847, in Norwich) started out as a lay clerk in Norwich Cathedral in 1871, but by the time of his death in 1880 was a Professor of Music.

George MINNS was born on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1855 in Norwich. By 1861, he was a music student at St. Mary Coslany. He married Anna Maria MARSHALL on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1877 in Norwich, and by 1881, the family were living in Fore Hill, Holy Trinity parish, Ely. George was now a "Teacher of Music". In 1891 he was a Professor of Music, and by 1911, was describing himself as "Retired Lay Clerk (Ely) now engaged as a record searcher and copyist (literature and music)" in Norwich.

A list of composers of music for the organ (at Ely Cathedral) includes a George MINNS, born in 1855 or 1856 in Norwich.

On 16<sup>th</sup> March 1925, George MINNS, now a widower of 79 years, emigrated to America. His Declaration of Intention stated that he was a "musician composer". He had grey hair and a small scar under his chin! Two of his children were already living in America. These were Sidney H. MINNS (born 11<sup>th</sup> November 1884 in Ely) and Constance E. M. MINNS (born 20 March 1883), who was now Constance SHAW. George MINNS died on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1938, in Salt Lake City, Utah.