

Meanwhile, back in Siston.....

On the 15 January 1840, Jane Pillinger's father, Thomas Summerill, a coalminer, aged 77, died at Siston of 'asthma', a catch all description to account for the state of his lungs, choked and diseased after a lifetime of work in the pit. Stephen Pillinger, his wife Jane, with their children Alfred, Hannah, Aaron, Stephen and Jane were living with the in-laws and were still there the next year for the census, with Jane's mother, the widowed Rachel Summerill, as head of the household. Jane was pregnant with our great-grandfather, Thomas, who was born on the 1st December and registered two days after Christmas at Keynsham. I picture Jane walking over to the larger village in the bleak midwinter, perhaps even carrying the baby in the method known in Kingswood as 'the Welsh way', bound closely to her in a long criss-crossed woolen shawl. She made her mark before the registrar.

The family was growing up. Young Alfred, who we last saw at the font, was ten years old, and already 'a working man', a coalminer like his father. Soon his nine year old brother Aaron would join them at the pit.

Braine⁵⁷ gives us a glimpse of boys like Alfred and Aaron who went to work in the mines:

'Boys' tuggers, hods and wickers, dagger like candlesticks, made to stick in the coal, large iron buckets called carts and numerous picks and other instruments..... The tuggers were for lads who were employed at a very tender age, the fathers carrying them sometimes on their backs to the pits, and in many instances where the lads were timid, putting them into sacks, and keeping them thus till they reached the bottom of the shaft. They were then stripped to the waist, shoes and stockings thrown aside and harnessed with a "tugger". This was made of thick rope with a hook at the end. It passed round the loins and between the legs. It was then hooked on to a hod or wicker, a sort of box or basket, and thus equipped, the boy crawling on all fours through a passage extremely narrow, was compelled to pursue his work of fetching coals to the bottom of the pit throughout the whole of the men's turn or day. In going up an incline, the boys undid their tuggers and pushed the hods along with their heads.....'

A shocking accident in 1838 at a coalmine in Huskar, Yorkshire in which twenty seven children, boys and girls, were killed, drew a shocked general public to the plight of similar youngsters throughout the land. National inspections were commissioned to look into the conditions endured by working children in the mines and factories. Locally, in 1841, Elijah Waring was commissioned to report on the boys in the mines in South Gloucestershire and in the following year, the girls in the pin factory.

Waring first examined the tugging method *'which struck me so painfully at first that I was induced to examine closely its effects on the frame, conceiving it to be a barbarous and unnatural mode of applying muscular power, [but] on minute examination, I find the direction of the rope girdle is across the lateral dorsal muscles, passing between the crest of the ilium and the great trochanter, on each side, then descending in front quite clear of the*

⁵⁷ Ibid. History of KW

pubis so as to pass freely between the thighs, thus pressing but slightly on their superior anterior muscles in consequence of the inclined position used in tugging.” In fact, the method was much to be preferred to the shoulder strap tug used in the Forest of Dean, thought Waring, as the latter was much more likely to induce hernia. He examined John Pick, earning 7 shillings a week, “a stout hale lad aged 16 to 17, as to any injury arising from hauling by the tug and girdle forty tubs a day, four bushels each, 40 yards on level ground, unassisted with neither wheels nor plates found no marks of injury says it used to gall him at first over the hips; acknowledges his work to be hard; the men said none but a strong boy could do it.” Boys and men said the method was better than the shoulder strap, and one added “Every country do like his own way best.’

Nevertheless, Waring said ‘*On the same principle which studies the comfort of a horse by constructing his collar of smooth and elastic materials it would appear at once benevolent and easy to substitute some less harsh material for the hard twisted rope used by these laborious boys.*’

It is likely that Stephen and Jane’s boys ‘wrought’ at the Warmley works of Davidson and Waters, which employed 60 hands, 11 under 13 and 10 from 13 to 18, with the youngest aged nine, (perhaps our Aaron?). Waring interviewed Thomas Waters, who told him the boys were paid between 2s 6d and 10 shillings a week. The shafts were 80 and 84 fathoms deep, the deepest for the pumping engine, 50 horse power. The winding engine was 22 horse-power, using a plaited rope and running stage. The ventilation was stated to be good except when the wind set against the pit’s mouth when the foul air was troublesome. There had been no accident from gas, but two years ago a man had been killed when asleep out of the draught in an old topping ‘*where he should not have gone*’ and just afterwards, another died in a roof fall. A man’s finger had been cut off by a sharp stone ten weeks ago. The seam worked was 2 foot 2 inches, with a generally good roof and part of the workings 40 yards wide. Wages were paid on Saturday in money only. (The last was certainly a good thing: in some places, though not as far as was reported in Kingswood, wages were paid in tokens which had to be spent in shops owned by the pit or factory proprietors!)

Mr. Waters considered the colliers, and the population generally, to be more civilized than they were 30 years ago, but with ‘*plenty of room for improvement still*’. There was a National School at Siston, a mile from the pit, with two Sunday Schools also within that distance. The boys in his pit were all carters, and were occasionally employed taking in pit timber. He thought most could read, but feared very few attended a place of worship. He knew of only one boy who did not have a change of clothes for Sunday. That boy had a sottish father and a badly managing mother. Pit boys were generally more immoral than agricultural workers and their countenances rarely looked as healthy, although they were uncommonly hearty feeders and lived as long as average. Some of the old colliers used to blasting with gunpowder were asthmatic.

After Waters’ testimony, Waring hastened to interview the boy without a change of clothes. His name was John Harvey, who was a carter at Crown pit. He said he was thirteen but

‘who looks no more than 9 or 10: the men say they know him to be the age he states: draws coal with another boy, about 2 cwt. at a time: eight score yards on rails, with slides

underneath the cart. The ground, all level is pretty dry except in a few hollow places. Does not catch cold or lose his appetite: earns sixpence a day: works from 6 o'clock to two, or thereaway: gets potatoes and butter, or potatoes fried with bacon when he goes home from the pit: gets whatever he can catch: is always very hungry after work: seldom has as much as he could eat. Does not go to Sunday School because he has no clothes besides what he works in: cannot read: never had a pair of shoes or stockings in his life: has seven brothers and sisters: one brother earns 2s 6d in the same pit with himself: thinks his father earns 12s a week in the Spelter works: sometimes works at night for the sake of getting an extra sixpence: goes down at 10, and up at six in the morning.'

Mr. Waters said that he had been told that young Harvey had actually worked in the pit three days without food, but that he heard of it too late to do anything about it. (He did not say whether he had felt disposed to do anything since!)

Waring then interviewed George Chambers, aged 11, a boy of a healthy appearance who was Harvey's carting partner, and taller by a head, though two years younger. He went to the Sunday School and had a mother who took good care of him. Another carter, Charles Osborne was 16, and had worked at the pit since he was ten. He complained of severe headaches, and was 'of sickly complexion and countenance, but well grown. The work evidently does not suit his powers.' Likewise Abraham Brain, aged 10 who said "*I do push with another boy*" was paid only threepence a day: 'he has no shoes; complains of tightness in the chest: looks delicate.' Samuel Britton aged 18 was a robust lad with a healthy countenance: he had worked 11 years and now earned 9 shillings a week; could stand upright in most parts of the pit, but on the deficit side, he could not read and did not go to Sunday School.

Great things were expected of the Sunday Schools of which there were many in the district, the largest being at Whitfield's Tabernacle but when Waring visited there were five hundred assembled there, but only forty nine were colliers aged between eight and eighteen years of age. Waring noted the contrast between those who attended and those whose '*stolid countenances betrayed their entire lack of instruction*', but it was not as easy as all that to send your children to school. Daniel Poole, a 50 year old collier who was learning to read at the Moravian Sunday School had nine children and said he would send all of them to school on Sundays if they had decent clothes. He found it hard to maintain so many, provisions being so dear. Perhaps his idea was to learn himself and then pass on his knowledge to the children? Daniel thought the colliers were better men now than they used to be, an opinion shared by Waring who said the improvements were striking:

'The colliers were formerly the terror of the neighbourhood and for gross ignorance, rudeness and irreligion were without parallel in the Christian community. Those who knew the country 40 years ago, and I count myself among that number, remember the frequent scenes and the continual dread of outrages on property and public peace which then prevailed. You could not ride through some of the villages and hamlets without being insulted by the boys who would throw stones at both horse and rider without provocation. "The Kingswood Colliers" was then a phrase that conveyed every idea offensive to civilization, order and religion. [Now] there is as much decorum in the manner of the population as in the generality of rural districts. The numerous places of worship are well

attended, many of the colliers being members of religious societies. Any open desecration of the Sabbath is reproached even among the non-professing portion of the community who are of sober habits.'

Waring remained concerned however that many of the children received no schooling whatever, and what instruction there was arrested at too early an age, but concluded the poverty of the parents was such that they had no option but to send their sons into the pit, (the youngest collier named in the report was seven years old), for the sake of their meagre wages.

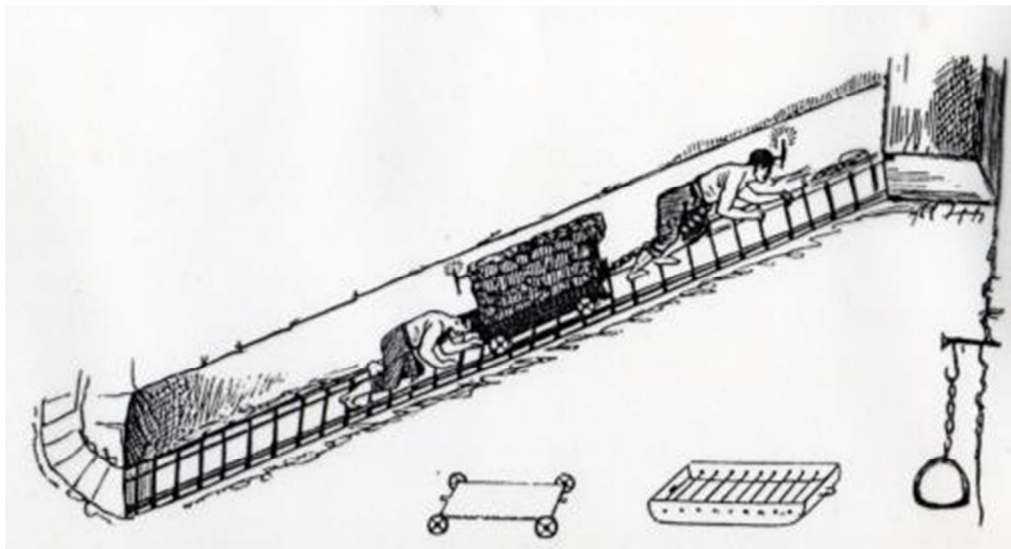
In 1841, Robert Pillinger, old John's son by his second wife Silvia, was living at Oldland Common, with his wife Mary and a lodger, an ag. lab, George Franklin. On the 14th December 1843, they had fallen on the parish once more and as usual were sent to Yatton Keynell for relief. Now, because 'the Act' had come into force, rather than being paid a few shillings, perhaps they had been obliged to enter the Workhouse at Chippenham. Unlikely as it may seem, perhaps George Franklin was able to help, for by 1851 when the next census was taken, they were back at Oldland with good old George, the lodger, still with them. Two others had joined the family group by this time, John Merrett, aged 54, a hatter from Winterbourne and a two year old girl, shown as Elizabeth Tallents, though her name was Tarrant. Robert and Mary never had children of their own and I would like to think that this little foster child was some consolation to Mary.

On the 1 November, 1858, Robert had been at work as usual but during the night he was kept awake by severe pains in his head. Mary got up, *'and struck a light several times. By the morning though, he seemed a little better, and took a bit of breakfast, gruel or porridge. He improved still further in the next couple of hours, and sent her to fetch a pint and a half of beer and some cheese.'* She went out, leaving him sitting in a chair beside the fire while she went to the 'Bottle & Jug' at the nearby pub, the Union Inn, where she bought the ale and a bit of cheese. She was only gone a few minutes but when she got back she found her husband with his head leaning back over the chair, dead. She called out in distress and Job and Sarah Fudge who lived next door came round. Somebody went for the local Bobby, Sergeant Thomas Clarke, who, because of the death was so sudden, informed the Coroner. An inquest, conveniently held in the bar of 'The Union', where Thomas Ashley was landlord, heard evidence from Mary, the Fudges and the Police Sergeant. Mary said Robert had been subject to headaches for a few years. The verdict was 'Death caused by Visitation of God'.⁵⁸

In 1861, the little girl, Elizabeth Tarrant, now a twelve year old schoolgirl was still living with Mary at Oldland Common. A whole tribe of Tarrants were living next door too: the youngster must have belonged to them in some way. Elizabeth had gone by 1871, though Caroline, the mother of 'the Tarrants next door', who was still at the same address, had

⁵⁸ GRO CO1/N/4/D/9. (I cannot help but compare Robert's death with Colin's, who suffered a brain haemorrhage in 2014.)

been widowed and remarried. Her new husband Thomas Goodall was 28 to her 44, only a few years older than her three grown up sons who were living with her. Mary Pillinger had been taken in by an old couple William and Eliza Franklin, obviously relatives of George, who was by then himself an inmate of Keynsham Workhouse where Mary would soon join him. At least the nonsense of her being 'settled' at Yatton Keynell had at last been abandoned. George Franklin died aged 81 in 1873 and Mary Pillinger in 1879 aged 88.



Young coalminers working by candlelight hauling by guss and crook.

(Drawn from life by a local miner, the pseudonymous "Jonathan Presto".)

The young coalminer, Alfred Pillinger survived the rigours of his childhood and on the 20 October 1850, aged 20, was the first of Stephen and Jane's progeny to marry. His bride was Ann Hale, a nineteen year old servant, the daughter of William Hale, a furrier, in the hatmaking trade.

In the census of 30 March 1851, Alfred, a 'married man' was staying with his parents at Kingswood Hill; his wife Ann, the mother of a month old baby girl, Elizabeth, had gone home to her Mum, Martha Hale, at New Cheltenham.

Alfred and Ann went on to have another eight children at Made for Ever. The baby Elizabeth grew up and married Aaron Brain at Bitton in 1871. The others were Aaron, born 1852, Mary Ann, 1854 (who married Samuel Rogers at St P & J in 1874), Hester, 1856, (who married Joseph Fry also at P & J. in 1875), Ellen, 1858, (who married Joseph Haydon at Mangotsfield, 1881), Harriet, 1860, (married William Silverthorne at Mangotsfield, 1882), Emily born 1862, (married William Lowden at Bitton, 1880), Henry born in 1864 and Fred in 1867.

In 1881, Harriet, aged 21, a boot fitter, Henry, 18 and Fred, 15, both shoemakers were all still living at home with their mother and father, Alfred aged 50, 'coalminer, unemployed'. I wonder if he had suffered an accident at the pit? By 1891, all the children had left home, though Fred and his wife Emily Iles were living next door. Alfred was now back in work, as a labourer.



Fred and Emily had one son and two daughters. He reversed the usual trend by going from shoemaker to coalminer and in 1914 pleaded guilty to being in Hanham Pit with a match in his pocket, contrary to regulations. He was bound over for six months, plus costs.⁵⁹

The Crown & Cushion complete with bombsite across the road.

His son, Frederick junior who married Alice Passmore had seven children, at least two of whom, Frederick III and Marion migrated to Canada. Fred senior was landlord of the Crown & Cushion pub in Milk Street, Bristol, 1938-44. In 1941 he was twice summonsed for selling intoxicating liquors outside the licensing hours, both cases dismissed, though he was still landed

with costs of 20 shillings.⁶⁰ With the City laid waste between November 1940 and April 1941 by Nazi bombs, you would have thought the authorities would have had more to think about. The pub was demolished in 1958.

Another of Fred's children, Leonard, who died in February 1997 was well known in 'media circles'. He sold papers in Bristol and merited an obituary write-up in the local press:

'PAPER SELLER DIES. Popular former Evening Post seller Len Pillinger has died. Mr Pillinger, who was 74, had a stand at Baldwin Street for many years.

*'Mr Pillinger died last Friday at Broomhill People's Home in Eastwood Crescent. He is survived by four sisters: Gwen, Reen, Floss and Marion. His sister Gwen Sollis of Kingswood said "He was very well known and he made many friends from his newspaper stand. He always enjoyed his job. He was a member of the social group 600 Club and worked despite a disability. Angling was his favourite hobby and he rarely missed an opportunity to cast his rod.'*⁶¹

Ann Pillinger, Alfred's wife, died aged 70 in 1900, and left a will with probate granted to her son Aaron, in 1909.

In 1911, the widowed Alfred aged 80, 'old age pensioner' (having benefitted from the Act of 1908 when old age pensions were paid for the first time) was living with his daughter

⁵⁹ WDP, 3 & 10.4.1914

⁶⁰ Ibid, 23.4. & 21.10.1941

⁶¹ BEP 14.2.1997

Harriet Silverthorne, son-in-law William, a boot manufacturer (and employer), and grandson Herbert, 23, at Silverdale House, Honey Hill, Kingswood.

Harriet Silverthorne's funeral in January 1920 took place at Whitfield's Tabernacle. Her brothers Aaron, Henry and Fred attended, along with her brothers in law, Aaron Brain and Joseph Fry. Curiously, in Kingswood, it was not generally done for women to attend funerals, even if the deceased was female! Alfred apparently did not attend his daughter's departure as he was 89, and moreover was in Keynsham Workhouse. 'The money' left by his wife Ann in the charge of their son Aaron for the upkeep of his father was causing friction, not least due to Alfred's longevity and there was an episode that July when Aaron, aged 69, of Soundwell Rd, was sent a summons by the Keynsham Board of Guardians

*'to contribute towards the upkeep of his father, Alfred Pillinger, 89, out of money deposited in his name at Stuckey's Bank, Kingswood. Out of £180 in the bank for the benefit of his father, £50 remained. The Guardians referred to an agreement of May 7, 1909 to pay his father 7 shillings a week. The cost of maintaining the older man in the Infirmary was approximately 15 shillings a week. The Defendant, Aaron, occasionally lost his sight, had a wife, and was dependent on an income of 22 shillings brought into the home by his two daughters on which they all lived. Dr Perrett stated that Aaron was suffering from cardiac disease and was at present in Bristol General Hospital. The Bench made an order for 4 shillings a week.'*⁶²

Alfred died the following 3rd May, aged 90. A terse announcement with no hint of regret stated that the cortege would be leaving Silverdale House, for Wesleyan Chapel at 3 p.m. on the following Saturday.⁶³

Aaron, who had been a coalminer at Soundwell Pit when he married Harriet Bryant at St P & J, in 1874, was afterwards a shopkeeper. Their children were Alfred Henry, Lawson James, Graham Isaac, Amos, Onslow, Edna Maud, Marie, Olive, Harry and Idris.

His brother, Amos, born in 1880 joined the Gloucestershire Regiment in 1900 at the age of 19 years and three months for six years. With his service completed, he was back home at 49 Soundwell Road by 1911, working as an insurance agent. As a Reservist, he was called up on the outbreak of War in August 1914, and drafted into the 8th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment, service no. 5789, where he was swiftly promoted to sergeant. He went to France with the Regiment and was on the Somme by 1 July 1916. When the terrible order to 'go over the top' was given, he was believed killed seven days later on 8th July.

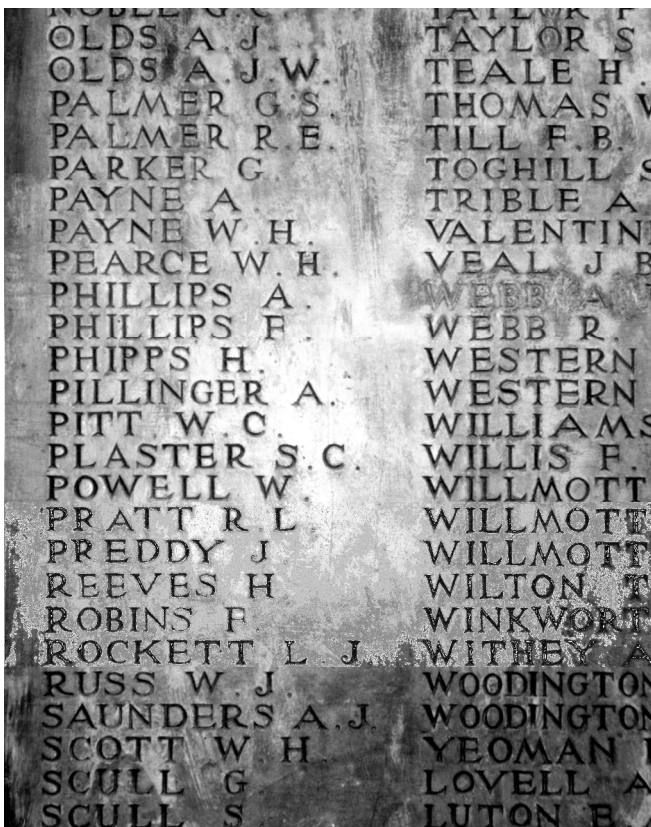
⁶² WDP 3.7.1920

⁶³ WDP 6.5.1921



Amos and his wife Mabel Bryant (married 1911)

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Amos is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial (left) among more than 72,000 missing of the Somme who have no known graves. He is also remembered on the War Memorials at Holy Trinity Church, Kingswood and at the now defunct (and inaccessible) Wesleyan Chapel. Amos and his wife, nee Mabel Bryant, and had one son, Donald, born in 1912.



Amos's son, Donald Pillinger

Donald married Eileen Harris in 1946 and they had two children, Anne, 1949 and Stephen, born ten years later. Stephen had two daughters, Michelle and Sarah, and Anne three daughter and two sons, the youngest of whom, Tim, born in 1988, took the name Pillinger. A letter from Anne to Colin was found amongst his effects after he died and was passed on to me by Judith, his widow. In the letter, Anne related how she worked in a shop in Kingswood where she got to know our Dad, Jack, who told her that Amos was his cousin. Jack was not known for going shopping, and it could

only mean one thing. "A betting shop?" I asked Anne later. Of course it was. I am grateful to

Anne for the pictures of her grandparents and her father. I was glad to know that Colin replied.

Serial No. 4444... Army Form B. 2075
 Certificate is to be issued without any alterations in the manuscript

Discharge of Non-Combatant Rank...
 Name... Pillinger...
 Unit and Regiment of Corps... Royal Army Veterinary Corps
 Regiment of Corps to which first posted... Royal Army Veterinary Corps
 Specialist Qualifications (Military)...
 Date of discharge... 21st April 1919
 Signature and Rank...
 Officer in Charge...
 Description of the above-named soldier when he left the Colours...
 Year of Birth...
 Height...
 Complexion...
 Eyes...
 Hair...
 (Attest) W. Woodlurch, Major, R.A.V.C., D.D.C.I.

Lawson James Pillinger, a housepainter of 47 Soundwell Road, married Hannah Ford in 1897 and had three sons and two daughters. He died aged 39, on 26th August 1915 at Bristol Royal Infirmary 'after much suffering patiently borne.'⁶⁴

I am frequently amazed by the trivia published in local newspapers in Victorian times. In 1894, Onslow Pillinger, 13, was accused along with Albert Golding and Arthur Gingell, both 12, with stealing sweets from off a barrow at Two Mile Hill. The prosecutor, one Frederick Skuse, had

evidently calmed down by the time the matter reached Lawford's Gate Petty Sessions, and withdrew the charge. The boys promised not to offend again and the case was dismissed.⁶⁵

Onslow Pillinger, known by his second name 'Frank' was a painter, living at 49 Soundwell Road, when he married Edith Gifford, a tailoress, at St Michael's Two Mile Hill on the 29th June 1912.

In May 1916 conscription was extended to include married men. On the 31 May 1916, Onslow/Frank enlisted at Woolwich as a private in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps. He was born in 1882, was 5' 3" tall, with a fair complexion, brown hair and eyes. In July he would have heard the tragic news of his brother's death in France. He served as a horse keeper in Salonika and survived the war, being invalided out of the army with pneumonia after two years and 90 days.

He and Edith had three daughters, the youngest being Doreen Grace, the mother of Tony Thompson of Worcestershire with whom I corresponded for some years and who helped me with Aaron the musician's family. Onslow died in 1948 of lung cancer and brain tumour and was buried at Greenbank Cemetery, Bristol.

Henry (Harry) Pillinger, was a labourer in an ochre mine (the same Ochre Works at Wick, where infamously, I worked for two days when I left school in 1953!) He lived at Siston Common with his wife Ruth Caroline Counsell and their seven children: James Henry, 1884-1941, Alice bc1885 married Alfred Pennal, 1912, Annie, bc1888, married Ernest Roberts, Harriet, bc1891 married Gilbert Wilmot, William, bc1895, (little Willie, otherwise unknown appears in the punishment book of High Street School⁶⁶ on 10th October 1906: *'Willie Pillinger, with Chas Gibbs and Percy Haskins, clinging to the backs of tramcars again yesterday. Two strokes on the hand.'*

Herbert, 1899-1967 and Evelyn May, who married Harold Rogers, 1928. Ruth Pillinger died in 1911. Harry married his second wife Edith Maria Mealing in 1915 and had three more children, Grace, Vera and Roy.

There are a few snapshots of Henry and Ruth's children:

James Henry married Alma Rose Collins and had Annie Ruth, 1912-31, Lily (Lilian) E. 1914, James, 1911, married Vera Close and had Brian, 1939 (died 2017) and Colin, 1943, (contemporary and namesake of CTP!) Kathleen, 1920, married Edward Thompson, 1941 and Elsie May, married Percy Isaacs. Annie sadly died in 1931 of meningitis. She was courting a young man called Jack Busley who died of the same infection the following month. They were buried side by side at Holy Trinity Kingswood.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 14.12.1894

⁶⁶ Also CTP's junior school in 1951



Annie Pillinger with Jack and other members of the Busley family.⁶⁷

Annie's sister Lilian, in her Civil Defence Uniform, WW2 (?with her husband Ron Hawkins?)



I was told that the dreaded Annie, born in 1888, charged her brother Herbert Pillinger for his board and lodging when he came home on leave from the war!

⁶⁷ Info from Jim Cotterell whose mother was Jack Busley's sister



I was sent this information by Doug Crew, who told me "My Great uncle, Ernest Roberts (b 1885) married Annie Pillinger (b 25.8.1888) in Kingswood around Sept 1907. Does this Annie feature in your family tree?"



Ethel Roberts, Annie Pillinger's daughter

Herbert Pillinger, born 26 May 1899, the son of Harry and Ruth (a grandson of Alfred and Ann), had a remarkable army career. He enlisted in the Royal Engineers, Field Company, South Midland Division, Territorial Army at Bristol on 8 September 1914 during the enthusiastic rush of recruits in the first month of the War. He was accepted as being eighteen, when in fact he was aged 15 years and 3 months. After four months training he embarked for France on the 21st December, served at Ypres in 1915 and on the Somme in 1916 and 1918. He survived the war, and still not twenty years old, was sent to Russia

aboard the SS *Czarita* on the 14th May 1919 where he served at Archangel and Murmansk. Army life agreed with him and he signed on as a regular soldier, transferring to the Royal Corps of Signals in 1921. From 1925 to 1933, he was with his regiment in India, serving at Karachi, Quetta and the North West Frontier. He was demobbed in 1938 with the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major, and spent a year in civilian employment at Northern Command HQ. When war broke out again in September 1939, he was commissioned Major, served in Northern Europe in 1940, and took part in the D-Day landings in June 1944. His promotion to Captain (Quartermaster) Army number 106161 was announced in the London Gazette 8th June 1944. He subsequently fought with the 11th Armoured Division Signals from Normandy to Schleswig. In 1947, as Major Herbert Pillinger, MBE, MSM, he was made recruiting officer for Lincolnshire, a post which he held until his death in 1957. He married Lydia Caddy at Colchester in 1923, and they had one son, George Dennis, who was born in 1924.

Aaron's wife Harriet died on the 12th October 1935. Her funeral, like that of Harriet Silverthorne, her sister in law, was attended by a crowd of male mourners, for the same reason as before. Clearly her brother George Bryant was a person of note whose presence relegated her widower to the sidelines:

'Mrs. H. Pillinger, 85, of Soundwell Road, Kingswood, sister of George Bryant, of Zion Church was buried at Wesleyan Chapel. She was for sixty years a worker at Wesleyan. Mourners were A. Pillinger, widower, E., O., G. & H. Pillinger, sons, C. Ford, A. Cane, V. Stone, sons in law; H. Ford, R., D., and A. Pillinger, grandsons.'

Aaron of 39 Soundwell Road died on 25th October 1936, 'aged 84' and was buried at Wesleyan graveyard alongside his wife. His will, with probate granted to his son Graham Isaac, general dealer, amounted to £202.19s. 7d.

The Railway ran through the middle of his House

*The railroad comes through the middle of the house
The railroad comes through the middle of the house
The trains all come through the middle of the house
Since the company bought the land.*

*They let us live in the front of the house
They let us live in the back
But there ain't no living in the middle of the house
'Cause that's the railroad track.*

Back we go to November 1846. Since Thomas came into the world in 1841, two more children had been added to Stephen and Jane Pillinger's brood, John, in 1844 and Sarah, in 1846. At the time they were still living with Rachel, Jane's mother in Siston. The village was abuzz with rumours. Strangers in frock coats had been seen about asking questions, looking through spyglasses and taking notes. It was '*something to do with the Railway*' they heard.

Then it was official. A branch line of the Midland Railway, Mangotsfield to Bath was proposed

*.....'diverging from the said intended railway in the said parish of Siston near to a certain farmhouse there, belonging to Thomas Pexton Peterson and now or late in the occupation of Stephen Pillinger.....'*⁶⁸

.....and the Pillinger/Summerill household was in the way of it.....

Just imagine the worry of it all. I am sure Rachel said *"Where shall us go?"* and *"that'll be the death of I."* And so it was. Three months later, on the 21 February 1847, she was dead of phthisis, that is TB, aged 76. As the informant on the certificate was given as John Stone, of Siston Common, 'present at the death', Stephen with his wife and children may have already decamped for Kingswood Hill as the cottage where they had all lived must have been demolished in the cause of progress. Rachel was buried at Siston churchyard with her husband Thomas.

In 1851 the census man called on the family at Kingswood Hill and listed them as Stephen Pillinger, 43, coalminer, Jane, his wife, 42, with their sons and daughters Alfred, 20, coalminer, Hannah, 19, fur cutter, Stephen, 14, coalminer, and the scholars, Jane, 12, Thomas, 10, John, 7, Sarah Ann, 5 and a new child, Ann, 3, all of them apart from Stephen, the father, stated as born variously at Bitton or Siston.

"Place of Birth?" enquired the official. Stephen scratched his head and looked vacant.

"Dunno....." he said at last.

The Civil Servant had many doors to knock and no time for such nonsense.

'N.K.' he wrote in his book. *Not known.*

The Search for Stephen Pillinger

So far I have narrated the story of the family chronologically from the earliest known facts. When doing the actual research of course, I went in the opposite direction attempting to work backwards from the known to the unknown in reasoned steps. It was not always possible, for I had to jump about a bit, family history being like a jigsaw puzzle in which many of the pieces are lost, mislaid or in different rooms. Small bits of information came to light in isolation, metaphorically a fragment of sky, the leaves of a tree or a bit of the lady's dress: they had to be stored away until they could be joined with each other and placed in the frame of the straight bits. Using often tiny clues, I would try out theories, and my mathematical brother would accuse me of flights of fancy and illogical conclusions. I would quote Sherlock Holmes: *"When you have eliminated the impossible whatever remains, however improbable must be the truth."* He was very rude about this theory. Colin did not do 'impossible'.

⁶⁸ BM 14.11.1846

The point in the narrative where Stephen dropped his bombshell and denied knowing where he was born is the ideal place to pause and describe the search which joined Stephen to the rest of his family; the lapses of time between effort and fulfilment, the disappointments and the patience required.

I first 'met' Stephen in the grave registers of the Wesleyan Chapel, built in the Victorian era by Samuel Budgett, the merchant, Kingswood's admired 'self-made man', the brother of Henry Hill Budgett who had so movingly described the plight of the poor in the cholera years.

The entry was brief: 'Stephen Pillinger, Blackhorse Road, Kingswood, aged 88 years; date of burial 21 February 1899.'

I did not know then that he was my great, great grandfather, so I started with my great-grandfather, Thomas, who died, said Dad *"about the time of the sinking of the Titanic. Or was it the Lusitania?"* It turned out to be the second of the two, the burial also at Wesleyan: 'Thomas Pillinger, Counterpool Lane, 12th July 1915, aged 72 years.'

Dad was 13 when his grandfather died. He said Tom had a 'gammy' foot. He needed somebody to run his errands. *"Ee 'ould get I to run a mile for an 'a'penny and a piece of cake."*

Thomas was married on the 30 November 1868 at St Mary's, Bitton. The records at that time were in the church, in that same turret room at the top of a winding staircase where, as described, I first opened the package with the 'settlements'. The registers and other papers were in brown paper parcels and reeked with damp.

The marriage line stated: 'Thomas Simeon Pillinger, bachelor, shoemaker, father, Stephen Pillinger, furrier, and Lavinia Fray, spinster, dressmaker, father Henry Fray, labourer.'

I was pleased that Thomas could sign his name, which he wrote as 'Thomas Simman' but was otherwise shocked that Lavinia marked with a cross.

So now I could compile a rudimentary family tree, working backwards:

Me & my brother Colin.

Our Dad & Mum, Jack and Flo.

Grandfather Albert and grandmother Hester.

Great grandfather Thomas and great grandmother Lavinia.

Great great grandfather Stephen.

The furrier puzzled me. I knew nothing at all about the hatmaking trade. I scratched it out, and wrote farrier, imagining something to do with shoeing horses, which I presumed ruled the roads of Kingswood at the time.

I made more appointments to visit the draughty turret and uncovered more revelations. The two marriages of John Pillinger in 1794 and 1805 from which I assumed Stephen to have

been an offspring of the second marriage and therefore born about 1811, if his age at death as quoted by the Wesleyan Chapel was correct. But I found no christenings. Colin had to go up to London about this time, and said he would search at the Public Record Office for me. He discovered the baptisms of John and Anne's children, Evangelist John in 1806, Aaron and Harriet in 1816 at Whitfield Tabernacle. No Stephen.

I went to see Great-Aunt Flo, Albert, my grandfather's sister. Why she was called Flo, is an oddity, as her given name was Elizabeth. At the time she was almost ninety years old. Conversation with her was a tad trying, not because of her great age, but because she was a keen Jehovah's Witness, and would frequently cry out, triumphantly anticipating the imminent end of the world:

"We'm living in terrible times!"

Answers to my questions would be punctuated with Biblical texts, quoting appropriate chapter and verse:

"And the children of the Israel enquired of the Lord! – Judges 20, 27." she was liable to say, or

"He turneth wise men backward and maketh their knowledge foolish! – Isaiah 44, 25."

She spoke enthusiastically of her ancestors because she would be meeting them all again soon, and would be able to acquaint them with *"the truth"*, for as she told me,

"They died in higgorance!"

I am afraid her high hopes of recruiting me were not realised.

Stephen, Flo said, had built houses in Blackhorse Road. Was he then a builder as well as a farrier? No not a farrier, she was certain. A furrier: hats. But she was more interested in the houses which were only one storey high,

"a lot of chaps 'ould get together, and if you could get a roof on before sunset you could claim your rights to 'em."

She recalled Stephen saying to her father Thomas,

"If I'd a-had my way over again, Tom, I've done more for thee, and not so much for our John," and crying as he said it. (John was Tom's brother, and rather more successful.)

She remembered her sisters, Kate and Vinny, and told me she had *"our Kate's"* doll somewhere upstairs, but never showed it to me. She spoke of her mother's father, Henry Fray, and her old eyes filled with tears when she said, shockingly, that he had cut his throat when he thought *"they were going to put him in the workhouse."* I did not pursue this upsetting topic further, and to tell the truth, I wondered if it was true; Dad the fount of all knowledge, when I asked him later, had never heard about it. Flo generously gave me

photographs of Henry⁶⁹ and of Stephen, her other grandfather. She was in it, along with Vinny, her sister.

Stephen sits, squinting slightly, a stick held between his knees, trousers *'square rig'*; fore and aft creases didn't come in before the reign of Edward VII – his black frock coat is open, and there is a muffler round his neck. He is clean shaven apart from the merest wispy growth of beard. The second joint of his index finger on his left hand appears to be missing or even bent back out of sight. I wonder if this was a case of Dupuytren's Contracture which I have inherited.

"He was ninety-odd," said Flo. Was he born earlier than I had thought? His young granddaughters standing beside him are all in white, even their shoes and stockings. The elegant Vinny, who Flo said died at the age of 25, and Flo herself, an elaborately dressed little baggage, staring apprehensively at the camera, aged about seven. Flo said her mother, Lavinia, made all their clothes. It somehow didn't fit with her secondary occupation of slaughter woman. Dad was wont to say of Lavinia, *"she was the only 'oman I knew as could kill a pig."* There again, people had to turn their hands to everything.

I could not have done without Flo's information, and the photos of her two great-grandfathers were pure gold. As children, Colin and I were *'frightened to death'* of her. When she came to our house, we would hide under the table.

"Where's our Jack?" she would ask. Mum's response that he was outside gardening would bring on one of her lesser outbursts.

"Fighting the thistles and the thorns!" she would acclaim triumphantly, which was a lot better than talking about the End of the World.

Our acquaintance in adulthood ended abruptly when she complained furiously to Dad that I had sent her a rude greetings card from Ilfracombe. She refused to believe that I had never even been to Ilfracombe. As with so much else, she *"knew the truth"* and refused to believe otherwise, a sad case of mistaken identity and Pillinger pig-headedness.

She said to Dad *"Tell thee daughter not to come near I again."* They then had a tumultuous row and he vowed not to visit her again. After an interval allowing matters to calm down, we made enquiries but found she had moved and I never saw her again. Dad believed she had gone into a home found for her by her co-religionists, but years later, I found that all along she had been in Brislington near where I live, probably in the Broomhill Old Folks Home, when she died.

Thomas's birth certificate which I obtained from St Catherine's House in London confirmed that he was born to Stephen and Jane at Siston in 1841. I found the family mentioned on the Siston tithe maps, but the parish register was a disappointment, yielding only the one christening, that of Harriet, an adult, daughter of John Pillinger, hatter of Made for Ever and his wife Anne. So Harriet was christened twice.

⁶⁹ Sadly it was all too true. Henry's photo with his history is in Part 3, 'The Brassmakers'.

I had yet to look at the parish registers of Holy Trinity Kingswood which were still in the church and the Canon was a procrastinator, a 'tricky vicar'. As a species they are still not quite extinct. I came across one as recently as 2014 when I was forbidden access to the burial records of Zion, the great edifice at the top of Victoria Park, as these are 'Private' I was informed. The Bishops' Transcripts seemed set to save the day. These transcripts, which I had then only just heard of, are contemporary copies of parish registers made for the bishop of the diocese. As Holy Trinity, Kingswood, like Bitton, was formerly in Gloucestershire, I made the first of many visits to Gloucester. My first attempt was all but wasted, for no-one told me I needed the authority of the diocesan solicitor, before permission to look at the documents could be granted. Directed to his office, I discovered the august body was out and no-one knew when he would return. After hours sitting listlessly on a hard chair in his waiting room, he returned, formally rubber stamped a pass, charged me five bob, I think, and I high-tailed it to the library about half an hour before they were due to close. All this bureaucratic rigmarole has now changed. Since my misadventure, the BTs are in bound volumes on the open shelves at Gloucester Record Office, available to all. I found that Stephen had been married as Stephen Pollinger in 1828, and being illiterate had been unable to correct the error. I found it unlikely he was only seventeen when he was married and assumed that the Wesleyan grave books were a more reliable source for his age than Great Aunt Flo. At breakneck speed, breathless, rueful of the missed hours, with one eye on the relentless clock which hurtled away the seconds, I copied down the christenings of Stephen and Jane's children, spelled in every case, Pillinger, and uncovered a piece of highly circumstantial evidence that Stephen was a child of John and Anne. The christenings of Alfred, son of Stephen and Jane, and Aaron, son of John the hatter and Anne took place at the same time, on the same day, the 30 January 1831. The name Aaron was popular amongst the descendants of Stephen, but was the original Aaron his brother?

My next step was to enquire at Bristol Library whether there was a Kingswood Local History Society. They gave me the name and address of the secretary, Doreen Street. I wrote to her and she rang me the following morning in great excitement. She could not supply the ancestry of Stephen, but by an extraordinary coincidence, her mother's name was May Pillinger. Could we meet? We did. Our grandparents had lived next door to each other. Her grandfather Fred and my grandfather Albert were half-brothers. Doreen Street was knowledgeable about the Oldland hatting industry, which she had researched "*from the trapping of the animals on the Common to the finished product on the heads of the London swells.*" I removed my mental picture of John as Alice's Mad Hatter as drawn by Tenniel, and substituted one of Urk Starkadder, hung about with small animals. Naturally, I thought, Stephen would have known something about the trade from his supposed father John.

From the census of 1841, John the hatter was still alive in 1841, working at Leather Heaven. I discovered the burial of his wife Anne at Whitfield Tabernacle in 1832 with her place of residence misread by me at the time as 'Church Hatton', which for some reason didn't strike me as relevant. Several months later, having my breakfast, with a cup of tea poised to my lips, the penny dropped, and with it the cup in my hand. I suddenly recalled that I had seen something like Church Hatton before. I riffled through the card index I had been keeping, and found that a Nathaniel Pillinger, who married forty years before Anne's death had given Yatton as his abode, Hatton & Yatton – the same, surely? Even then, like a fool, I wrote off

to Yatton in Somerset, and the vicar's answer, not surprisingly came back negative. I read Nathaniel's card again and noticed that Yatton was in the county of Wiltshire. I then discovered that Church Yatton was the antique name for Yatton Keynell. I contacted the vicar, but he was, as already noted, was the original 'tricky vicar'. He declined to let his records be examined by a member of the hoi-polloi. He kept me waiting many months, shirtily rebuffed my telephone enquiries, but eventually with bad grace, reluctantly sent me a handwritten list of Pillingers going back to Samuel and ending with Nathaniel. He charged me £17 which was a lot of money in the 1980s. There was no Stephen among them. So I was still stymied. The vicar assured me there was nothing left to find. **THIRTEEN** years later, when the Yatton Keynell archives had been deposited in the Wiltshire Record Office, I was able to discover the amazing catalogue of Poor Law payments made to members of the Pillinger family. I was delighted to note they amounted to £51.13s.5½d, so even allowing for the vicar's fee, we had still made a handsome profit.

After further visits to the freezing Bitton vestry I discovered John's and the elder Nathaniel's papers, which further corroborated the connection with Yatton Keynell, though I remained perplexed why the place should have been given as the address of Anne Pillinger, who was born, married and buried in Bitton. The Pillinger puzzle picture was taking shape, but there was still a great gap where Stephen's baptism should have been and hence I could still not join up the family tree. I toyed with other avenues, trying to place him as an illegitimate son of one of the Pillinger girls of the time. I wondered if he was the son of Anne Stone Pillinger by her first marriage – having noticed that her first husband was called Stephen. I checked all other first names, seeking out EVERY member of the Pillinger family from anywhere at all, as previously stated, in the hope that I would find him by a process of elimination.

All the enquiries came to nothing. At this point I discovered the census of 1851, and Stephen himself said his place of birth was Not Known.

I had now spent three years in the search, and then in 1977, I received an excited letter from a fellow genealogist, the late Tony Brain, a schoolteacher, who was spending his holidays at the Gloucester Record Office, (as you do) when the chance turn of a page in the Bishops' Transcripts of St George, Hanham Abbots (not the same as St George, Kingswood) brought him to 2 August 1823, and the belated christening of three young men, Jacob, 24, John, 16 and Stephen, 14½, described as the sons of John and Anne Pillinger. I had searched through the whole of Bitton's church registers but 'the chapelry' records of the period after 1813 were kept with those of Christchurch, Hanham. This Victorian Church was consecrated long after the period of Stephen's birth and consequently I had not searched there. Bitton was an enormous parish, originally with minor 'chapelries' at Hanham & Oldland, the latter becoming St George, Hanham Abbots. Over time other churches were consecrated to take the over-flow: another St George, otherwise 'the New Church, Kingswood', in 1751; Holy Trinity, at Kingswood Hill, 1818, and the later Victorian churches of Christchurch, Hanham and St Anne's, Oldland. In many cases the parishioners who had a choice where to get married, went back to the mother church at Bitton. The area is one that still causes confusion among family historians.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ See article by Margaret McGregor in BAFHS Journal no. ?

Tony's breakthrough enabled me to take our family tree back to Sallai, and thence all the way to Samuel of Yatton Keynell. I still believed there were a few more treasures yet to find amongst the Bitton archives, but the sexton there also told me repeatedly that I had seen everything. Another SIX years passed and the records were at last deposited at Bristol Record Office, but even then I was not able to see them for another year. I have already said they were damp. They were just caught in time and had to be expertly dried and fumigated before they could be released to public view, and even then catalogued. My patience was at last rewarded and the sorry tale of the 'settlements and removals' was revealed. The whole story became clear.

I did not believe for a minute that Stephen's birthplace was unknown. The controversy over where the Pillingers 'belonged' must have still been current at the time of his birth, and he no doubt grew up with it. When Stephen was accosted by the census man in 1851, the prospect of 'lawful removal', like poor old uncle Bob in 1843 and his father's death in Chippenham Workhouse, would have been much too close for comfort. I think he reasoned that he could hardly be removed if there was nowhere for him to be removed to. When it came to later censuses, 1861, 1871, 1881 and 1891, he clearly felt the danger had passed, and admitted he was born in Bitton. Was he? I think he probably was.

Some years ago I taught an extra mural Evening Class at Bristol University. On the sixth, and final, lesson I was issued with forms to tout for feedback. One of the students was unimpressed.

"After six whole weeks I thought I would have finished my Family Tree by now," she wrote. "Very disappointing."

I would like to dedicate this chapter of the story to this snotty young Madam. I do wish I had taken a note of her name.

Mysterious Brother Aaron

For many years the mystery of the whereabouts of Aaron Pillinger, who was christened for the second time at Holy Trinity at the age of 15 years 9 months in 1831 along with Stephen's baby son Alfred was an irritation, a scab, occasionally picked when I had nothing else to do.

Aaron turns up in dribs and drabs. For instance, he was married at Kidderminster, Worcestershire on 6 April 1850: Aaron Pillinger, 30, bachelor, musician, Worcester Street, father: John Pillinger, hatter & Mary Ann Griffiths, 23, spinster, Worcester Street, father: Thomas Griffiths, victualler. The marriage was announced in the Worcester Journal on the 11th April. Thomas Griffiths was the landlord of the Cross Keys Public House in the town.

He was more than a decade older than his bride, but lied about it. He was 34. How did this scion of coalminers and hatters make a living as a professional musician? Compared to the horny-handed rest of them his occupation seems 'flighty'; there is no evidence to suggest he was a military bandsman. I still don't know where he was in 1841 and 1851, but in 1861 the Pillingers were a 'single parent family' living at 23, Chapel Street, Kidderminster: Mary Ann was aged 32, a musician's wife, born Kidderminster; her elder daughter Clara Louisa, aged

nine, was born at Holmfirth, Yorkshire. What were they doing there? The rest of the children, Teresa, 8, Alfred, 3, and twins Harry and William, eleven months old were all born at Kidderminster. Aaron took some finding in 1861, but at last turned up in Manchester, as a lodger at 10 Byron Street, with another musician, George Whitford, lodgers in the household of a grocer and general dealer called Edward Williams. Our man said he was born in Bristol, was single (!), called himself Aron and gave his age as 36, when according to his late christening record he was 45 years old.

Shortly afterwards, Aaron returned to his family and another son, Bartholomew was born in 1864, and a daughter, Leah in 1866. He died sometime in the June Quarter of 1868 at Kidderminster, 'aged forty nine'. His last child, a daughter, Eliza was born posthumously. Mary Ann continued to live in Kidderminster, where several of her children worked in the carpet trade for which the town is noted. In 1871 she was living at 14 Hill Street, Kidderminster aged 42, with Clara Louisa, 19 and Theresa, 18, both 'setters' at the carpet works. Alfred aged 13 was an errand boy and the rest, Harry, William, Bartholomew and Leah were all at school. Eliza, the baby was aged two.

Ten years on, Clara had moved to Edgbaston, Birmingham where she was working as a nurse; Theresa was married and living in Kidderminster with her husband William Hunt, an Axminster carpet maker and their two small daughters. Mary Ann's four sons remained at home, working variously as a weaver, a labourer, a tailor and a creeler, that is one who minds the machinery which twists the weave. Leah was a dressmaker, aged 15, and Eliza was twelve.

By 1891, Mary Ann had moved to 67 Park Street, Kidderminster. Alfred's wife, Elizabeth Green died aged 27, and he and his young son were living with Mary Ann, as were his sisters, Leah the dressmaker, Eliza, and a niece, Sarah Sparkes, both carpet finishers.

Harry married Julia Cecilia Talbot in 1884 and in 1891 was working as an agent for Singer Sewing Machines. In 1891 the couple were at Friar Street, St Nicholas, Droitwich but there is no trace of them thereafter.

In 1901, Mary Ann had moved to 112 Park Street, Kidderminster with Leah, 35 and Eliza 32, neither having married. She died in 1908 aged 79. In 1912, 'Miss Leah Ellen Pillinger, dressmaker', advertised her services from 145 Park Street. Eliza died in 1947 aged 78 and Leah in 1957 aged 90.

Bartholomew left Kidderminster and moved about the Midlands as a blacksmith. He married Jessiemonde Parsons at Bosworth in 1894 and they had one son, Gilbert. After Jessie's death, Bartholomew married Mary Ann Hadfield in 1908 at Eccleshall, on the Derbyshire/Yorkshire border. Gilbert joined his father as a metal smith and in 1911, the family was in Sheffield. They eventually settled there and Bartholomew died in 1946, aged 82.

I struck up a correspondence with Tony Thompson, (who lived in Worcestershire) the grandson of Idris Pillinger of Kingswood. Tony advertised in the Kidderminster Shuttle on my

behalf asking for any descendants of Aaron Pillinger to contact him. He received a letter from a Mr D.F. Jackson of Kidderminster which contained the following information:

“My great aunt Ann Whatmore married a William Pillinger, a carpenter, and they had five children. Their eldest, Theresa, married John West, the manager at a timber merchants, as far as I can remember. One of the sons spent many years living in Coventry and returned to Kidderminster about thirty years ago. Alfred and Annie were the oldest children.”

William married Annie Whatmore in 1883 and she gave birth to eight children, of whom only three were surviving by 1911. Of these, Alfred became a carpenter, like his father and the two daughters, Annie and Theresa, were Axminster weavers. They lived in various abodes in John Street and Bennett Street, Kidderminster.

I have been told that the centenary booklet of Kidderminster Rugby Football Club contains a photograph of the 1880/1 team with an “A. Pillinger” in the front row. I suspect that this was Alfred. There are still members of the Pillinger clan in Kidderminster and the perceived interest in sporting activity continues with a marathon runner, Nicola Pillinger. Sorry to say no member of Aaron’s family has ever contacted me.

Two spots of bother and a passage to America.

Here we have another Aaron. On the night of the 1851 census, Stephen and Jane’s son Aaron was not at home with the rest of the family because he ‘lived in’ as an assistant at a grocery shop in Kingswood Hill.

On 4 February 1855, he was married at Holy Trinity, St Philips, to Esther or Hester Britton, ‘of full age, a collier of Pennywell Road’. His bride, also over 21, of Winsford Street, was the daughter of William Britton, an engineer. In April 1861, they were living at Kingswood Hill, with their two sons, William Alfred and Stephen. A third son, George was born shortly after the census was taken.

In May that year Aaron got into trouble: ‘Aaron Pillinger of Kingswood Hill, shoemaker, aged 26, charged on 30 May, 1861 with the theft of five chickens, the property of James Bryant at Mangotsfield and of stealing 18 fowls, the property of Robert Hathaway at Frampton Cotterell on 3 May 1861.’⁷¹ Instead of a mug shot, there is a description: ‘5 foot 5¼ inches tall, light sandy hair, long visage, fresh complexion, a small blue spot over his right eyebrow, with moles on his throat, neck and shoulder blade. A native of Kingswood Hill, married, three children; has been working for Mr. Cafsam (sic)’.⁷²

He was found guilty and sentenced to four months with hard labour on the 4 July, 1861. His term expired on 3rd November and he was discharged from Gloucester Gaol the next day. In the next few years two more children, Joseph and Elizabeth were born.

In 1869, he was at it again, now ‘a gardener, aged 33’. To his physical description which had hardly changed was added: ‘Wesleyan, married, 5 children, born Bristol, known to Pc

71 GRO. 1861. Q/Gc6/4.

72 Undoubtedly Handel Cossham the pit owner

Hawkins 9 years; has been here before, stealing.’ The verdict was once again ‘Guilty’ and he was sentenced to twelve months with hard labour. He was released on 20 October, 1870, having served the full year minus one day.

The census of 1871 lists him as a butcher, living at 1 Hanham Road, Kingswood. Hester had given birth to another daughter, Emily Jane, while he was away in gaol. Aaron was the full rolling stone, from grocer, to collier, to labourer, to shoemaker, to gardener, to butcher.

Then he went to the United States of America.

If he had applied today, they would probably have said ‘On your bike, chum!’ and barred his entrance owing to his criminal record. No such problems existed then. On 15 April 1878, the Pillinger family, Aaron, Hester, three sons, a daughter, a daughter-in-law and an infant grandson set sail from Bristol, steerage, to cross the Atlantic aboard the ss ‘Somerset’, a vessel of the Great Western Steamship Line.

True to form, he didn’t settle. He was especially cast down when Hester died on the 15 October 1881, and returned home with his daughter Elizabeth, leaving his sons behind. In 1882, he married again, a widow, Sarah Ann Fry, nee Bessell, at Holy Trinity Stapleton.

He must have come back with some cash, which always talks, for in 1885, he was considered sufficiently upstanding to vouch for George Steward Bessell of Wrexham who had applied to the Guardian Permanent Benefit Building Society for a mortgage on 1 Rodney Cottages, Two Mile Hill, St George’s ‘to be advanced on the surety of Aaron Pillinger’. The deed was signed by both parties and witnessed by H. Jennings, solicitor’s clerk.⁷³

His daughter, nineteen year old Elizabeth Esther, a dressmaker, married a shoemaker, Samuel Bryant, at Oldland on 24 January 1887. When his stepson Edward Bessell married Louisa Guard at Bitton in 1890, Aaron signed the register as a witness.

In 1891, Aaron, aged 56, a butcher, was living at Bell Hill, St George with Sarah Ann, aged 50, her mother Ann Bessell, a widow of 69 and a visitor, Florence Price, aged 10. He had retired by 1901 and moved to Hill Street lived with Sarah Ann, and her widowed sister, Emily Williams, and Florence Lovelace, aged 17, probably the same visitor (!) despite differentials.

In September 1902, Aaron was involved in a contretemps: two boys William & George, the sons of Walter Hale, were charged with the theft of water belonging to Bristol Water Works Company from a pipe supplied to Aaron Pillinger of Two Mile Hill Road. Pillinger said there were six houses with two taps and they had his permission to take the water whilst their own cistern was being cleaned out. When the officers called on Pillinger there was (quote) ‘some heated conversation’. I’ll bet there was. I suspect a typical Pillinger fiery outburst. The two lads were fined 5 shillings with 7 days in default.⁷⁴

⁷³ Deed offered for sale on the internet by Beryl Anderson, reference 105/45, for £31.

⁷⁴ WDP 16.9.1902

Aaron, aged 68, died on 3rd January 1904 as recorded in the book kept by Alderwick's, the undertakers of Regent Street, Kingswood which is still going. The funeral was at Wesleyan on the 6th January with 'coffin and attendance, car, 2B and 4B, £10.0s.0d.' He was laid to rest beside his father and mother, Stephen and Jane.

Sarah Ann continued to live at Two Mile Hill with her sister Emily and died there on 24th November 1914 aged 75. She was also buried at Wesleyan where her tombstone was inscribed 'Our dear Nancy, widow of Aaron Pillinger'. An obituary notice read 'Pillinger. Nov. 24th at Home Cottage, Two Mile Hill, Sarah Ann (Nancy) widow of the late A. Pillinger, deeply missed by her loving brothers & sisters.'⁷⁵

Those who accompanied Aaron to the USA were his sons Stephen, 17, (married to Elizabeth Powe at Bitton, on the 2 September 1876) and William Alfred, 20, a stoker, of Derby Street, (married Fanny Thirza Hill, at St Matthew Moorfields, 20 May 1877). They remained in America. Great Aunt Flo recalled "*a rich relation, an American, quite a toff*", visiting them at Two Mile Hill. He offered her mother Lavinia a couple of gold sovereigns or \$20 in paper money. "*What use is that to me?*" cried Lavinia, "*I'll take the gold.*" There were \$4 to the £1 in those days, but I doubt they would have known how to change the paper.

To try to find out about the emigrants and the returning trans-Atlantic visitor, I went through American telephone directories at the Bristol Reference Library and collected several names and addresses of Pillingers living in the USA. I wrote to them and received two replies, one of which was from Douglass Pillinger of Glen Ellyn, Illinois. From information he supplied, I knew I had hit pay dirt.

Douglass's first letter dated 1st June 1975 reads: '*My grandfather was Stephen Pillinger who came to the United States from Bristol in the middle or late 1870's. He first settled in Upper New York state but later came to Chicago where he lived all his life. I can remember attending my grandparents' golden wedding anniversary in about 1926, so I assume he was born 1856. My grandmother was also from Bristol. Her maiden name was Elizabeth Powe. She died in the early 1930's and my grandfather in 1937 or 1938. He was one of four brothers, Fred, George, Henry and Stephen, all of whom came ultimately to Chicago where they lived all their lives. They are all dead now of course, as are all of their children.*

'My father, Edward James was born in 1883 and lived in or around Chicago all his life. He died in 1953. My parents had two children, my sister Dorothy who is still living and myself, each of us now senior citizens but of the youthful variety if there be such. My sister, a widow, lives in Sebring, Florida.

'One of Henry's children, Herbert, was for a long time a doctor in Elgin, Illinois, about 30 miles from Chicago. He retired to Florida and has since died. His widow and his son Donald live in Sebring, Florida. Another of Herbert's sons, also called Herbert is a doctor practicing in Elgin. Donald is another son. His son Barry lives in Corpus Christi, Texas.

⁷⁵ WDP 26.11.1914

'I'm not sure I can identify the "rich relation". To my knowledge my grandfather never went back to Bristol, nor did my father. However, my sister tells me that that Henry, one of grandfather's brothers did make a trip to England and Bristol in the 1920's. I doubt whether he was really rich, but if it was he, I can understand from my knowledge of him while I was growing up that it would have been easy for him to give that impression.

'Unfortunately, my aunt Florence, my father's sister, the last of that generation died in 1969. Her son Robert La Nier who lives at Slingerlands, New York has the Family Bible... but when I last spoke to him he thought 'the history' did not go back further than the names of my and his grandparents mother and father.'

My correspondence with Douglass, a lawyer, continued until his sudden death on 8th November 1983. I was informed of the sad news by his wife Harriet who herself died shortly afterwards in a fall at their home. Unfortunately neither ever came to England, a trip Douglass was putting off until his retirement, but a few years later, their daughter Carol Daw of Boulder, California, came here on holiday with her husband Paul and sons Peter and Nathaniel, the latter named by a happy coincidence, for they knew nothing of the earlier Nathaniel Pillinger. We spent an enjoyable day together sightseeing in the Bitton area, and finally visiting Brunel's famous steamship ss 'Great Britain' which made many transatlantic crossings and is now preserved in Bristol docks. Carol and Paul, are committed Anglophiles, and own a converted a loft apartment on the banks of the Thames where they stay on their frequent visits to London. I have occasionally joined them there. On one of these visits, they were accompanied by Carol's sister, Lucy. We remain in touch up to the present time, 2015. (Photo "Send a Smile Back Home")

I also met Robert La Nier and his wife Connie when they visited Bristol thirty years ago. It was a Sunday, so we went to St Mary's, Bitton, where so many of the family married, arriving at the end of matins, but Robert's especial thrill was standing on the site of No 1, Hanham Road which had been the family address in 1871, and well known to him from the Family Bible. Robert repeated it over and over in wonderment: "No. 1 Hanham Road....."

Later my name was passed to Bill Pillinger of Aiken, South Carolina, grandson of William Alfred, who was Douglass's 'Uncle Fred'. The family knew nothing of his marriage to Fanny Thirza and speculated that she might have died on the voyage. William Alfred remarried in 1880 at Austin, Illinois to Edith Maria Webb. George who was born in 1862 married Alice, surname unknown and had two daughters who died during the 'flu epidemic, post 1918. Henry (Harry), 1864-1931, apparently began life as Joseph, the name by which he is recorded on the English census of 1871. (I have lost count of the number of times Pillingers have changed their first names.)

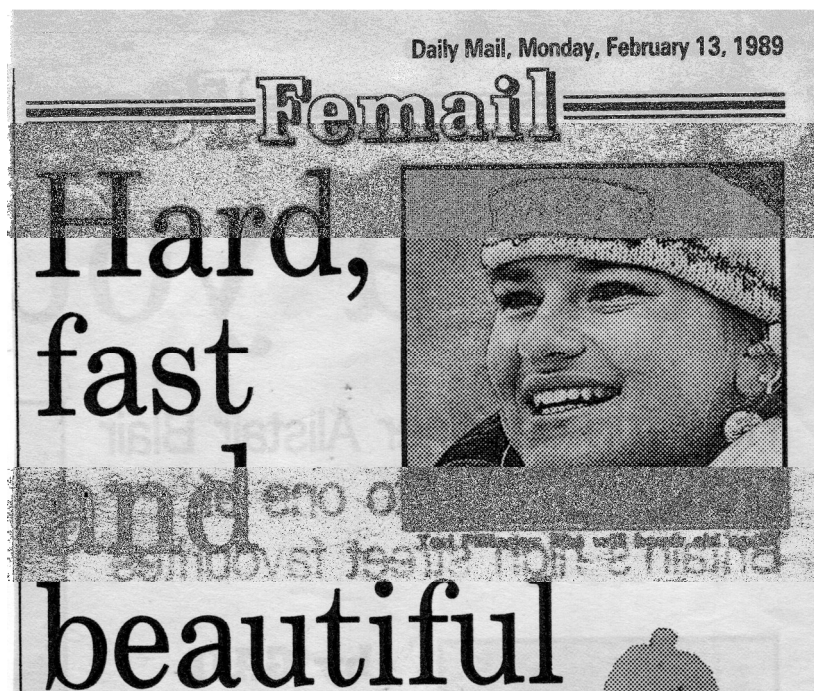
Bill told me that the four brothers had '*emigrated from Bristol to Oak Park, [formerly Austin] Illinois, about 9 miles WNW of downtown Chicago and is part of the greater Chicago area and the politically nefarious Cook County... [where]... they engaged in selling shoes, and in building construction' – those houses again, learned at their grandfather's knee no doubt! – 'and banking. Stephen, Fred and Harry founded the First National Bank of Oak Park and Harry's son, Harold was the cashier at one point. They were very affluent until the bank*

failed. (Did the citizens of Oak Park rally round as in that icon of small town America Capra's film 'It's a wonderful life'?)

Harold's great grand-daughter is Tori Pillinger, who represented her country at downhill skiing, and whose career was tragically cut short by a horrific accident. I read about her in the Daily Mail of 13th February 1989, under the heading 'Hard, fast and beautiful':

'Vail, Colorado: The most poignant sight among the princes and poseurs who gathered here over the past fortnight was not that of Arnold Schwarzenegger drinking beer by the steinfal and pining for the Fatherland in a mock Tyrolean bar. Nor was it Gerald Ford remembering what it was like to be President of the United States as he pottered about making speeches.

'No it was when you caught a glimpse of Tori Pillinger, the apple-pie hope of American skiing just a year ago that a lump came to the throat.



'It is 14 months since the bubbly girl from Park City came hurtling down a Swiss mountainside, strove to clip a hundredth of a second off her time for the Leukerban women's downhill but instead of crossing the line, crashed into a solid steel post supporting the finishing marker.

'Tori Pillinger was a few days short of her 21st birthday. The fracture was

a compound, splintered agonising mess requiring metal pins which still hold the leg together.

'Not only will she never ski again, but is doubtful she will ever walk unaided. Ask her if it was worth it and she shrugs her shoulders, plucks up a smile as bright as the Colorado sunshine and limps away to watch her former rivals pitch themselves down Vail Mountain at 70-miles an-hour.'

'Cousin Tori' later contacted me by email and was able to reassure me that though her accident was horrific.....she had made a full recovery:

'I have staged many comebacks. I attended the University in Utah and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Exercise Physiology. I was Pre-med. However I decided I would never survive the rigors of having to remain awake for hours at a time so I chose nursing. I went back to school and received my second Bachelor's in 1999. I am now an emergency room

nurse in California. I have run two Marathons with my best time being under four hours and two triathlons in the last few years. My husband and I made a trip to Nepal and hiked to Everest Base Camp carrying all our own gear. I have taken up kayaking, mountain biking and rock climbing..... I am still a quite able skier.....but I think that motherhood is probably the most challenging job I have ever had. I have two daughters who mean the world to me.....'

To return to Bill: *'Harry's other son, Herbert, was a medical doctor; Stephen's son Edward was the largest Oldsmobile dealer in Chicago, and in Illinois from 1921 until the 1940's'*

William Alfred (Fred), Bill's grandfather was taught to read and write by his wife Edith. He was a general contractor and did so well financially that he was able to offer his sons Ralph (Bill's father) and Milton the choice of a college education or a trip round the world. *'Ralph took an architectural engineering degree from the University of Illinois, Milton took the trip.'* (Perhaps **he** was Great Aunt Flo's 'rich relation'?) *'Ralph who died in 1924 became sales manager for the Dodge automobile dealership in Miami, Florida; Milton stayed in Oak Park as a general contractor.'* Bill died in June 1997 aged 73. There are many Pillinger descendants in the USA.

Another voyage to America

When we last heard of Elizabeth, the widow of Jacob Pillinger, who was killed at Easton Pit, it was 1841 and she was living with her children at Blackhorse Road.

Ten years later she was fifty one, taking in washing, and living with her children, Esther Joy, 24, a shoemaker, her sons Thomas Joy, 20 and Jacob Pillinger, 16, both coalminers, and her twelve year old daughter, Elizabeth.

On 14 January 1855, she and her son Thomas Joy, who could write his name, witnessed the marriage of Samuel Francis Brunning aged 21 and Mahala Johnson aged 23. Brunning was a teacher and Mahala, a servant at the Kingswood Reformatory School. If as seems likely the Reformatory School supplied the bulk of Elizabeth's laundry work, this would have been how she became friends with the bridal pair. (The Brunning's marriage certificate was sent to me by one of their descendants requesting information about them, and by sheer coincidence I was interested in the witnesses!)

In 1857, Jacob and Elizabeth's son Jacob, 1835-1878, then a 'warehouseman' married Hannah Stone at Bitton. A year or so later he had been ordained as a preacher in the Methodist connexion and as we have already seen he took pride of place as 'the Rev Jacob Pillinger of Kingswood' at the wedding of his sister Sarah to Abraham Williams, a farmer of Cock Road. Rather grandly for the time, the marriage was announced in the Western Daily Press.



Jacob & Hannah Pillinger

In 1861, he and Hannah were living at St George with their baby daughter, also Hannah. He was described 'a coalminer and local preacher' with another preacher, Samuel Britton, living next door. The Wesleyan influence in Kingswood at the time was enjoying a strong revival under the influence of the Budgett family, the younger of the two brothers, Samuel, who was currently occupied with the building of the Wesleyan Chapel. *'We have a great work going on here,'* Samuel, full of enthusiasm for the project, wrote to a friend. It is sad to imagine what he would think of the current roofless shell. As well as his preaching duties, Jacob was active in Trade Union affairs. In July 1864 he addressed a meeting of miners in St George telling *them 'the great object for which they united was self-defence, for they had*

been taken advantage of in times past. The men never thought of opposing the masters in maintaining their ground and as the masters had a union amongst themselves, why should not the miners?' (Loud cheers) *'All they required was a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. At present, some of the men did not receive more than 14 shillings or 16 shillings a week and perhaps they had several children. It was scarcely enough to keep body and soul together. If they were true to their principles and to their union, they would see better days.'* (More loud cheers.)

It must have been shock to Elizabeth when Jacob announced that he was taking his wife and family (by then three children, Hannah, Elizabeth and Jacob junior) to the USA. A party of Kingswood miners had been recruited to work in the coalmines of Gilberton in Pennsylvania. Jacob, the preacher, sure his God would provide, was going with them, as was his brother-in-law William Stone.



Jacob Pillinger (left) & Hannah Pillinger, nee Stone, with their daughters, Hannah and Elizabeth, at Tamaqua, Pennsylvania.⁷⁶

I would not have known of the American adventure without an article in a local newspaper in July 1980 headlined 'Bill's attic is full of history'. Bill Millard had rescued a number of apparently unwanted church books relating to defunct chapels in the Bristol area and I wrote to him enquiring if any contained the name Pillinger. One book certainly did. The membership roster of the Zion Chapel in Kingswood contained details of a family who had removed to Swindon. Bill was pleased to help, "*I am sending your letter to our district archivist Mr J.B. Edwards, a direct descendant of the Pillingers.*"

Through John Edwards, I learned about Jacob and Hannah in America and made copies of letters from Hannah which had been handed down within his family.

⁷⁶ *The Photographer was called David Baily!*

Hannah wrote home to her mother in November 1873, an epistle full of piety, without, alas, any mention of her daily life or her children, who now included two new sons called with suitable gravitas William Bramwell, (after one of the founders of the Salvation Army) and another, Henry Wesley, whose name needs no explanation.

Gilberton, November 17/73.

'Dear Mother

'We embrace the present opportunity of writing these few lines to you hoping to find you well as it leaves us at present, thank God for it. Dear mother, we received your kind letter and was glad to hear from you and to find that you was better. We hope by this time you are quite well. Although there is a great distance between us, we do never forget you. The poet said our bodies may far off remove, but still we are one in heart and such is the case with us. Dear mother, we are very much obliged to you, to bro Henry and to our Hester and William and Susanna for the presents you sent us it was very kind of you and we hope to return the compliments someday. It was almost more than we could desire. We were glad that Hester liked the garters we sent her. We hope to send you something else after a while and hope someday to see you again that would be a happy meeting dear mother we hope amidst your affliction you are putting your trust in the Lord, dear mother, try to make your peace with God so that if we never meet again on Earth, we may meet in Heaven. Dear mother we hope you liked the caps we sent you they were not so good as we wish for it was out of the season. But we intend to try to get you two more prettier ones and two American shawls knitted and send you when we see someone coming home. We should like to know if you wear any under flannels because we think you ought to for they are highly recommended in this country. They may save you from taking another stroke. You must take care of yourself dear mother we are glad to inform you that William does not forget you and we inclose for you a draft for two pounds so you see that he has still the affection of a son towards you & he feels almost like coming home to see you sometimes for we believe he would take it very hard if anything serious were to happen to you. He is still living with us and has a good constant place of work and is in good health. He attends church regular and is a teacher in the Sabbath school. Dear mother we must bring our note to a close sending our best respects to Bro Henry to our sisters and to Hester & William and tell them we are glad to find that they are steady and will cleave close to the Lord. Give our best respects to uncle George Lewton & wife, for Doctor Burgess & family, for John Stone & family, to Betsy Clements and family, to Elizabeth Hussy & the family and to all inquiring friends and accept the same yourself from your affectionate daughter and sons,

Hannah & Jacob Pillinger and William Stone.'

I wonder why no regards were passed to Jacob senior's mother, Elizabeth? Perhaps no-one worried whether she was wearing under flannels or not. Presumably this new-fangled American garment was that which became popular and known as 'Combinations' or 'Coms'" for short.

At Gilberton the children attended the Methodist Sabbath School, where the Superintendent had a name straight out of the Witches of Salem, Eli Pickersgill. In 1873,

young Jacob, aged 10, was presented with a prize for learning his lessons at Sunday School, a printed book called 'Little Humpy' about a child with a hunch back. The boy prays to Jesus and such is his faith, he is cured of his deformity and wakes up whole. I was so disgusted by this crass nonsense that I did not copy it with the rest of the stuff, but now I wish I had. How dare they preach such ignorant and cruel rubbish? It is thirty-odd years since I saw the book but it still rouses me to fury. What it would have done to me as a child, I dare not think. I have scoliosis as did Colin. Was little Jacob also afflicted? I picture the child praying devoutly but needless to say was '*not good enough*' for Jesus to come to his aid; whether deformed or not, he died a child in the USA.

Rev Eli Pickersgill, 1845-1931, a member of the Philadelphia Methodist Episcopal Conference, rather than the bony, old man I imagined, was only 28 at the time he was the Pastor at Gilberton. He was born at Ossett in Yorkshire, and died at Parkesburg, Chester County, USA.



Entrance to a mine tunnel at Tamaqua, Pa. ca 1900

Coalmining was no less dangerous in another country, and within the next year Jacob sustained head injuries whilst at work in the pit. At first his life was despaired of, but at last, upon partial recovery he expressed a

wish to be allowed to die in his own land. It is said that his standing with the Kingswood Methodists was such that a public subscription (headed by the famous mining engineer Handel Cossham) was raised to enable his return.

Jacob was in England by July 1875, and another of Hannah's letters survives, written from Gilberton where she and the children remained for the duration:

'Gilberton, Schuylkill Co. Pa. July 15th 1875

'Dear Husband

'I received your kind and Welcome letter yesterday the 14th day of July and was glad to hear from you and to hear that you are well and I was glad to hear that you had a good passage. We got to know when you landed in Liverpool two days after you landed it was a good passage. Dear husband I received the letter you sent when you got to Liverpool on the 5th of July but I thought I should wait till you wrote again before I did write to you dear husband, as a family we are all well at present thank God for it in regard to the Work here all are working

on the 20 per cent drop. Dear husband thear was a Sunday School picnic hear on the 5th of July and it was a good one. I should think thear was 4 or 5 hundred of people thear and thear was a good time thear and I send you this paice of New paper to let you hear it came off.

'Dear Husband in Regard to what you said about staying in the old Country you can do what you think Best about it. I tould you about it before you went that you should do the Best you can, so you can do what you think Best. So I now bring my few lines to a clouse by sending all of our kind loves to you all Hannah and Elizabeth and William and Henry and Samuel and Jane send thear kind loves to all and Robert and William and receive the same yourself from me so no more at present from your kind and loving wife

'Hannah Pillinger.'

The surviving children were mentioned, though curiously, Hannah says nothing about her own health: possibly the fact that she was well advanced in pregnancy (then known 'as a certain condition') was too delicate a subject to raise in a letter. Her last child, Martha, their daughter, was born at Gilberton in the latter part of 1875.

The two letters are in different handwriting, with the second poorly spelt. In all probability neither was written by Hannah herself: she was either helped by a friend from the chapel or employed a scribe.

In Kingswood, old Elizabeth Pillinger, although styled 'a pauper', had at least kept out of the Workhouse; she was nearing her end and hopefully saw her son again before she died. She was buried aged 80 at the Wesleyan Chapel on 21 August 1876.

Jacob's thoughts turned to his own mortality, and in his debilitated state he made up his mind that his wife and children should rejoin him. Hannah dutifully obeyed: overland from Gilberton to New York; across the Atlantic to Liverpool and by train to Bristol, with such worldly goods as she could bring with her. Such a journey with two teenagers, a nine year old, a toddler of three and a babe in arms would be daunting even today, but she made it, and they all came safely home.

Although he was never able to go down the pit again, Jacob obtained lighter work as a weigher at the colliery and for a time appeared to be on the mend. He even preached at the United Methodist Church, Crew's Hole in aid of Home and Foreign Missionaries in February 1877.⁷⁷ Sadly, his remission was short lived and he died on 4 May 1878 aged 43, officially from 'a disease of the brain occasioning epileptic fits', allegedly brought on by the injuries he had sustained in America. The death certificate was signed by H.M. Grace, surgeon to the Kingswood colliers, the father of the famous W.G.

Despite finding Hannah's extreme piety hard to swallow, I can only marvel at her resilience. She had travelled upwards of three thousand miles with her children to get home to her sick

⁷⁷ WDP 28.2.1877

husband, had nursed him in his illness, only to be widowed by the coal pits like her step mother-in-law before her. Then, like Ann of Redcliffe Hill, widow of an earlier Jacob, she set herself up in commerce. Not of course in a pub, for she must surely have eschewed the evils of strong drink, but in a little shop at 10 Lorne Terrace, St George where we find her and her children in 1881. Hannah and Elizabeth aged 22 and 19 were working as bootmakers, with William, 14, Henry, 8 and Martha, six, all scholars, 'born at Gilberton, America.'

Hannah was still at the same address in 1901 with her three spinster daughters, Hannah and Elizabeth who were still in the boot trade and Martha, 26, a dressmaker.

On 3rd December 1902, Hannah was admitted to the Lunatic Asylum at Fishponds with 'senile mania' where the medical report states:

'At times refuses all food, quite lost and incoherent in conversation. She thinks that her soul is lost and cannot possibly be saved; thinks that she does not deserve to eat or live. Talks and mutters to herself, flings herself about, is generally melancholic and uncontrolled. William Bramwell Pillinger, High Street, Staple Hill, the son of the examinee, states that she had influenza three years ago and since then has been gradually getting into her present state. She has depressing delusions, is often noisy and violent to her daughter, threatens suicide and is dangerous to be detained at home.'

To the questions put to him William Bramwell replied as follows:

Is this her first attack? *Yes*

Age when admitted: *70*

Epileptic? *No*

Suicidal? *Threatens*

Dangerous to others? *Yes*

Phthisical? *No*

Intemperance? *No*

Hannah had white hair, grey eyes and a sallow complexion. She was 5 foot 2 inches tall and weighed 78 lbs. (5 stone 8 lbs)

She was detained and remained in the asylum until she died on 21 July 1904.

In 1909, Martha married Edward Iles Tippet and Elizabeth moved in with them at 346 Two Mile Hill. Their sister, Hannah died at the Lunatic Asylum, Wells in 1919, aged fifty nine. I feel there is a pattern here of too much religion. She was buried at the Wesleyan Chapel in Kingswood.

William Bramwell Pillinger married Sarah Jane Flook on 15 April 1895 with his brother Henry as witness. The married couple went to live at High Street, Staple Hill where W.B. opened his own business, a boot factory.



William Bramwell Pillinger outside his Shoe Shop in Staple Hill

As a successful businessman, he took up local politics and was elected to the Warmley Rural District Council in 1922; he became a Justice of the Peace in 1924, and was on the bench as a magistrate hearing numerous petty cases, his name occurring frequently in this respect in the local papers. He enjoyed music and was President of the Downend Male Voice Choir.



William Bramwell & Sarah Jane Pillinger and their children, Guy Alan (1899), Grace Mary (1901) and Charles Raymond, (1903)

Guy, a civil servant, was called up as soon as he was eighteen and served briefly as a Private in the London Regiment, until invalided out of the army on medical grounds. He was slightly built, 5 foot six inches tall, with a sallow complexion, grey eyes and fair hair. He married Violet Martin in Brentford, Middlesex in 1921 but there were no children.

Guy and Vi (!) along with Guy's mother and brother Charlie are mentioned in a newspaper report of the wedding of another Violet, Miss Cann and Philip Watson Jones in 1923. According to custom, a long list of the gifts received with the names of their donors was published in the local press. Some of these were quaintly modest: Mr & Mrs Guy Pillinger: a tea cosy; Mr Charlie Pillinger: a table centre; Mrs Pillinger (who must be Sarah Jane) pushed the boat out with a breakfast cruet. Expectations were evidently rather lower than those of today and I suspect people were the better for it. Nowadays, eyebrows would be raised: "A

tea cosy? What's that?" You are more likely to be asked for a cash donation towards the honeymoon in the Maldives.⁷⁸

In 1933 there was a family tragedy when Sarah Jane Pillinger, aged sixty four, died from injuries received when she was knocked down by a cyclist at Staple Hill. The rider, Arthur Cook of Kendleshire said she did not appear to see him and though he swerved to avoid her, he fell off and he thought his head struck her as he fell. At the inquest a verdict of 'Accidental death' was returned. The Rev A.F. Deighton of Hebron Methodist Church, Staple Hill spoke warmly of her in his funeral address: *"Wherever she went people around her were stimulated to do good works by her high and noble living. Her hand was ever open to enrich and help all who were in need and we in this church and the district will miss her at every turn."* Family mourners were Mr W. B. Pillinger, widower, Mr & Mrs G.A. Pillinger, son and daughter in law, Mr & Mrs A. Edwards, daughter and son in law, Mr S. Pillinger, son, Mr H.W. Pillinger, brother in law, Messrs E., J., and G. Flook, brothers, Mr R. Flook, nephew as well as a large congregation of friends, councillors and representatives of community groups.⁷⁹

Charlie who remained a bachelor, lived with his father all his remaining years and died aged 46 on 26 May 1949. The funeral was held at Hebron Methodist Chapel in Staple Hill and he was interred at Mangotsfield Cemetery.⁸⁰ William Bramwell Pillinger of Staple Hill died in 1954 aged 87.

Grace and her husband Alan Edwards were the parents of John Edwards who inherited the Gilberton letters. John had carried on the family tradition, becoming a lay preacher, and at the time I met him, he had been invited to preach at America's Mahoney Plain where Jacob and Hannah had lived with the community from Kingswood. As if I had not guessed, John told me the family was *"very religious"*. As a child he overheard the following exchange:

Wife – sobbing with religious ecstasy: *"Oh what shall we do in the swellings of the Jordan?"*

Husband – more taciturn and less devout: *"Drown, if thee bisn't ready!"*

It recalled how Colin and I would hide under the table when Great Aunt Flo came to call, ranting on about the End of the World. Not a few of the Pillingers were a bit cracked. On the whole, I preferred them when they were crooks.

I was convinced that the 'Zion Member', Harry Pillinger, who had been deleted from Zion membership in December 1895 was Henry Wesley, the brother of William Bramwell. John Edwards had never heard of an 'Uncle Harry', though he had come armed with a family tree which showed William Bramwell's siblings. John believed he was the very last of the line and

⁷⁸ WDP 4.9.1923

⁷⁹ WDP 28/29.12.1933

⁸⁰ WDP 27.5.1949

as he was childless, after his death Jacob and Hannah's seed would be no more, but he was wrong. The Swindon branch was still going strong.

I found them through a roundabout route. My article *'Pillinger was here!'* about the Australian Pillingers appeared in the Journal of the Gloucestershire Family History Society, and a member passed it to Dennis Pillinger, a Maidenhead architect, the son of Herbert, already mentioned, who had been serving on the Western Front at such a tender age in 1914. An interesting and fruitful correspondence began: Dennis had long been keen on the family history, but had previously confined his operations to those Pillingers who had joined the Colours. In one of his letters, he told me he had come across a David Pillinger, chairman of the Stroudwater Canal Trust. I contacted David, who was a descendant of the large Box Pillinger family, and he was very keen. He xeroxed (how prehistoric that sounds) my letter and posted it off to various Pillingers in telephone directories. Among several responses was one from Ian Pillinger of Broad Hinton, whose father was Percy Frederick and whose grandfather was Henry Wesley! *"Was there a tradition in your family,"* I asked Ian, *"that your grandfather was born in America?"* At the end of the telephone there was an audible intake of breath. *"How on earth,"* Ian said, *"Did you know that?"*

Percy Frederick (1910-1970) was a railway clerk who trained as a teacher after the Second World War, and became senior master at Sanford Boys School. He married Gladys Myers in 1937 had two sons Stuart and Ian, born 1941, an author and artist, who lives in Swindon with his very accomplished artist wife June. The widowed Gladys remarried in 1978, Gordon



Mutch. She tragically died in a gas explosion in 1982 while on holiday in Portugal.

Percy and Gladys Pillinger with Stewart & Ian.



Ian & June Pillinger, wedding day..... and in 2007 below



Henry Wesley & Louisa Pillinger with their children

Henry Wesley Pillinger married Louisa Jay in 1896 and they were living in Swindon when their daughter Clarice, who was born in 1898 married Reginald Nethercott in 1922. Henry ('born USA, British Subject') was a foreman bootmaker in 1901, and living at 79 Avenue Road with his wife and child. In 1911, they had moved to 28 Avenue Road, with four more children, William Harold, born in 1901, Reginald Wesley in 1906, Leslie Henry, 1907 and Percy Frederick, born 1910. Henry was by then working as a commercial traveller.



William Harold Pillinger, (1901-63) here looking apprehensive, on 12th June 1926, at his wedding to

Evelyn Sterry.

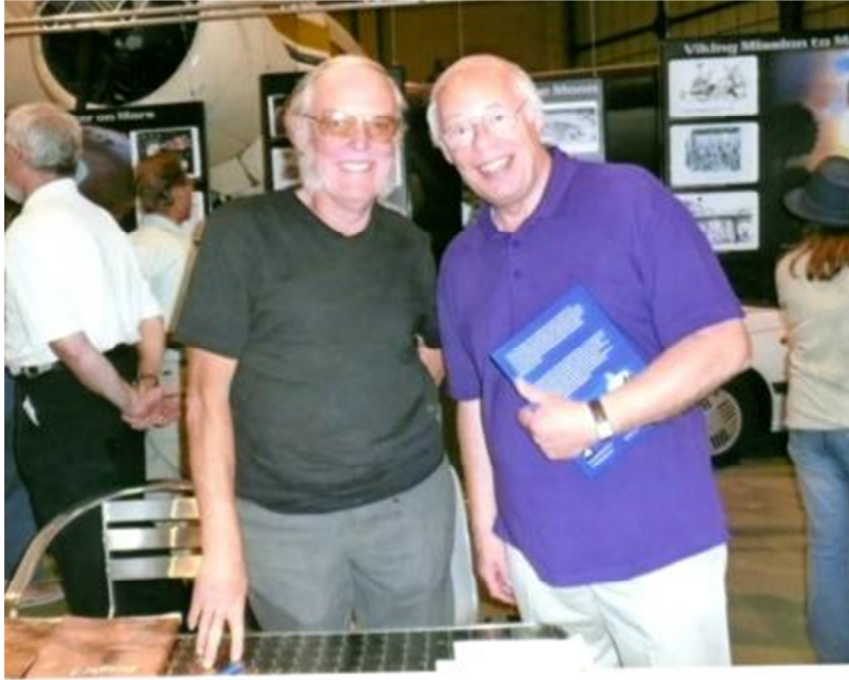


The children of William Harold & Evelyn were, David, (left, at sea, in tropical kit), Michael, and Susan, born 1941.⁸¹.

Reginald, b. 1906 married Phyllis Rushen and they had a daughter, Judith

Leslie, b. 1907 married Louise Smith and had a son, Terry.

⁸¹ I am grateful to Susan for providing me with the portraits of Jacob and Hannah as well as other family photographs



“Cousins”. Ian met CTP at one of Colin’s lectures: a family resemblance?

Ian is a well-known author of children’s books and a talented illustrator. He is responsible for the splendid image of Colin (as an ESA astronaut) which fronts this volume.

Meanwhile, back in Kingswood.....

..... it is still only 1855. Stephen and Jane had just lost their youngest daughter Mary, aged 2. Then in 1856, Hannah married William Clark, a farm labourer and in 1859, nineteen year old Jane junior, married a collier, James Ford.

Stephen, the third son of Stephen and Jane married Ann Britton in 1858, and they had Mary Ann in 1859, Alice in 1864, (married Frederick Bolwell, at Warmley, 1887), Annie in 1866, (married Frank Raynes, at Warmley, 1895), George Gilbert in 1870, Stephen in 1876, and Ernest in 1879.

In 1911, Stephen and Ann were living at 18 Blackhorse Road with Annie and Frank Raynes, a boot maker, and their granddaughter Olive Raynes, aged 11. Their other daughter, Alice Bolwell was living at 22 Soundwell Road, with her husband Fred, an insurance agent, and children Harold, 19, a clerk, and Phyllis, a scholar, aged 12.

A few doors down away from the Raynes' ménage, at no. 28 Blackhorse Road, lived their son George, a grocer, with his wife Harriet Leonard and seven children, Arthur, Gladys, Sydney, Ralph, Arnold, Doris and Ella.

George though now a reformed character, been in trouble in 1885 when he and another youth, Thomas Etle, were charged with the theft of 17 live ducks from William Cottle, landlord of the Black Horse, Kingswood. At Lawford's Gate Sessions they pleaded guilty as charged and asked for two offences of burglary concerning finished boots and leather uppers to be taken into consideration. Despite being 'given good characters', Etle was sentenced to 4 months and Pillinger to three months, both with hard labour.⁸² George Gilbert died in 1967 at the sensible age of ninety seven.

His son Ralph, born 1897, was a tobacconist, and I often visited his kiosk for cigarettes when I worked at the Lep Travel Agency, in Small Street, Bristol, in the 1960s. We were then unaware of any connection but talked in a friendly fashion. He had been in the Gloucestershire Regiment during the First World War and was in Cologne in 1919 with the Army of Occupation. He married Blanche Davis at Holy Trinity, and they celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in 1979.



Ralph 1897-1981 with Blanche his wife

I continued the acquaintance with their son Colin, born in 1936, who took over the business when Ralph retired. I told him that my brother was also called Colin Pillinger. He looked at me with greater interest.

"THE Colin Pillinger?" he queried. "The Moon Man? I often receive his mail – and his 'phone calls. He's famous!"

After Colin, the tobacconist died in 2004, I was contacted by his widow Vivienne, nee Ellis who said: *"My Colin was very tall, 6 foot seven inches,"* (I remembered....and the kiosk was very small.....he was squeezed behind the counter.....he had to lower his head) *"a real gentle giant. We met at 15 and married at 21. His hobbies were cricket and chess, a Gloucestershire county player and Chairman of the Bristol & District Chess League. We were married for 47 years and had two sons, Alan and Neil. The family owned a field which was sold and became Pillinger's Road, Kingswood."*

"Ralph had three brothers and two sisters. Gladys, the eldest sister died in a mental home at Gloucester. One brother married and had two daughters but the other two men were rather strange. They seem to lie about the house all day not working except for growing tomatoes in a heated greenhouse at the bottom of the garden. The family owned a field which became Pillinger's Road."

⁸² WDP 22.5 & 18.7.1885



The above portion of a mining map of Kingswood showing various pits and 'levels' includes the otherwise mysterious 'Pillinger's Farm'. I had always believed that Pillinger's Road was the spot where John Albert had his bakery, but the proximity of '.....orse Lane', later Blackhorse Road and the Reformatory School makes Vivienne's information more likely.⁸³

Arnold, born 1898 was a married man – his wife was Ivy Britton – so the two oddballs were obviously Arthur and Sidney. Mum, when she was 'on the Home Help' for Kingswood Council was sent 'to do' for them in the late 1950s when their regular help was on leave. She said she didn't know what to do there, as *"you couldn't move for stuff"*. They showed no interest that her surname was the same as theirs. The two men had both been conscripted into the Gloucesters in World War One. Sidney's records have survived: '28.2.1916, age 21, 5 foot 5¾ inches, 9 stone 14 pounds (! –i.e.10 stone, somebody didn't know their tables) chest 35 inches, good physical development, 'complains of chest pains in left lumbar region. No objective signs of disease.' Passed B1. Discharged 6.1.1919.'

By April 1920, Sid had returned home and was in business: he must have kept something other than tomatoes in that greenhouse because he advertised in the paper:

⁸³ With thanks to Steve Grudgings of the South Glos. Mines Research Group.

*'Chicks! Emerging, possessing vitality from my Black, White, Leghorn, Ancona & Houdan eggs. 8 shillings, sitting; crosses, 6 shillings. Discharged soldiers one shilling less. Money refunded for clears. Strains of repute.'*⁸⁴

In our chats at the kiosk, Ralph Pillinger told me about his uncle, Stephen born 1876, a son of Stephen and Ann who married Henrietta Stone at Whitfield Tabernacle in 1898.

"They emigrated to Port Elizabeth, South Africa about 1912 and he worked in a shoe factory there. Stephen was quite a scholar, a local preacher and a linguist. He had at least two sons who are probably still residing in South Africa."

In 1911, prior to emigration, Stephen and Henrietta, born at Tamworth, were temporarily at 29 Blackhorse Road (there is a pattern emerging here of Pillingers living cheek by jowl). Stephen was then 38, a clicker in the boot trade and they had two sons, Clifford, born 1903 and Ernest Arthur, born 1907.

Stephen, another Pillinger who had felt 'the call' to the Ministry '*left Kingswood YMCA in 1903 to take up the Pastorate of a Church at Rushton, Manchester.*'⁸⁵ By 1907 he was Pastor of the United Free Methodist Church at Myrtle Bank, Burnley where his son, Ernest, known by his second name, Arthur, was born at 94 Nairne Street, on 23rd July 1907. Stephen is mentioned several times presiding over church functions in Burnley.⁸⁶ After migration to South Africa he worked in Port Elizabeth as a teacher of Esperanto and shorthand. The present South African family were unaware that he had been a Methodist minister until Ernest Arthur's birth certificate came to light. Stephen died on 13th November 1921; his obituary notice shows that he was still remembered at home in a decidedly optimistic obituary:

*'Pillinger: Nov 13, at Natal, South Africa, Stephen P, formerly of Kingswood, in his 48th year. Not dead, nor sleeping: he lives on.'*⁸⁷

His widow Henrietta remained in Port Elizabeth and subsequently married an American, whose name is unknown by the present family.



Clifford Stephen, elder son of Stephen and Henrietta married Molly, (surname again unknown) and lived in Port Elizabeth until his death sometime before 1950. They had no children. After his death Molly remarried a man remembered by the current family as 'Uncle Bert'.

Arthur aged 20.

The younger son, Arthur, left Port Elizabeth for Durban where he

⁸⁴ WDP 7.4.1920

⁸⁵ Ibid 17.11.1903

⁸⁶ Burnley Express, 27.4.,18.12.1907 et al

⁸⁷ WDP 15.12.1921

worked as a cabinet maker and there met his wife to be, Jeanette May (Jean) Smith; her father Frank Collard Smith was South African and her Scots mother, Nettie Leith went out during the Boer War. Arthur suffered from tuberculosis and before the wedding travelled to Denmark for an operation in which *“he lost one lung and half of the other which left him constantly out of breath.”* On his return journey he met his cousin Douglas Stephen Pillinger, the son of Ernest, in London and the two branches of the family remain in touch to this day. Arthur married Jean in Durban in 1946. Their only child, Owen Stephen, known as ‘Steve’ was born in Durban in 1948. Steve took a degree in Classics and taught Latin for a while until he *‘felt God’s call to work as a Christian missionary’*. He joined Wycliffe Bible Translators and through this organisation met his wife Johanna Teuling, born in the then Tanganyika, who is of Dutch extraction. They were married at Colchester in Essex when Steve was completing his PhD thesis on the language of the nomadic Rendille people of Northern Kenya, who at that time had no part of the Bible translated into their own language. The Pillingers have had various adventures pursuing their missionary work - Steve promises to write a book –



including surviving a plane crash in 1995 when the light aircraft in which they were travelling suffered engine failure. They have two children, Stephen John, born in 1986 at High Wycombe and Jennifer Sophie, born 1987 in Nairobi, who is now Mrs Warren Melnick.

Steve, Johanna, Stephen & Jenny

The family history of the South African branch was kindly contributed by Steve. Further information about Steve and Johanna and their adventures can be found on WBT websites including an article telling how he has typeset the Bible translated into tribal languages, a painstaking task, which takes three to four months for the whole, or six to eight weeks for a New Testament. Whatever your beliefs, you have to be awe-struck by the dedication required.

A Pillinger centenarian

Ernest Pillinger, a bootmaker, the youngest son of Stephen Pillinger and his wife Ann Britton married Lilian Maud Ford, a dressmaker, in 1907. In 1911, they were at 32 Blackhorse Road near the other family members.

Ernest Pillinger worked for Ernest Britton, a member of the noted G.B. Britton family, the firm of bootmakers, for whom half Kingswood worked, including Mum and several of Dad's sisters. The two Ernests were cousins and as a consequence, I 'inherited' Ernest Pillinger's photograph from my friend, the late Gladys Spilsbury, author of 'The Brittons of Kingswood Chase', the granddaughter of Ernest Britton, with whom I spent many a happy hour at various record offices in by-gone days. Gladys, or 'Judy' as she preferred to be known, portrays her Ernest as a kind and caring man, though this is an opinion not shared by his

grandson Jonathan Pillinger, who told me:

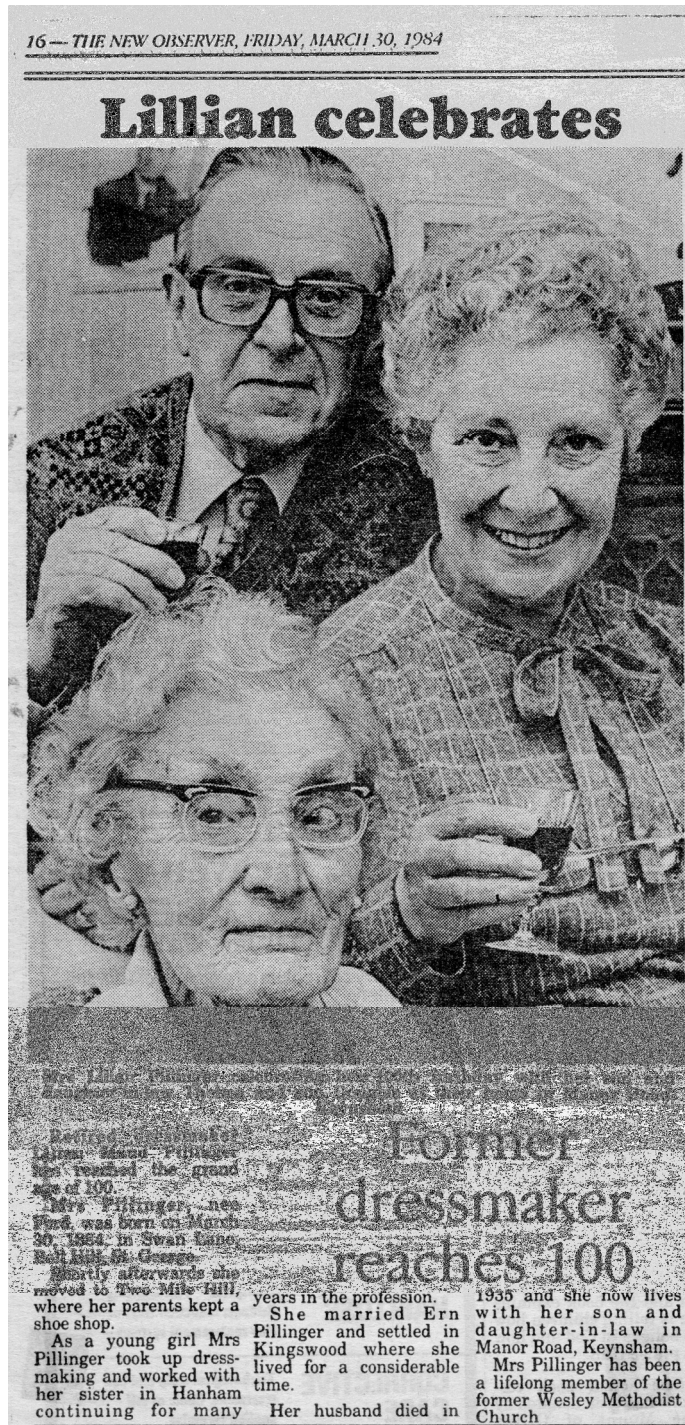
"I remember my Grandma complaining bitterly that her husband never received the wages owing to him by Brittons' when he was unable to work, aged just 50."

Ernest 1879-1935



Jonathan does admit however that Grandma Lilian may have been biased, as she frequently alienated people with her stridently held opinions. Ernest Pillinger was an accomplished musician, teaching pianoforte and playing the piano/organ at the Wesleyan Chapel in Blackhorse Road. He met his future wife, Lilian Ford, a locally well-known singer, who performed with her sister Mabel across the road at the rival Zion Chapel. On one fateful occasion she had no-one to accompany her rehearsal, and seeing he was available persuaded him to play for her. The Western Daily Press of 31st December 1902 records 'a Christmas tea for the old folks' in which the Misses Ford gave solos, accompanied by Ernest

Pillinger on the piano, as well as giving his own selection at the pianoforte. They married in 1907, Ernest "mild mannered and mellow and Lilian, the strong woman", in Jonathan's words. They were living at no. 22 South Road when Douglas Stephen, their only child was born in 1916. Shortly afterwards following the illness and death of Hannah, Lilian's mother, they moved to the Ford family shop in Two Mile Hill, opposite St Michael's parish church where they stayed until Thomas, Lilian's father died in 1927. The shop was sold and they moved back to South Road, this time to no. 44. Whilst playing the piano, 'Ode to a Wild Rose', Lilian noticed something awry, "our Ern never makes mistakes", she thought. Sadly he had suffered a major stroke. Though he recovered in some measure, he was unable to work again and died six years later in 1935. Although he was unable to play the organ, "the Wesleyan kept his name as organist as a mark of appreciation." The formidable Lilian survived him by nearly fifty years and became the only Pillinger centenarian on March 30th, 1984. She is pictured, left, with Douglas



and Thelma. She died in 1985.

Douglas Stephen passed the scholarship to Kingswood Grammar School, where he matriculated in 1933, passing in English, French, Latin, Maths, Mechanics, Physics and Chemistry. According to Jonathan, Major Eaton, the revered Head, pleaded with Lilian to allow him to 'stay on' to no avail. (Luckily, a similar plea to our parents in 1959 when Colin was about to leave KGS aged sixteen, met with a more positive response.)

Douglas is said to have envied his contemporaries, particularly Bernie Lovell (later Sir Bernard of Jodrell Bank) who had gone on to great things, a sentiment with which I can readily empathise. He took a job as a laboratory assistant with E.S & A. Robinson, the paper bag makers, of 1 Redcliffe Street, a firm I also worked for, among the very many(!) Unlike me, he stuck at it, and eventually became their senior research chemist. At the age of 19, he had the shocking experience of arriving home from work to find his father dead from another stroke. Ernest was sitting at the piano with a musical score open before him at the tune 'In Heavenly love abiding'. Douglas appears to have been 'a good all-rounder' making frequent appearances in local newspapers for attendance at Bible Class, success with gardening, (nasturtiums), and the Eisteddfods, where neighbourhood talent competed. (And still does: the institution is still going strong in the Kingswood district – my stage-struck grandson Leon Boothroyd won 1st place in his class, 7-9 year olds, for a 'recitation' in 2013, though these days such achievements are rarely reported.) In 1947, Douglas was commended for playing 'a refreshingly full-throated Nazi' in the Kingswood Wesleyan Players' production of 'Frieda', a drama beloved in the Am-Dram world. In those days before 'everybody had TV' most of us were similarly engaged, in Scouts, Guides, in my case the GNTC, the girls' version of the Sea Cadets, bands, or amateur drama, usually with Church or Chapel groups. He married Thelma Bright in 1941; their son Stephen Douglas was born in 1942 and Jonathan in 1957.

A disastrous love affair

Once again we go back in time to 1843, when a 'John Pillinger' of Bitton aged 25, was accused of the theft of brass at Mangotsfield. This John makes no appearance elsewhere and seems to have slipped through every net, unless 25 is a mistake for 15. John, the son of William, (John the hatter's, brother) was born in 1828. If this is the case, then it is only 'a big if' he was the John who returned from Australia and married the widow at Hanham Lock, and tragedy came in his wake. The John who follows here was certainly the son of William, a coalminer..... and here we find ourselves in the year 1885 when.....

Attempted Murder and Suicide.....

.....is the headline of a case that was sensational enough to be reported nationally in 'The Times' of the 3 June 1885:

'A young man named Rogers, the son of an innkeeper shot his father in law through the head on Monday night at Hanham, near Bristol, and believing he had killed him jumped into

the river and was drowned. Rogers was the son of Isaac Rogers who was the landlord of the Chequers Inn on the river-side. The father, who also kept the ferry at Hanham, died about three years ago and left all his property to his widow who was 36 years of age, the son being then about 18.

'About six months ago an Australian named Pillinger, who was stated to have made much money in the colonies arrived at Hanham and shortly afterwards married the widow. Three months afterwards the pair began to sell their house property and at one of the sales young Rogers attended and protested against the auction proceeding on the ground that he had an interest in the property. A fight broke out between Rogers and Pillinger and Rogers was summoned for assault and bound over to keep the peace. The ill-feeling continued and last week it was revived when the sale of the property was completed, with Pillinger receiving the purchase money to the amount of £300. It appears that the Australian and his wife then determined to leave England and on Monday they packed up their boxes and made every arrangement to leave yesterday morning. Rogers hearing of this took a gun and went to the house at Hanham between 11 and 12 o'clock at night and asked Pillinger if he meant to give him his share of the property. They had an altercation for a few minutes and Rogers then suddenly raised the gun and shot his father-in-law in the face the charge blowing away the lower part of his jaw. He is likely to recover however. Rogers's body was found in the Avon two hours afterwards'

John Pillinger and Mary Nightingale Rogers were married in 1884 and whilst I waited for the certificate to arrive I looked into the history of the Rogers family who lived at the Chequers.

Isaac Rogers of Hanham married Mary Nightingale Rumbold who was born in Exton, Hampshire in 1860. Theirs was a May/September match, for Isaac was more than thirty years her senior. In 1861, he was 'a carrier by water' aged fifty six to her twenty three. Two daughters, Rose and Mary Ann aged six and four may have been theirs or Isaac's alone. Also in the household was an old deaf woman, Edith Pollinger, aged 76, 'a general servant, unmarried'. A small family called Pollinger, who also lived in Bitton has frequently been muddled with the Pillingers though seem to be discrete. The only other sighting of Edith is in 1841, where she was a servant working for a John Andrews at Hanham Mills. The final occupant in the Rogers household was Henry Jones, aged sixteen, a driver of barge horses.

By 1871, the family had considerably increased for though Isaac was now stated to be 'aged 70' he was 'a barge proprietor', and was certainly lusty enough, having produced five more children in the interim with his wife Mary Nightingale. The eldest daughter Rose had left, perhaps married, but Mary Ann was now 14, and she was followed by Jesse Isaac aged 8, Alfred, 6, Lewis, 4, Aaron, 3, and Gilbert, a babe in arms.

Isaac Rogers died aged eighty, early in 1880. The next year's census described Mary Nightingale Rogers aged 43, 'baker/grocer', with the children, Mary Ann, 24, proudly described 'Governess – Professor'. Jesse Isaac, 18, a 'butcher – unemployed', his brothers Alfred and Lewis, 16 and 14, shoemakers. Thirteen year old Aaron assisted his mother as a baker, Gilbert, wrongly shown as nine, attended school, as did two more children who had arrived since the last census, Lily 9, and Oliver, eight.

There is no doubt that the widow's household was thrown into confusion by the arrival of John Pillinger, an exotic creature, who had returned from foreign parts.

I have referred briefly to William Pillinger, the half-brother of John the latter, who was born in 1793, to John Pillinger and his second wife Silvia. William married Hannah Isaacs in 1821 and in 1841 they were living with their children Mary, born in 1824 and John, born 1828. Their elder daughter Elizabeth was by this time married to George Jeffrey and two other children, Ann and Simon had died in 1835 and 1836. In 1843, a 'John Pillinger of Bitton aged 25', was accused of the theft of brass at Mangotsfield. This John makes no appearance elsewhere and seems to have slipped through every net, unless '25' is a mistake for 15. If this is so, and it is 'a big if' then he is our William's son, the John Pillinger who married Anne White in 1853 at Bitton who thereafter disappeared from the area. Whether having had previous "form" and a further offence led to transportation or he went to Australia of his own accord, he was now back "with a vengeance". Mary Nightingale, a mother of eight, previously "an old man's darling" had her head well and truly turned by this exotic world traveller.

They were married at St Paul's, Bedminster, well out of the way of gossiping tongues, on the 13th August 1884. Once again there is doubt concerning John's age which he gave as 47, perhaps he was overly sensitive, being younger than his bride, who was correctly shown as forty six. John was an inn-keeper (had he already put his feet under the table?), the son of William Pillinger, coalminer, deceased, and Mary Nightingale Rogers the daughter of Jesse Rumbold, a farmer, also deceased. John made his mark but Mary Nightingale signed her name. The couple gave 52 Old Charlotte Street and 2 Willway Street as their respective

ATTEMPTED MURDER AND SUICIDE.

A young man named Rogers, son of an innkeeper, shot his father-in-law through the head on Monday night at Hanham, near Bristol, and, believing that he had killed him jumped into the river and was drowned. Rogers was the son of Isaac Rogers, who was the landlord of the Chequers inn, on the river-side. The father, who also kept the ferry at Hanham, died about three years ago, and left all his property to his widow, who was 36 years of age, the son being then 18. About six months ago an Australian named Pillinger, who was stated to have made much money in the colonies, arrived at Hanham and shortly afterwards married the widow. Three months afterwards the pair began to sell their house property, and at one of the sales young Rogers attended and protested against the auction proceeding, on the ground that he had an interest in the property. A fight took place between Rogers and Pillinger, and Rogers was summoned for assault and bound over to keep the peace. The ill-feeling continued, and last week it was revived when the sale of the property was completed by Pillinger receiving the purchase-money, to the amount of £300. It appears that the Australian and his wife then determined to leave England, and on Monday they packed up their boxes and made every arrangement to leave yesterday morning. Rogers, hearing of this, took a gun and went to the house at Hanham between 11 and 12 o'clock at night and asked Pillinger if he meant to give him his share of the property. They had an altercation for a few minutes, and Rogers then suddenly raised the gun and shot his father-in-law in the face, the charge blowing away the lower part of the jaw. He is likely to recover, however. Rogers's body was found in the Avon two hours afterwards.

abodes, but these may have been accommodation addresses, simply to confirm they were 'of this parish' for the purposes of the banns of marriage. At this stage with no hint of family animosity, Mary Ann Rogers and Lewis Rogers attended the wedding and signed as witnesses.

A few months later the couple signalled their intention of leaving for Australia, to the fury of Mary Ann's third son who had already assaulted his step-father. What can Mary Nightingale have been thinking of that it seems she intended leaving her children behind? The three youngest were still only fifteen, thirteen and twelve. Nevertheless despite

the tension in the household, the couple packed their bags.

The local account of the events⁸⁸, 'Determined Suicide and Attempted Murder at Hanham' differs slightly to that in "The Times:

'It appears that about six months ago, a widow, Mrs. Rogers, who kept an out-door beerhouse called The Nightingale's Rest at Hanham Mills was married to a man called Pillinger. This apparently caused some ill-feeling in the mind of her son, a young man about nineteen years of age who had resided with his mother at the beerhouse. Soon after, Mr. and Mrs. Pillinger, desiring to leave the neighbourhood expressed their intention to dispose of some property (about four houses) possessed by Mrs. Pillinger; shortly after a sale took place. These circumstances caused frequent altercations between Lewis Rogers and his parents and he was summoned at Lawford's Gate petty session and bound over to keep the peace. Affairs reached a climax yesterday. In the morning it is alleged Lewis Rogers came into Bristol and purchased a revolver and in the course of the day after his return to Hanham Mills he again made a disturbance during which he drew the weapon and shot his step-father Mr. Pillinger in the face, the bullet penetrating some distance. Immediately following the disturbance, Lewis Rogers ran to the river which is only about five yards from the Nightingale's Rest and jumping into the water swam to a shallow spot in the middle. On reaching this spot which is a large mound of mud, Rogers, a powerful swimmer stood for a few moments looking at the persons who had assembled on the banks of the river and then deliberately jumped into the deep water and allowed himself to sink. He was not seen alive afterwards. The body was subsequently recovered. Pillinger, it is stated, after being shot ran to the unfortunate young man and endeavoured to prevent him jumping into the water but was unsuccessful in his efforts. Dr Lodge of Keynsham arrived soon after the occurrence and extracted the bullet from Pillinger's face. The wound is serious but not regarded as dangerous and yesterday the wounded man was progressing satisfactorily.'

An inquest was held by Dr. E.M. Grace⁸⁹, the coroner for West Gloucestershire. The evidence of the family dispute and subsequent purchase of the revolver was re-iterated and is substantially the same as in the above reports, except that it was stated that the family had previously kept the Chequers Inn but 'some years before' had left it for the Nightingale's Rest, about a hundred yards away. George Bruton, a quarryman, told how he had seen the deceased rush from the house followed by his step-father and had jumped over the wall and into the weir. He had not attempted to swim and 'after floating a few yards, held up his hands and went down'. The witness believed that the family had lived happily before the recent sale of the property which had taken place at the Maypole, after which Lewis Rogers believed he would be 'done out of what was his due.' Daniel Cox, a stone mason, described how he had searched for the body. He had known the deceased a long time but 'never considered there was anything wrong with his mind.'

The coroner summed up by saying a verdict of suicide did not make the difference it once had "*when persons guilty of felo de se⁹⁰ had stakes driven through their bodies and were buried by the cross roads at night. Nowadays it was up to the clergy to bury them if they*

⁸⁸ WDP 4.6.1885

⁸⁹ Brother of the famous 'W.G.'

⁹⁰ 'Self-murder'

chose though they were not compelled to give them a Christian burial.” The jury then delivered a verdict accordingly.

The death of ‘Louis’ Rogers aged 19 was recorded at Keynsham. John Pillinger recovered though he must have been horribly disfigured. He and Mary Nightingale left the Kingswood district for Southampton where John died ‘aged 53’ in 1889. In 1891 Mrs. Pillinger, now widowed for the second time, was running The Spa Tavern at Spa Road, Southampton with her daughter Lily Rogers, 19, as her assistant. In 1893 she was married for the third time, to a George Augustus Chambers. In turn, Lily married George Kingston, a merchant seaman of Portland, Dorset. On census night in 1901, Mary was living with her daughter and son-in-law at 11 St Andrews Road, Southampton; her husband George Augustus Chambers was absent. He died at Droxford, Hampshire, aged 81 in 1910. By 1911, Lily had a new husband William James Barnes, a cycle agent and was living with him and a lodger at 28 Gosbrook Road, Caversham, near Reading. Her mother, Mary Nightingale Chambers came too. Mary’s death aged 74, was registered at Reading the following year.

The life of adventure that Mary Nightingale had envisaged after her whirlwind romance with John Pillinger obviously never materialized and apart from Lily Kingston Barnes, I have been unable to discover what became of the Rogers children who were seemingly left high and dry. Perhaps – poetic justice - they all went to Australia?

The present Chequers Inn was built in 1901 and replaced the former building. The Nightingale’s Rest is perhaps the building on the left. The mound where young Isaac stood



before his fatal leap must be the grassy spot between the two channels.

The Chequers was a frequent destination when we went on a family walk, usually ‘Down ‘Annum’, (groan) most balmy Sunday evenings in summer. In those days kids were not allowed

in pubs and we stayed outside with a packet of crisps and a bottle of lemonade. An instruction to “Play nicely” was impossible as we were hampered by being in our ‘best Sunday clothes’. It was excruciatingly dull. When the adults had finished their drinks, we walked home again. A few years later it was a favoured haunt of mine when I played truant here from Kingswood Grammar School.

A 'Saint' among the sinners.....

..... but first, a return to the census of 1861 at Kingswood Hill. Stephen our patriarch, allegedly aged 51, had left coalmining and taken up his father's hatting trade, to be precise, fur cutting, and was joined at the bench by his daughter, Hannah Clark, the wife of William Clark, a 29 year old ag. lab. As well as their daughter, son-in-law, grandchildren children Mary, 4 and Jane Clark, 2, Stephen and Jane had five younger children at home: Thomas, (my great-grandfather), his brother John, 17, both ag. labs, Sarah Ann, 15, Ann, 13 and Elizabeth, 11.

In December, 1861 the boys got into hot water and were brought up at Keynsham Petty Sessions, for poaching at Queen Charlton:

*'John Pillinger, Thomas Pillinger, Stephen Hayden and James Palmer, all of Bitton, were summoned by George Buckingham, keeper to Mr. Myners for being on land in the occupation of Farmer Broad of Queen Charlton in pursuit of conies on Saturday 3 November. George Smart, assistant gamekeeper deposed to seeing the defendants with a lurcher dog on the day in question, beating for rabbits. He asked them what they were doing and they answered they were endeavouring to find some watercresses. He asked whose dog they had with them, and they said they didn't know, but they believed it belonged to a farmer up the lane. They gave it something to eat and it followed them. One of the defendants subsequently said the dog belonged to his father. They refused to give their names at first but ultimately did so. The witness was corroborated by Buckingham and they were each fined £1 including costs which were paid by the defendants' friends.'*⁹¹

The sinned against, Henry Eden Myners was 'a fund holder' who lived nearby in Chewton Keynsham with his aged grandfather. Samuel Broad, 70, farmed two hundred acres, employing three men and a boy, who included his brother-in-law William Toghill and a carter, George Adlem, who lived in, 'below the salt'.

I imagine that Stephen and Jane were not best pleased when Tom got into trouble of a different variety. In 1866, he fathered a son, born to Elizabeth Lacey, christened Frederick at Warmley on 6th February. I was told about this boy by Dad, his sister, my Aunt Nell, and by Doreen Street, who was one of Fred's grandchildren. Each one of these three believed they were the only custodians of this bit of scandal. Dad, having the last word with his usual irreverence said Tom had "a gammy foot" and thus not quick enough to run away. Thomas married Lavinia Fray at Bitton in 1868, "on condition that she brought up the other woman's child." Something on which they all agreed, but unfortunately, this was the extent of anyone's knowledge. Though the main participants were all long dead it was still shameful: Dad asked me not to mention it when I gave talks on the Pillinger family. As 'the talks' are themselves now historical, forty years in the past, anyone likely to be offended is long dead.

It seemed a very peculiar arrangement to me, but on the next census, the 2 April 1871, bits of it appeared to be confirmed. Thomas, a shoemaker, aged 29 was described 'lame';

⁹¹ WDP 3.12.1861

Lavinia⁹², his wife, 25, born Keynsham with sons named Fred Lacey, aged 5, and George Pillinger, two. On reflection it seems Tom Pillinger did the honourable thing as far as he was able. Lavinia too was obviously a remarkable woman. (Fred Lacey was baptised at Warmley to Elizabeth Lacey 6 February 1866. I wish I knew what happened to her. To Dad he was "Uncle Fred".)

By 1871, William and Hannah Clark had their own home at 38 Cherry Wood, and three more children had been born, William, junior, 9, Ann, 7 and Kate 3, all scholars. Also in the household was George Clark, a bachelor of 43, a mason's labourer, who was probably William's brother. Whether these Clarks were related to the little boys who perished at Easton Pit with Jacob Pillinger is unknown. Sarah Williams, aged 50, Jacob's daughter, lived next door, with her husband Abraham, a gardener, two stepchildren, Harriet and Henry aged 16 and 14, and her own son Thomas, nine.

Alfred Pillinger was living with his family at Made for Ever; Aaron who would soon go to America was at 1 Hanham Road, and Stephen junior at Oldland. Elizabeth had married a carpenter called Samuel Bond in 1869. Great Aunt Flo called her Aunt Lizzie Bonn (sic) and said she kept a little shop near Kingswood Park. Samuel Bond died 10 February 1922 aged 72 and Elizabeth Bond, also 72, 'of 111 High Street, Kingswood' died on the 25th November, 1925. They were buried at Wesleyan. Stephen and Jane had lost another, daughter Ann at the age of 14 in 1862.

In 1871, Stephen, now 61, was 'a skin dealer', and he and Jane at last had the cottage at Potter's Wood to themselves. They were not lonely, however, for next door lived their daughter Sarah Ann – known as Saran – with her husband Thomas Bright, a collier, who she had married at Bitton in 1868, and their two small daughters, Clara and Elizabeth.

Jane died on 14 June 1875, at Potters Wood, 'aged 67', from a diseased liver and jaundice and was buried like so many more at Wesleyan. Stephen moved next door to his daughter Saran Bright and her husband Tom, and remained with them until his death twenty four years later.

By the time the census came around again in 1881, Thomas Pillinger, 38, a shoemaker, and Lavinia, 34, were living at 43 Potters' Wood with five sons, Frederick, 15, (no longer called Lacey and known as Fred Pillinger) George, 12, Albert, 7, (my grandfather), Alfred, 4, and Henry, 1.

In 1891, Thomas and Lavinia were at 226 Blackhorse Lane with their remaining children, George, 20, Albert, 17 and Alfred, 14, all bootmakers, Harry, 12, Lavinia, 9, Kate, 7 and Elizabeth, 2 and safety in numbers continued. Fred who married Alice Britton at Bitton on 7 June 1886, were at no. 224 with their children Arch (sic), aged 5, George, 4, and Alfred, 3; John and family were in 223, and in 225, Thomas and Saran Bright, plus grandfather Stephen Pillinger.

⁹² For Lavinia's interesting ancestry see Part 2: the Dutchmen

Little Kate, Tom and Lavinia's daughter, aged ten was buried at Wesleyan on 11 February 1896. It was probably a year or so later that Elizabeth, her sister, (otherwise 'Great Aunt Flo') had her photograph taken at Chas. Hook's Richmond Studios with her elderly grandfather, Stephen, with her elder sister, 'Vinny'. If I assume, the picture was taken in 1898, a year before Stephen died, then Vinny was about 15, and Flo, seven or eight. Both girls are very well dressed, Flo slightly crumpled in a full smock decorated with a rosette, and over-large leg of mutton sleeves; Vinny elegant, with a neat waist, a ruched bodice with a frilled collar and similar, though well-fitting sleeves.

From her demeanour and immaculate dress, I would have suspected an eager young man, and subsequent marriage, but alas, I knew that Vinny died young; Aunt Flo had told me so,

but I was not prepared for the how and where. Vinny was admitted to the Keynsham Union Workhouse on 7th October 1903 and died there on the 26th March 1909.

Stephen with Vinny and Elizabeth/Flo



What can have happened to this lovely girl between the photograph in 1898 and 1903 when she was sent to the Workhouse, where she seems to have endured nearly six years? My mind ran riot. Both her parents were alive, as well as five elder brothers, all of whom might have given her a home. Had she perhaps given birth to an illegitimate child for which many an unfortunate girl was shut away? If this was the case, it revealed plenty about double standards, given her father's youthful indiscretion. Certainly what happened to Vinny was a secret not to be revealed; Flo had simply said that her elder sister had died.

And by the time I came across the entry, Flo herself was long gone.

Vinny's death certificate declared she had died of 'epileptic convulsions' at the Workhouse. Epilepsy. They would have been mortally ashamed, something they associated with the casting out of devils; to be kept quiet at all costs. Poor girl. But perhaps it was not epilepsy at all. Epilepsy was then a catch-all term for which there was no real explanation. Could she possibly have had another neurological complaint which at the time had no name? Autism or its cousin Asperger's Syndrome? A perceived oddity and a melt-down would have been sufficient for her to be put away. Enough for her to be severely restrained. Too horrible to contemplate. Vinny's brother Alfred of 150 St Michael's Terrace 'was present at the death'. As late as 1970 British law prevented 'epileptics' from marrying.

Stephen Pillinger died on the 21 February 1899, with his funeral reported at length in the local press⁹³:

'One of the largest funerals seen at Kingswood for some time was that of the late Mr. Stephen Pillinger which was held at the Wesleyan graveyard Kingswood on Sunday. Deceased, who was one of the oldest residents in Kingswood was most highly respected. Years ago he carried on successfully the business of a furrier, but for a long time he had been out of business. For over seventy years he attended Kingswood, pastor of Kingswood Wesleyan Chapel and he took a deep interest in the progress of Wesleyanism in the circuit. The rev John Hugh Jones, pastor of Kingswood Wesleyan Chapel speaking of deceased on Sunday said 'His was a beautiful and truly ideal life, - an unselfish life, full of love and praise. He never knew an aged saint who seemed more to his mind than such a beautiful type of Christianity.' The Kingswood Wesleyan was Circuit was re[resented] by Messrs. James Harris and W.B. Laurence (society stewards) Messrs. H. Yates & S. Roach (poor stewards) Messrs. G. Harris, G. Pullin, H. Green, M. Phipps, H. Mitchell, A. Harvey & W.S. May, (leaders). There was also a numerous representation of Sunday school teachers and Members of the Men's Bible and Society classes. The chief mourners were Mr. Alfred Pillinger, Mrs. English, Mr. Aaron Pillinger, Mrs. Ford, Mr. John Pillinger, Mrs. Bright, Mrs. Bond, Mr. S. Pillinger and Mr. T. Pillinger, sons and daughters. Mr. Ford, Mr. Bond, and Mr. English sons in law, Mr. & Mrs. Brain, Mr. & Mrs. Fry, Mr. & Mrs. Silverthorne, Mr. & Mrs. Raynes, Mr. & Mrs. Kerlake, Mr. & Mrs. Britton, Messrs. A. Pillinger, H. Pillinger, J.A. Pillinger, J. Cox, F. Pillinger, A. Pillinger, H. Pillinger, S. Pillinger, G. Pillinger, E. Pillinger, T. Flook, S. Bryant, J. Burgess, grandchildren and other relatives. As the funeral procession went to the chapel the organist Mr. G. Harris played Mendelssohn's 'O Rest in the Lord' and at the first part of the burial service the 'Dead March' from 'Saul'. The polished elm coffin with massive brass fittings was supplied by Mr. S. Bolton of Kingswood and bore the inscription 'Stephen Pillinger died 21st February aged 90 years'. It was covered with a number of beautiful wreaths.'

Stephen and Jane's youngest son John was born in 1844. He married Elizabeth Bright, a silk binder, at the Wesleyan Chapel on 15 May 1865. He was another who turned his hand to a variety of different occupations: a furrier in 1865; a mechanic at an iron works in 1871; an engine fitter in 1881; a grocer and licensee of the Mechanic's Arms, 1891; a baker in 1892.

⁹³ WDP/BM 28.2.1899

He appeared on the Kingswood Electoral Roll in 1874 as ‘an owner or tenant of property worth more than £50 per annum’, at Cockshott Hill where he had a freehold house and garden, making him eligible to vote, the first of the Kingswood Pillingers to be enfranchised.



In 1891 John and his family were living, as we have seen, at Blackhorse Lane, in close proximity of other family members. He and his wife Elizabeth had three children, Henry and John Albert, who were both bakers and a daughter Elizabeth, who was married, aged 19, to Joseph Cox, a stone dresser. Elizabeth and Joseph had a daughter, Violet May and a son, Cyril Joseph who died in 1912 aged 2 years and nine months. The little boy is commemorated on the stylish memorial in the Wesleyan churchyard in the same grave as his grandparents John and Elizabeth Pillinger, where in due course Elizabeth Cox would also be buried.

Henry aged 25 married twenty two year old Louisa Britton at Warmley on 14 May 1893 and died just over a year later leaving a widow, a young daughter, Edith Winifred, and £19 10s 5d. Louisa remarried, a bootmaker, Henry Whitcombe. By 1911 she had a shop at 6 Regent Street, Kingswood. As well as Edith⁹⁴, now aged 16, a music teacher, she and Henry had three sons, Herbert, Percy and Frank.

When Louisa died in 1932, and was buried at Wesleyan, beside her first husband. When Henry the second died in 1940, he joined them, thus Louisa lies between her two husbands. Their tombstone reads:

‘Henry, dearly loved husband of Louisa Pillinger, departed this life 24th August 1894 aged 27.

*You are not forgotten husband dear,
Nor ever will you ever be
As long as life and memory last
We will remember thee.*

‘Also of Louisa, dearly loved wife of Henry Whitcombe passed away 31st March 1932 aged 61, loved by all.

‘Also of Henry Whitcombe, beloved husband of the above, died 10th November 1940, aged 70.’

⁹⁴ Edith Pillinger married Henry Moon at Holy Trinity KW in 1919

Following Henry Pillinger's death, his brother John Albert was the sole proprietor of the bakery after which 'Pillinger's Road' is named. John Albert married Sarah Louisa Davis at Warmley in 1894 and had two sons, John Henry, (Harry) and Cecil Baden.

In October 1901, a fire broke out at the boot factory belonging to Arthur & Luke Peacock, which adjoined the Pillinger property. The Fire Brigade had no chance of saving the bakery but John Albert managed to move 130 sacks of flour to safety, as well as saving all their household goods.⁹⁵ The next year, in March, John Albert and Louisa's elder boy died. A poignant obituary appears in the Western Daily Press: *Pillinger. John Henry (Harry) dearly beloved child of John A. & Louisa P. of Blackhorse Rd, KW, after a short & painful illness, aged 6 years 11 months.*⁹⁶

They had a third child, a daughter, Stella, in 1912. Cecil Baden married Elsie May Willis, and had three children Sylvia, Elizabeth and John. Both girls 'passed the scholarship' to Kingswood Grammar School, but both left before my time. The Senior Mistress, Gertie Quinton, often called me Sylvia, a name I had once chosen for my best doll, and therefore much preferable to Doreen, but I was then unaware of any relationship.

The elder John Pillinger lived at York House, South Road⁹⁷, where Elizabeth his wife died on the 22nd September 1922. She was 77. A brief announcement appeared in the Western Daily Press with the addition: 'No flowers by request'. John himself died on the 30th July 1927, leaving the then considerable sum of £2,976, 13s 10d, with probate granted to his children, John Albert Pillinger and Elizabeth Cox. I cannot but think of Great Aunt Flo's recollection of old Stephen's tears, in connection with John and Thomas, for of course, his son Thomas left nothing at all.



Jack Johnson, the Champion of the World

& his part in our story

One of the pitfalls of tracing the family history is that on occasions you will be told (in all seriousness) a number of far-fetched tales. The summit of craziness was reached one day when Great Aunt Flo piped up:

"Did you know?" she said, "that your grandfather fought Jack Johnson?"

Jack was as famous in his day as Mohammed Ali and as controversial as Mike Tyson. He was forced to flee the United States through his then 'scandalous' marriage to a white woman.

⁹⁵ Bath Chron. 31.10.1901

⁹⁶ WDP 17.3.1902

⁹⁷ Bristol Directory, 1912

According to Flo, the Champion was down on his luck and was touring the British Music Halls, taking on all comers. She sincerely believed that her brother Albert had been one of those foolish enough to take up the challenge.

I wrote to the Evening Post in May 1976 to enquire if John had ever been to Bristol. It appeared not, but one reply was from a Mr. Jack Phelps, a boxing historian, who confirmed that Johnson had been a variety performer; that he wore a leopard skin outfit, like an African Chieftain's and would cross the stage in this garb with three giant strides, shouting "*Who'll take me on?*"

The more I thought of the idea that Albert had responded to the challenge, the sillier it became. I could imagine he might well have seen the performance – like many of the Pillingers he was a 'sportsman' though the race course was a more likely habitat than the variety theatre, but you never knew. Perhaps a gang of them went after a good day at the track. As to the rest, it is my belief that he was having Flo on.⁹⁸

In any event, with due respect to Mr Phelps, I have found nothing in contemporary newspapers to suggest any truth in his version either, concerning music halls and the like. The press was far more concerned with Johnson's blackness.

I was also contacted by Tony Ticktum, the husband of Pauline Pillinger, the granddaughter of Henry [Harry] Pillinger. Tony knew nothing of Jack Johnson, but said that George, Harry and Alb's elder brother "*used to fight in the circus, and in boxing booths, taking on all corners, with the likes of Sky Lines.*"⁹⁹ "*Did you know?*" he continued, echoing Flo, "*that George once walked to Birmingham to find work, didn't find any, and walked right back again?*"

I didn't. George's last official sighting so far is in 1901 when he was still living at home, aged thirty one. According to Dad he was, rather bizarrely, a pig ringer by trade, though in the census he was a bootmaker like the rest of them. As for Alfred, Albert's younger brother, according to Tony, "*he once had a stand up fight in Two Mile Hill with a butcher called Billy Jefferies.*" Alfred married Kate Edwards at Warmley on the 31st July 1904 and they had a son, Percy, born in 1908. According to Dad he had ginger hair and died aged 27, but this is unverified.

Much of the above seems to confirm the remark of another Pillinger, Tony Thompson's mother, Doreen Grace, (daughter of Onslow) who said, "*they weren't half rough, mind. They used to keep fighting cocks.*"

Henry Pillinger married Minnie Baber or Beaver, (these surnames being synonymous in Kingswood!) at Warmley in 1907. They had two children, Clarice Joyce who married Ernest Haskins in 1938 at Holy Trinity and Gilbert Edward who married Lilian Baker. Gilbert and Lilian had Pauline, (who became Mrs. Tony Ticktum), Paul, Roy, David and Brian. David's son Simon was at Brislington School when our children were there. Simon (very briefly) 'went

⁹⁸ True or not, the story inspired me to write a short play called "Endgames" in which I took a great deal of dramatic licence. I submitted it as part of my degree in 1992.

⁹⁹ William Charles 'Sky' Lines, Bristol boxer, 1866-1942

out' with Caroline. I would have recognised him at once: there was no denying the family likeness. He was much more interested in the family tree than any of my own children.



Elizabeth Pillinger, otherwise Flo married William Jefferis at Holy Trinity in 1908. In 1911, 'Elizabeth Jefferis', aged 21, a bootmaker, and her little son Philip, aged two, lived with her parents, Thomas and Lavinia at Counterpool Lane. Thomas was then aged 69, 'a parper' (sic) and Lavinia, 67, 'occupied with house duties'. I assume Flo and William Jefferis had already separated; they were later divorced. She married for the second time in 1929, William Walker. *This picture of Philip, Flo and Tom must have been taken about the time of the census in 1911.*

After Tom's death in 1915, the widowed Lavinia lived with Flo at 174 Two Mile Hill, where she died aged 89 on the 14th September 1936. Thomas and Lavinia were buried in grave no. 1023 at Wesleyan alongside their daughter Kate.



Albert Pillinger and his wife, Laura Hester Burchill. (And my son Kevin wonders where the nose came from!)

The Burchills, a coalmining family

Our grandparents, Albert Pillinger and Laura Hester Burchill were married at Bitton on 2 September 1894.

Laura Hester Burchill was born just over the border in Bristol, hence her birth was registered in Clifton rather than Keynsham.

From the first quarter of the 18th century people called Burchill lived in the parish of Mangotsfield, and though there is a stream of baptisms of the offspring of different couples, none are shown as the parents of Charles Burchill, the ancestor of Laura Hester, and therefore of us. Charles was born about 1745, not long after 'the Great Stir' of the preachers, at a time when the coal owners were concerned that the building of schools would give their workers ideas. On the 23 October 1746, John Cennick, the young Moravian school teacher who had come to Kingswood at the request of John Wesley in the Great Stir of 1739 wrote in his diary:

*'William Clear broke open door of the school accompanied by several others but it was done by the instructions of Thomas Burchill, bailiff of the coalworks under Mr Bragge. Mr Jenkins, the dissenting minister at Maidstone (once a Methodist) & Mr Humphries (ditto at Bradford) prompted them on. John Pool repented of it afterwards and joined the brethren. Clear also was sorry but went back to Burchill.'*¹⁰⁰

It is difficult to side with Thomas Burchill, the boss's man, but anyone can see that he would not want to jeopardise his good job as bailiff. He had his wife, Phoebe and a family of children born between 1728 and 1740 to support.

'Our' Charles Burchill married Elizabeth (Betty) Pierce at Bitton on the 15 September 1765, but returned to Mangotsfield where their children were born, namely Elizabeth, Francis, Nathaniel, Charles, George and Love. There is little known of them apart from their names, and the fact that they had a habit of marrying close relatives. Daughter Elizabeth married Charles Burchill in 1789, perhaps her cousin, and in the same year, Francis, married Hannah Pierce, probably a maternal cousin. Nathaniel was different: he married Ann Bramble at St James in Bristol in 1794.

Supposing Charles was in his mid-twenties when he married, he was probably about fifty five when he composed his will on the 25 September 1795. He was a man of considerable property:

¹⁰⁰ Cennick, J., Diary: F.C. Jones Papers, BRO & at University of Bristol Library

'By the permission of Almighty God, I, Charles Burchill of Kingswood in the parish of Mangotsfield in the county of Gloucestershire, being of sound mind, though weak in body do make and ordain this to be my last will and testament.....unto my beloved wife Elizabeth the dwelling house wherein I now live and the close in which it stands also my two tenements occupied by Daniel Summeril and Isaac Bryant with the gardens adjoining....also three closes of ground respectively the Upper Patch, the Middle Patch and the Lower Patch.....together with all appurtenances belonging to my said wife for her natural life for her own use.....upon condition that she remain unmarriedthat she keep the premises in good repair and keep the chief rent paid every half yearly as it becomes due and renew the lease of the said premises.....whenever any or the lives by which the same is held shall happen to die within twelve months next after the death of such life or lives.... Upon my wife's decease or upon her marriage or unlawful cohabitation with any other man or fail or default in repairing the said premises.....I give and bequeath my dwelling house to my son George.....his heirs and admors upon payment of £6 of lawful money to my son Charles his heir and admors....and to my son Francis the tenements occupied by Daniel Summeril and Isaac Bryant, with appurtenances etc, plus the ground called the Middle Patch, subject to payment of £6 to my son Charles.....I bequeath to my son Nathaniel all the close etc called the Upper Patch and to pay Charles £3....I give my son Charles the ground called the Lower Patch with the several sums of £6 and £3 above mentionedto accommodate each other with egress and ingress to and from respective premises with horses and carriagesto my son George the feather bed on which he currently sleeps immediately after my decease and all my goods, chattels, tools, implements, stock personal estate and effects whatsoever to my wife Elizabeth.....revoke all former wills, to which I put my Mark & Seal. Charles X Burchel'.¹⁰¹

One of Charles's daughters, Love, was buried aged six, and the absence of Elizabeth would suggest that she too was deceased.

I blinked when I first read *'The Upper, Middle and Lower Patch'*, for our back yard at Victoria Park abutted a piece of waste ground. Though otherwise we were 'townies', as kids, this was our domain, an island of greenery surrounded by an urban jungle of terraced houses. We rode the range, slapping our backsides as make-believe horses, we dug holes, built dens, lit fires and climbed the scabby old 'trees', and played amongst 'the tumps', stones which stuck out of the ground in the middle which were obviously once buildings of some sort. This hallowed spot was known to everybody as The Patch. I suspend my disbelief and imagine now (what I couldn't have guessed at the time) that this was the Middle Patch, our ancestor Charlie Burchill's bequest to his son Frank, our direct ancestor.

In the early sixties the Council claimed the land and built some unspeakably dreary flats on it. Whilst it was never a nature reserve, today it is a monstrous eyesore.

The Burchills were coalminers to a man and epitomize the danger to those who worked in the Kingswood pits. Elizabeth's husband, the other Charles Burchill, was killed aged 29, on the 20 October 1794, at his work in Charles Bragge's coalpit (a name we have come across before!) and his kinsman Stephen, was killed at one of the Duke of Beaufort's pits by 7 cwt of rubbish falling on his head. His funeral took place at Mangotsfield on Christmas Eve,

¹⁰¹ Mangotsfield, though in Gloucestershire was in the diocese of Bristol, hence the will is at BRO.

1797. Three more Burchills, a father and two sons, John, William and John, were killed in a boiler explosion at Starveall Pit, St George in 1851.

By the time Charles' widow Betty died in 1822, the boys had taken their share, and she was intestate, leaving effects under £20. Her affairs took some time to wind up, for the probate was not granted until 1827, to 'her lawful son, Francis Burchill, coalminer of Mangotsfield, with his brothers George, coalminer, and Nathaniel, yeoman, both of Stapleton as trustees'.¹⁰²

Francis and Hannah, nee Pierce, had Francis, junior, in 1790, Elizabeth, 1792, Dennis, 1799, Charles, 1802, William, 1808 and George, 1809.

Francis, junior bucked the trend and when, aged 25, he married Charlotte Punter (also from an old coalmining family) in 1815, he not a miner but a shoemaker. They had Samuel, 1819 Joseph, 1822, Charles, 1825, with Mary, James and Elizabeth bringing up the rear.

In 1841 Francis and Charlotte were living in Soundwell, with their children, Samuel and Joseph, both coalminers, and Charles, 15, Mary, 12, James, 8 and Elizabeth, 4.

Francis senior died aged 78 in 1838. Three years later his widow Hannah was shown as being 'of independent means' so perhaps a little of the inheritance was still intact. In 1841, the old lady was living with her daughter Elizabeth, the wife of a coalminer, William King, and their children, Thomas and William. Her son Francis and daughter-in-law Charlotte lived next door.

Hannah died the following year aged 76. She was buried at Mangotsfield church on the 30th October 1842.

In 1851, both of Francis and Charlotte's elder boys were married, Samuel to Hester Garland in 1841, and Joseph to Ann King, again 'keeping it in the family'. Their parents, Francis and Charlotte, now 60 and 55 years of age were still at the same address with Mary 21, James, 18, a coalminer like the rest and Elizabeth aged 14, a scholar, an encouraging sign. Francis the shoemaker was aged 72 in 1861, Charlotte, 64, with daughter Mary, a thirty year old spinster who worked 'in the fields' and James, 27, a coalminer. Francis died in 1863 and Charlotte in 1866, their lives, apparently blameless, reduced to no history except hatch, match and dispatch.

All Aboard for the First Fleet

Hester Garland, the wife of Samuel Burchill came from the same coalmining stock as her husband. Her surname, Garland also frequently occurs in the depressing catalogue of accidental deaths in the pits, from falling coal, from falling from the bucket on descending and one, Samuel, in 1814, killed when 'the steam engine severed his head from his body'.

¹⁰² BRO EP/J/3/3/9.

Hester's first confirmed ancestor is another Samuel, born about 1733, the second of three sons of John Garland and his wife Hannah Hobbs. No record exists of Samuel's christening and likewise there is no record of his marriage to Amy. Samuel 'followed the work' and therefore several of his children were born and baptised in the 'New Church, Kingswood' at St George. If Sam's arrangements were fairly haphazard, in one particular, he came up trumps. He left a will dated the 1 May 1802.

'to my wife Ammy (sic) Garland all that dwelling house that I now live with orchard and garden and an enclosure rented by William Brain to take all rents and profits for her natural life and after her decease to be equally shared between my children. If any wish to sell, they should give their brothers and sisters first refusal.

'One fifth part each to my son, Samuel Garland; my son Thomas Garland; my son Henry Garland; my daughter Mary Jones; my daughter Hannah Garland. After my wife's decease I give and bequeath unto my daughter Hannah Garland the house that I now live in excepted from the foregoing for so long as she doth continue a single young woman. But if her doth marry or cohabit with any man it shall be void to her immediately and enjoyed by her no longer time.'

In the name of god amen. I Samuel Garland now living In the Parish of Mangotsfield in the County of Gloucester do
give witness that the goods and chattels of my deceased wife Elizabeth Garland late of the County of Gloucester deceased
children Thomas and other named that is to say one Elizabeth wife of John Garland and one other child that unto my
John Henry Garland one other child that unto my son Thomas Garland one other child that unto my daughter Anne
The conditions and appointments of my son Thomas Garland lately executor of this my last will and testament
whom taking with the payment of all my debts and all former expenses in writing of Shrove have
date Henry Standish within the fourth day of May 1782
Signed sealed published and endorsed by the above named Samuel Garland The mark of and
Thomas Garland

One of Samuel Garland's children was missing from the will: Francis, born at St George in 1759. Francis was a Bad Boy. A highwayman, no less. Consequently, he has a history.

He comes to our notice charged at Winchester, Hampshire with five other men, Joseph Morley, Joseph Roach and three Irishmen called Leary, Kelly and Macfarlane with an assault on one Thomas Evans on the King's Highway, 'putting him in fear of his life and taking from his person 12 yards of muslin, value 20 shillings and divers other goods value £5.13s.0d'. They were all found guilty at the Assizes on the 3 March 1783. Francis was sentenced to death but reprieved a few weeks later.

With no facilities for long term prisoners, there were only two options available for convicts: the gallows or transportation. Along with Morley and Roach, (the Irishmen are not mentioned, what happened to them?) Francis was sent to a Thames prison hulk to await his enforced migration across the sea. He languished a whole year before being put aboard the ship, the 'Mercury' on the 26 March 1784. He had the misfortune to be born in 'interesting times'. The American War of Independence which raged 1775-1783 put an end to the convenient arrangement whereby Britain unloaded her unwanted riff-raff across the

Atlantic and on to the Virginian plantations. In 1781 and 1782 with America no longer



available, the government made two disastrous attempts to establish penal colonies in West Africa which had to be abandoned as most of the convicts as well as soldiers and guards died from disease or starvation; the

remaining few escaped.

In 1783, having lost the war, the authorities assumed, somewhat arrogantly, that everything would go back to normal. A transport ship called the 'Swift' was fitted out and set sail from Blackwall in the Thames, allegedly for the fledgling United States, though the 'passengers' were terrified that their destination was Africa. In due course this brought about a mutiny which fizzled out in Portsmouth. Six of the so-called ringleaders were hanged and the remainder put on board the 'Mercury' to continue their journey along with its contingent of prisoners who included our Francis Garland.

Now common sense might lead anyone to believe that a very close watch indeed would have been kept on any of the previous convicts from the 'Swift', especially, a desperate character like one William Blatherhorne who had been involved in several previous incidents, both in gaol and aboard the 'Swift'. He had been shot in the neck allegedly trying to escape and also was caught with a gun following the mutiny, behaviour which at least matched those who had been executed. He was either the luckiest man alive, or to my suspicious mind, an informer.

At 8 a.m. on Thursday, the 8 April 1784, the 'Mercury' was 75 miles west of the Scillies, bound for America, though the convicts still believed their ultimate destination was Africa.

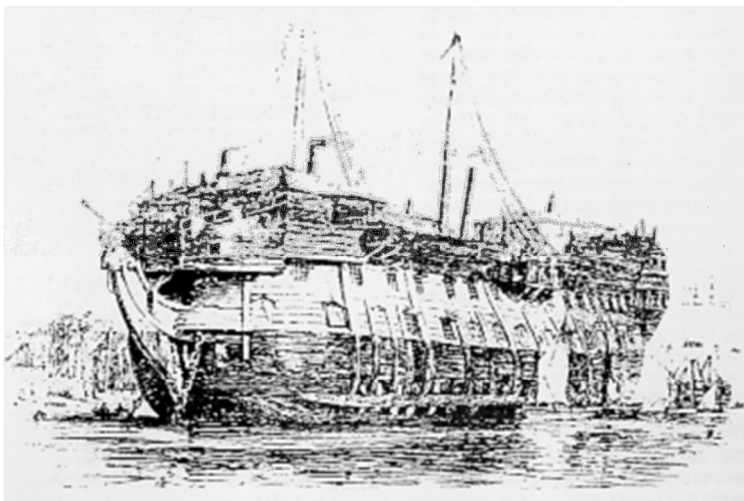
"Some of the men informed us that if they could not dispose of us in America, they were to dispose of us in Africa," said one of the men.

The prisoners rose up against the Captain and crew, and took the ship by force. There were only a few (if any) professional seamen among them and that they were able to remain at sea for six days, apparently without sustaining any loss of life, is a considerable achievement. They might even have succeeded in getting away altogether if they had not been forced back by rough seas, and they finally ran aground at Torbay. They scarpered off in all directions.

Francis Garland escaped in the mayhem, but he was recaptured at Plymouth and taken to Exeter Bridewell. Ninety men and boys were retaken, including Blatherhorne, Thomas Limpus, (who had been convicted of the theft of a handkerchief and had previously escaped from Africa), John Hudson, an eight year old chimney sweep and James Grace, aged eleven. They were tried at Exeter Assizes on the 8 July 1784 'for returning from transportation', were all found guilty and sentenced to death. Only two (un-named) went to the gallows, the rest, including Francis had their sentences commuted and were put aboard the prison Hulk 'Dunkirk', the temporary home for West Country prisoners. Francis' behaviour was noted as 'troublesome at times.'

Francis was probably unaware that he was one of the lucky ones. The 'Mercury' continued her voyage to the fledgling United States with those who had stayed on board. Unsurprisingly she was not permitted to land. She sailed on to Central America where she landed on 'the Mosquito Coast'. Nothing more has been heard of ship, crew or convicts.

Meanwhile, interesting developments were afoot. There was a 'new' continent in the southern seas, and it was allegedly empty! Salvation was at hand. A fleet of ships was being fitted out with the idea of establishing a convict colony in this new land.



Prison hulk 'Dunkirk'

Francis remained on the hulk for almost three years before the Fleet was ready to sail. At last he embarked on the 'Charlotte' on the 11 March 1787, along with

Blatherhorne and Limpus. John Hudson the chimney sweep was put aboard the 'Friendship' and landed at Port Jackson on the 12 January 1788; he was still only twelve years old. Sadly James Grace though listed as a First Fleeter seems to have died during the voyage. The 'Charlotte' arrived on the 26 January 1788 with Francis Garland aboard. Three years later, on Christmas Eve, 1791, he married a convict woman, Sarah Bartlam. Nothing further is known of him and he may have been dead by 1806 when Sarah was recorded as living with a John Bayley as his housekeeper.

Garlands and Burchills

Samuel Garland died on the 3 September 1804. His will, with effects under £200, was proved two months later on the oaths of his sons Henry and Thomas as join executors. To his family, Francis had been lost for many years.

Thomas Garland, the son of Samuel and Amy, was baptised at Mangotsfield in 1773 and married Hester Johnson on the 5 February 1792 at St P & J, Bristol, before witnesses Peter and Joseph Johnson, who were probably the bride's brothers. Thomas worked at the local pits in various capacities, described 'collier' and latterly an 'engine driver at a coal pit'. He



and Charlotte were the parents of Charlotte, 1793 and William, 1796, baptised at Mangotsfield church, though the family later became Wesleyans. Their daughter Ann was born about 1799, but not christened until 1807 when she was taken to Kingswood School (father 'by trade a colyar of Mangotsfield'). Their son Samuel was also christened in the schoolroom in 1809. Their daughters Amy and Hester arrived in 1816 and 1817, but only Hester was recorded ten years later at Mangotsfield parish church, shown as 'Hetty, aged 10, daughter of Thomas and Hester Garland, collier' on the 10 June 1827.

In 1833, a George Garland, (one of several possible George Garlands) was one of five collier boys trapped in Lodge Pit, (at 'the Causeway' Kingswood, which still retains its name) for nearly a week. There was a famous rescue and the boys were all brought out alive.

George Garland, from the poster sold to raise funds for the boys 'to apprentice them to some plain trade'.¹⁰³ (Note the chain his 'tugger' and the iron candlestick in his hat.)

Thomas Garland, the colliery engine driver, was buried aged 62 on the 25 November 1835 at Mangotsfield. His widow, Hester was living in Kingswood in 1841, with her daughter, Amy, a pin header, and her grandchildren Susanna, 6, Ann, 3 and her other daughter, Hetty, our great great grandmother who was soon to be married to Samuel Burchill. The wedding took place at Bitton on the 20 November 1841.

Ten years later the Burchills were living at St George with their children Charlotte, 5, Francis and Samuel, plus a lodger, another collier, William Banfield, a relative by marriage. The men were probably working at Starveall Colliery where in June, their kinsmen, John Burchill and

¹⁰³ The 1833 poster showing all five boys was given to me over 30 years ago by Miss W.F. Lloyd, a descendant of one of the boys. It is a unique survival, and to me, priceless. A pity the 'artist' couldn't draw hands!

his two sons William and John would be among the eight coalminers killed when a boiler exploded.

In 1851, old Hester Garland was '78', existing on parish relief and living in Kingswood with her elder daughter Charlotte and brother-in-law, Samuel Sheppard, a horse trainer, their son Samuel junior, 4, and Amy's daughter Susannah, a cotton weaver aged 16. Hester died suddenly on the 17 December 1854, and an inquest was convened. There were no suspicious circumstances however – she was, after all, 84 years old; the verdict given was the 'Visitation of God'.

In 1861, Samuel and Hetty Burchill were back in Mangotsfield with their now four children, their youngest, William, aged nine, would become our great grandfather. Ten years later they were at Two Mile Hill where great aunt Flo of the Pillingers would eventually live, with her mother Lavinia, nee Fray. I suspect they all knew each other long before the various children got married and the families became one. In 1871, Samuel and Hetty still had their daughter Charlotte, 24, a shoe binder, at home, as well as Francis, 22, Samuel, 20 and William, 18, all labourers. Childhood and youth was short, and the next year on the 7 October 1872, William, just twenty years old married Elizabeth Brain, 'of full age', that is over 21 - a shoe maker. Elizabeth made her mark but William signed the register in a good round signature. Dad told me *"I used to go an' read to 'un on a Sunday, out the Bible; he couldn't read nor write."* Was Dad's boyhood memory at fault? William had evidently been to school. Perhaps he just couldn't see: cataracts? or macular degeneration?¹⁰⁴

The three largest Kingswood families by some way are the Bryants, Brittons and the Brains, all of these surnames recorded in the district from 'time out of mind' and found in the earliest of the church records from 1500. Rather than making matters easier you are lucky to be able to fit together the avalanche of names; not every baby was christened, and men and women went out of the parish to get married (or didn't bother at all); even deaths, when no qualifying information is supplied can be hard to prove. Plus there are inevitable gaps in the records, not only small slips due to human error or forgetfulness, but whole tranches lost altogether, ravaged by damp or eaten by rodents. It is even impossible to place 'A. Braine' the local author of *The History of Kingswood Forest* (1891). The Brains were coalminers, (at least eleven are known to have been killed in coal pit accidents) and mine owners. One was famous, 'Big Ben' Brain, a prize fighter, the bare knuckle Champion of England in 1791.

Hugh Brain, Elizabeth's father was born about 1806, the son of William Brain and his wife, nee Mary Rider, his name being entered as an afterthought at the end of the Hanham/Oldland parish register as 'one of the baptisms that cannot be found'. (Mary's family, the Riders lived at St George, but her name likewise does not appear in the registers.) William Brain may be the son of James and his wife Sarah, nee Davis, but this is far from conclusive with other Williams as possible candidates. Elizabeth Cook, Hugh's eventual wife, born in the Bitton area between 1809 and 1811 according to census records is, like Mary Rider, not recorded at all.

¹⁰⁴ AMD. Another complaint I have 'inherited'.

Hugh and Elizabeth were married on Boxing Day 1831 at Bitton; Hugh worked in the Hanham quarries, a job no less hard and dangerous than coalmining. The couple's first child, Thomas, died aged 11 months. Their next child was a daughter, Anne in 1834. (She grew up to marry John Bees, who worked at the Barton Hill cotton factory.) Another Thomas was born in 1836, Sarah in 1838, (who married a collier, Francis Whitcomb); William, who died at six months in 1840; William the second, born in 1841; Mary Anne, in 1843 (who married George Britton); Samuel born in 1846 who worked with his father at the Crew's Hole quarry, married Elizabeth Jane Flew, from a family who eventually lived in 'our rank' in Victoria Park, Kingswood; George, born in 1848, was a collier, who married Sarah Ann Golding; last but not one was 'our' Elizabeth, baptised at Holy Trinity, Kingswood on the 14th May 1850, and finally, Martha, born in 1858, who married a collier, George Burgess.

In 1851 Hugh and Elizabeth were living in Hanham Lane when Hugh, 44, was working at the time as an ag. lab., (the only time he was so described). His children Thomas, 14, and Sarah, 12, were likewise ag. labs. Anne, 17, was engaged in 'household tasks', William, 9, had 'no occupation', whereas Mary Anne, 7, was mysteriously, 'scholar at home'. The rest were Samuel, five, George, 3 and our Elizabeth aged one.

It is Elizabeth Brain the mother who arouses my sympathy. Her occupation is 'maker of artificial flowers to sell' which makes me think of those gruesome pale wax lilies, shielded under glass domes which were part of the 'Victorian way of death' and could still be seen on graves when I was young. Rather than being a pleasant hobby, it must have been piece-work of the utmost drudgery, no wonder her eldest daughter did the housework. It can only have been a relief ten years later, when Hugh was back at the quarry and Elizabeth had become 'a market woman'. Hugh Brain died in 1879 aged 67, having lived an unobtrusive life. Elizabeth's death is as elusive as her birth and cannot be found with any certainty.

A lot can happen in ten years; in 1881, William Burchill and Elizabeth, married in 1872, were living at 24 Reformatory Lane, Kingswood, with their family of four, Alice, 8, Amy, Laura, 5, and Florry, aged 8 months. Laura was Laura Hester, our grandmother, and how I wish she had kept to her fetching first name, instead of the ugly Hester; it seems she was usually known as Hetty, after her grandmother, Hetty Garland. Perhaps 'Laura' was considered rather frivolous, but she certainly liked the name sufficiently to choose it for one of her daughters.

Samuel Burchill died on the 25th September 1879 at 3 John Street, Two Mile Hill from heart disease and dropsy, at the age of sixty two having spent his later years working as a grocer's porter. The informant was his daughter Charlotte, the wife of Isaac Morgan, inevitably a coalminer, of the same address where Hester, his widow also lived until her death, of hepatitis, aged sixty seven on the 28th November 1884. Samuel and Hester were buried at the derelict Wesleyan Graveyard in plot number 625. As access is now prohibited to the graveyard, this is a piece of useless information.

In 1891, William and Elizabeth were still in Reformatory Road, but with a change of house, no. 33, with Annie, 16, Laura H., 14, Florence 10 and Gilbert aged eight. I have been unable to find Alice, the eldest, though in 1901, she was back with the family, now at 5 Bryant's Terrace, St George. William Burchill, then aged fifty, was still a hewer at the pit and

Elizabeth his wife was 53. It would appear there was a full house: Alice, 28, Annie, 23, Esther, (otherwise Laura Hester) 24, Florry, 20, Gilbert, 18 (a coal pit tram boy), and William aged seven, plus a granddaughter, Edith, aged 10. William appears to have been reluctant to relinquish his daughters as he states that Annie, Esther and Florry are all 'married' but living under his roof. He keeps their maiden names, Burchill. Laura Hester had married Albert Pillinger in 1894 and Florry had married Samuel Taylor in 1898. an ag. lab. who had moved to Kingswood from Hull in Yorkshire. In 1901 Sam and Florry were living at the coincidentally named 'Taylor's Road' with their son, Stanley, aged two. Though I have been unable to find anything else about them, I recall meeting their daughter, Dad's cousin, 'Flossy' Taylor the wife of Ralph Brain who lived in the 'Pillinger enclave' at Blackhorse Road, Kingswood. Flossy had a daughter, Sheila Brain, about my age, who, poor girl, had Type 1 Diabetes and had to inject herself with a hypodermic needle. She appeared cheerful enough considering this daily ordeal, as to her it was the norm. I do not recall meeting any other of these Burchill cousins and I presume they were overwhelmed by the plethora of rowdy Pillingers. Likewise, apart from the photograph of my grandmother, Laura Hester taken with Albert, I have been unable to locate a single photograph of any of the other Burchills.

Both Laura Hester, who like Florry, was entered in the 1901 census twice was a married woman, living at Blackhorse Road with her husband Albert Pillinger and their three children, Albert junior, 5, Lillie, 2 and Florence aged 8 months. Sadly, the baby died the following year aged just two.

Shoemakers and Cherry Stones

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Kingswood mines were in terminal decline, and similarly Oldland hatting seems to have all but ceased, perhaps it dwindled out after the slaves were freed after the North's victory in American Civil War. Kingswood's main industry was now shoemaking and almost everybody in the family was in the boot and shoe trade.

Laura Hester and Albert Pillinger worked together at the bench as outworkers making boots and shoes. Most of the little Victorian terraces in Kingswood came complete with an adjoining 'workshop', though most of these have now been converted to downstairs bathrooms. The boots and shoes were made on cast iron 'lasts' of varied sizes, from a tiny child's size up to the largest adult's. The workshops had about them the wonderful sweet smell of freshly tanned leather.¹⁰⁵ Mostly, the outworkers made 'pieces' or parts of shoes, which would be taken to the factory for finishing, but Albert was a journeyman, who could make a pair of boots or shoes from first to last, from a piece of raw leather to the finished product. Footwear would also be repaired, 'tapped and heeled' and patched until there was no further wear left. To leave both hands free, Albert, like all shoemakers, would hold a mouthful of nails as he worked, deftly removing each nail individually to tap into the sole of the boot or shoe. He had the Pillinger temper. *'I've known 'im sling an 'ammer at our Alb, for giving 'im lip,'* said Dad.

Albert and Hester had nine children, Albert, born 1896, Lily, in 1900, Alfred, (Dad, who was always known as Jack) born on the 11 February 1902, Polly in 1904, Ernest, (who was always

¹⁰⁵ Harry Drinkwater in no. 35 (next door but one) in Victoria Park where we grew up was still a working shoemaker and I can still remember the lovely smell.

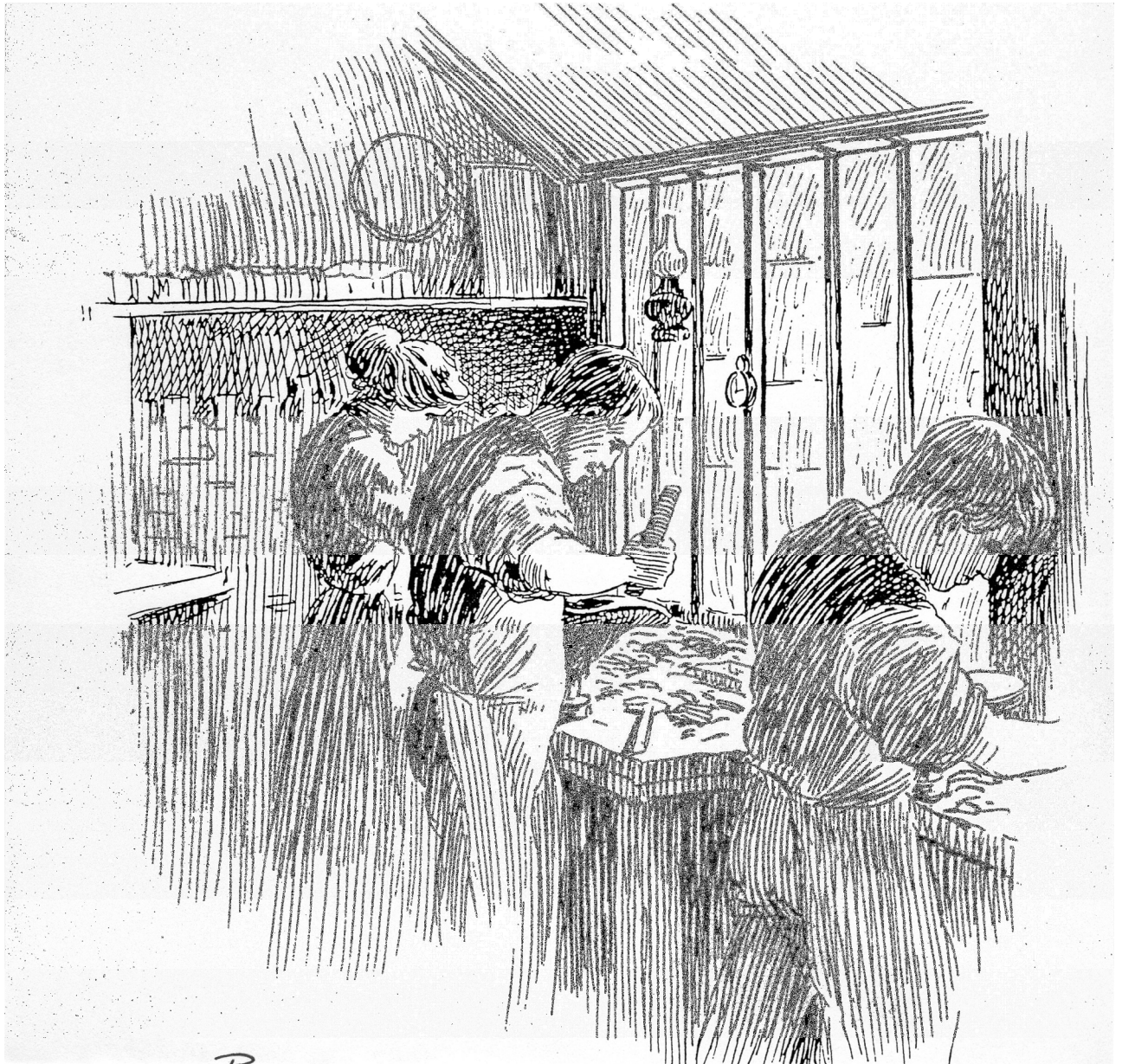
called Trix) in 1905. Nellie in 1909, Laura in 1911, and then Edith Cavell, born 1916 named at the suggestion of her brother Albert who was then serving in the Great War.¹⁰⁶ She was always known as Cavell, otherwise 'Our Cav'. The baby of the family was Amelia ('Our Mee') born in 1918.



Wesleyan Chapel, once the pride and joy of the merchant, Samuel Budgett, now a derelict shell.

I awaited the publication of the 1911 census to make the acquaintance of them with great anticipation. Then.....nothing. Zilch. Zero. They were probably recorded but their entry has not survived; likewise not a single christening for any of them at Wesleyan, or anywhere else.

¹⁰⁶ Edith Cavell was the British nurse shot by the Germans in 1915 for helping Allied prisoners escape.



“Out workers”. Shoemakers at work in Kingswood, as drawn by Samuel Loxton, ca 1890. The workshops were attached to the back of the houses, as in our house at 33 Victoria Park. A shoemaker, Harry Drinkwater, in no. 35, was still working like this when Colin & grew up. I still have several of Dad’s ‘lasts’ in the garage.

Meet ‘our’ Pillinger family.

Dad’s brothers and sisters, with various in-laws:

1. Albert Henry ('Alb') 1895 - 1987
Mar. (1) Mabel ('May') Thorne (died 1962)
(2) Violet Grayston, 1969



Albert & May, (right) with unknown person.

Two sons: Jack, 1925-2004
(left: 'The other Jack Pillinger')
& David, 1931 -

Albert junior survived the War, and worked as a gardener for the Bristol Corporation Parks Department. He married Mabel (May) Thorne who died in 1962. They had two sons, David and Jack. David married Audrey Graham in 1955 and they ran a restaurant and then a pub. They had two daughters, Tracey and Tina. Jack married Betty Mavis Smith at St Michael's Bedminster. Their only daughter Jane married Paul Brian Boys in 1995.



2. Lily ('Lil') 1899 - 1930

Married James Gregory, 1922. For her history, see below

3. Florence, 1900 – 1902. Florence made just the one appearance on the 1901 census. She was buried at Wesleyan. Dad never mentioned this baby sister who died the year he was born.

4. Alfred ('Jack') 1902 - 1985 (Dad – see below)

5. Polly ('Poll') 1903 - 1984
married Walter Flook, 1933



One daughter, Susan (left). Right Polly & Wally on holiday with Jack & Flo, (Mum & Dad) behind

Susan married Brian Hodgson in 1970; two children, Scott & Jessica.

6. Ernest (Trix) 1905-90, with his wife Elsie Austin. No Children



7. Nellie Lavinia ('Nell') 1909-1977
She married James (Uncle Jim) Gregory, 1931, (widower of her sister Lily. For her history, see below)

8. Laura, 1911-1935





9. Edith Cavell ("Our Cav") married Samuel Risdale. No children

10. Amelia ('Mee') 1918 – 1961

married Cyril Crew, 1941. One daughter, Annette.

I remembered that "Auntie Mee" lived with us early in the war; she used to sing "the Umbrella Man" to me.

Dad's family lived with their father and mother, Albert and Hester, at no. 1 Peacock's Lane, next door to 'Uncle Fred' Pillinger, born Lacey, Albert's half-brother. They were very poor and he would recall how the little sailor suit which he wore on Sundays (for the three

visits to Chapel?) would be neatly pressed and taken to Swaish's¹⁰⁷ Pawn Shop where it fetched a few coppers, to be redeemed the following Saturday. Also on a Saturday night Hester would walk into Bristol, to the Castle Street shops and wait until nearly closing time before buying a large joint of meat at a knockdown price at a butchers, when everything for sale had to go. There were no refrigerators then.

On the 13th January 1914 when Dad, Jack, was nearing 12, a copy of his birth certificate was needed. Overleaf is printed 'The certificate is required for the following purpose, namely:-' to which the handwritten answer is poignantly given, 'to give him a trade'. Unfortunately this 'trade' never materialised to his great regret, and most of his working life was spent with Bristol Gas Company.'

Christian Name and Surname of the Young Person or Child of whose Age a Certificate is required.	Names of the Parents of such Young Person or Child.		Where such Young Person or Child was Born.	In what year such Young Person or Child was Born.
	FATHER.	MOTHER.		
Alfred Pillinger	Albert Pillinger	Hester Pillinger	Black Horse, Kingswood, Bristol	1901

The Certificate is required for the following purpose, namely:—
To give him a Trade

Dated this 13th day of January 1914
 Signature *Albert Pillinger*

Like his grandfather Thomas, he had a 'gammy' foot, supposedly due to falling from a tree when a young boy, though it could well have been by inheritance. An

operation at the Bristol General Hospital designed to put things right was seemingly botched, and thereafter he was never able to wear shoes. His special

To give him a trade' 12th January 1914 (He was 12 years and eleven months old)

boots, one to accommodate the high arch of his (left) bad foot, the other normal, for his perfect foot, were made by his father, heavy with hob nails for work, and lighter for best. After his father ceased work, *"I never 'ad another comfortable pair of boots in me life"*.

With so many occupants in a tiny cottage, life was overcrowded and boisterous. Meals were eaten in a brisk fashion, as somebody else would scoff the food off your plate, said Dad. Nellie's job was to peel the potatoes which she did by the bucketful. Conversation was loud, and daunting to company. A shy young girl called Edna Britton, who came to tea when cherries were on the menu was too polite to ask what they did with the stones, and swallowed them. The assembled multitude, were, it seems, *"slinging them in the fire"* and how Edna didn't notice this remains a mystery. (Edna married Bob Demmery and they kept 'The Kingswood Hotel' where Colin, in his student years pulled pints behind the bar.)

The abrasive manner of speech adopted by the Pillinger family made my mother uncomfortable when she first met them. *"I had never heard anybody talk to one another like it,"* she said, but she came to realise that it was their way, with no offence meant or taken.¹⁰⁸ As regards the domestic arrangements, the parents slept in one bedroom, and the children in another, the sexes divided by a curtain for decency. As they grew up, many a time somebody would come home from work to find that an earlier arrival had gone out in their best dress or shoes, the good suit or clean shirt with resulting ructions. The girls in particular were very 'dressy' or 'smart' as they called it in Kingswood.

¹⁰⁸ Sheena, my son Kevin's wife, felt exactly the same when she first met us, the Lindegaards, who are equally rowdy and unceremonious. Or perhaps it's just me?



Jack in 1919 aged 21

In January 1921, Lily married Jim Gregory at Holy Trinity, Kingswood; this marriage was witnessed by the bride's sister and brother, Polly and Jack, who became the customary witness at family weddings, because, he said cheekily, with a glint in his eye, "*I was the only 'un who could write,*" [Untrue]. The marriage was announced in the magazine of Fry's, the chocolate factory where Lily worked.

They had three children, Jim junior born in 1922, Jack, 1924 and Betty In 1927. Lily died at the Bristol Royal Infirmary in a diabetic coma, on May 4, 1930 aged only 31. She was four months pregnant. I came across Jim junior when I briefly worked at a firm called 'The Ruskit Mills' in Kingswood. He was an 'under-manager' and walked about in a suit, carrying a clip board and therefore far too grand ('ikey'¹⁰⁹ as we say in Kingswood), to acknowledge a lowly mortal like me.)

¹⁰⁹ I think this must be 'High Key' – otherwise stuck up.



Lily's children, Jack, Jim and Betty.

I never really knew Jack Gregory until much later when we forged a friendship through the family history. Norman and I went to his 90th birthday party in 2014 in Windsor where he lived with his two daughters and a large array of descendants, all of whom were hoping against hope that Colin would also turn up on the day, unfortunately he couldn't make it. Jack died in 2015.



Jack Gregory aged 90, (son of Lily Pillinger & Jim Gregory)

Little Betty Gregory was 'idolised' by her grandmother Hester, and Mum, who was by then married to Dad, Jack, remembered how her mother-in-law had *"gone out and bought Betty a little red mackintosh and hat, and a little red umbrella, and she looked lovely in it,"* but suddenly Betty was dead, aged five, of meningitis. The death, coming so quickly after that of her daughter, *"finished"* Hester. She was already very thin and ill, and had lost all her teeth save one. In her picture, taken about this time, her face looks filled with grief. She died, aged 56, on 21st September 1933 and was buried at Wesleyan in the same grave as Lily and



Betty. (left) My mother always remembered the advice she gave on getting by financially: *“Spend a little bit, keep a little bit, owe a little bit”*, and I have adhered to it likewise.

A year or so after Lily’s death, Jim Gregory married his wife’s younger sister, Nellie. They had four daughters, Valerie Jean, Janet, Delia and Marilyn. Valerie Jean, born in 1932, like Betty, tragically died of meningitis at the same age, five years. Nellie survived her husband Jim, and in her widowhood lived with her daughter Marilyn and her husband Andrew Casford, known as “Caz”.

The male clan at Cavell’s wedding to Risdale, far left, in 1937. Jim Gregory 4th & Albert 5th from left, back row. The boys are Lily’s sons, Jim (junior) & Gregory; the younger boys Albert’s & Jack Pillinger



Sam is 3rd, Jack is The elder Jack sons, David

Polly married Walter (Wally) Flook, a boot operator, at Holy Trinity Kingswood in 1933. They lived next door to Nellie and Jim in Blackhorse Road, though in later life moved to Wick & Abson with their daughter Susan, son in law Brian Hodgson and grandson Scott. They celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary on the 15th July 1983, when the surviving family members got together, and the three brothers, now very old codgers, resumed their sibling rivalry: *“I was allus the odd ‘un.”* said one. *“What bist talking about, thee silly old fool?”* said another, *“I was the odd ‘un,”* and *“Woss mean? I was the odd ‘un”*, and so on until one of them fell over. Kevin, our son who witnessed this incident could not stop laughing when he told us about it. (This was during our restaurant years, hence our absence; another story.) Polly died in 1984, and her husband, the gentle and kindly Wally Flook in 1990.

On the 8th August 1935, Laura (left) died aged 24. It was said she caught a chill because of wearing “backless dresses” at dances, which turned to “consumption”.

In 1937, there were two weddings, Trix to Elsie Austin, and Cavell to William Samuel Risdale, known as Sam. I was amused to note that Cavell’s occupation was given as a “stripper”. This was something in the boot and shoe trade, and definitely nothing to do with the modern

meaning of the word. I also noted that Dad appeared in Cavell's wedding photograph, but not Mum. "Well, of course not," Flo said. "I was having you." Women did not go out in society in those days when they were in a certain condition!



Cavell's wedding to Sam Risdale. Dad is behind with Amelia.



The last of the family to marry was Amelia, in 1941 to Cyril Crew with Jim Gregory in RAF uniform and "Pap", Albert Pillinger to his left.



I knew that Mee had lived with us at Victoria Park when I was small. Nevertheless I was pleased to see the proof on the 1939 registration list, I was there too, though redacted as necessary by law. I was two years old. Mee caused a sensation in Kingswood by going out in trousers, then called “slacks”, which was considered rather “fast”. She died young, in her forties leaving her husband and a daughter, Annette, who I have not seen since she was a baby.

In 1942, Pap married a widow, Lily Beatrice Stone, seen, left, with him ‘on the Prom’, possibly at Weymouth. We called her Auntie Lil, and she had an illustrious relative, about whom I would boast in a silly chant, “My grandfather’s second wife’s sister’s husband was the Lord Mayor of Bristol.” Lil’s brother in law, Charlie Gill’s astonishing progress from pit boy to Lord Mayor during which he was made CBE in respect of Trade Union and Civic affairs deserves to be told in full. When I took up tracing the history of

the local mines, Charlie Gill became a constant companion. When teaching family history at an evening class, I often used various Pillinger certificates to illustrate points, and on one occasion when I mentioned Albert, otherwise “Pap” Pillinger a voice from the back called out, “*He was my Pap too!*” This voice belonged Diane Wring, formerly Stone and Lil’s granddaughter who I had seen as a small child when visiting 64 Foxcote Road, Ashton, where Pap and Lil lived, but not recognised in her grown up state. Florence Gill and Lilian Stone were the daughters of Charles and Laura Coy, and Diane kindly supplied me with a family tree of all Pap’s step-relatives.

In the photograph he has in his mouth the inevitable cigarette, though he later puffed on a pipe. It is hard to believe that almost everyone smoked in those days. I was amused when he told me one day in all seriousness, “I bin and give up smoking, my maid; it wasn’t doing I any good.” He was then ninety four.



I have previously mentioned that he made Dad’s boots; at over ninety he continued in his trade and put up a little sign outside his house, “Boots and Shoes Repaired”. Somebody complained to the Council that he was using the house for commercial activities and he was made to take the sign down, something we considered particularly mean.

Pap at ninety

As well as smoking, he was still putting “sixpence each way on a horse” – he had once been a great attender at Ascot, and other race meetings; he enjoyed a nip of whisky, and held nightly

court in his own corner at the Hen and Chicken pub in Ashton until a few weeks before he died on the 28th September 1973, by which time he was just three months short of his 100th birthday. He never ever, mentioned Jack Johnson. He was buried at Wesleyan beside Laura Hester and their little granddaughter, Valerie Jean Gregory. Within a year, Aunt Lil, "Uncle Frank" their elderly long-time lodger, as well as Frank's 'fiancée' of nearly forty years were all dead too. The fiancée, who (much to our bemusement would arrive, sit down for half an hour clutching her handbag and then go home. "*Their work was done,*" said Mum, "*they only stayed alive to look after Pap.*"

As previously mentioned, Cavell's wedding passed off without my presence, even in embryo. My existence came about as a direct result Dad whistling at Mum, Florence Honour, usually called 'Flo' from down a Gas Company hole in Soundwell Road, Kingswood, when she was on her way to work at G.B. Britton's boot factory. She was very quiet and shy, and I imagine blushed with embarrassment when later on his sister Polly told her "*Our Jack wants to go out with you,*" but bravely taking a chance, she agreed to meet him. They were 'courting' for four years until they married on the 1st August 1931 when she was 25 and he was 29.

Florence and the Honours.

The Honour family was in Bedfordshire from the early 1500s. One of their number, Gabriel, migrated to Oxfordshire where he married Anne Kerry at Wendlebury in 1616. Their descendants were farmers at Otmoor for the next two and half centuries. My great grandfather, Thomas Honour moved to Eversley in Hampshire circa 1881. His son, my grandfather, Levi, after a brief service in the army married his cousin Sarah Honour. Thereafter, they lived at numerous addresses all over the south of England. Sarah died aged forty nine when Florence was nine and her brother Harry, a year younger. During the First World War, as a former soldier, Levi was 'on Government work obtaining fodder for the army' and came to Bristol where he was joined by his two youngest children. They lived firstly in Barton Hill and then, when Levi married his second wife, in Soundwell Road, Kingswood.

Flo's family history is told in a separate volume, 'Honour thy Father and thy Mother'.



Jack and Flo on their wedding day, 1st August 1931.

Jack and Flo had a 'peck and shovel wedding', with Jack's workmates outside the church forming an arch with these Implements, and how I wish a photograph survived. They honeymooned in Torquay and returned to furnished rooms in Halls Road until they rented a house in Victoria Park, and never moved again. There was a large kitchen, back kitchen, and front room below, and three bedrooms above. Outside was the ubiquitous workshop, and an outside toilet. We were considered quite posh because our lavatory had a flush. There was electric lighting – but only downstairs. There was no bathroom, and Friday night was bath night, in a tin bath in the back kitchen, with water heated in the boiler. Monday was always washing day, with Flo rising at the crack of dawn to boil the whites in the same boiler, and hand washing the coloureds in the tub, before the whole lot was put through the mangle and out on the line.

Flo continued to work at G.B. Britton's until I was born in 1937. War was declared in September 1939. Jack was spared military service by his lame foot, but he went out nightly with the ARP, in his tin helmet, fire watching. I would cry bitterly as he went, and can still feel my relief when I heard the crunch of his distinctive walk, his hob-nailed boots sparking the pavement, as he turned into our *cul de sac* and home. During wartime, many people were on the move, and our house was often a temporary home to displaced sailors, stranded lorry drivers and odd beds of every sort that Jack would find in the Black Horse with nowhere else to go. Two girls, Agnes and Helen Colby, from South Shields who had been called up for munitions work were billeted with us, and they remained for the rest of the war, and became lifelong friends.

On the 9th May, 1943, my brother Colin was born, an event mostly memorable because the midwife arrived the worse for drink, and broke Flo's false teeth which were in a glass by the bedside. Colin's second birthday was celebrated in much greater style. Peace was declared at 8 in the evening of 8 May 1945, and the following day, the 9th May, was Colin's birthday and the occasion of a magnificent street party, with Victoria Park festooned in red, white and blue, trestle tables covered with food of all sorts, that the women had found, goodness

knows where, from some hoard or other, sandwiches made from spam or the stunningly bright yellow 'reconstituted dried egg' (which people said you could also use 'to sole your boots', but I liked it!) tarts and cakes and jellies. Endless cups of tea were served and there was singing and dancing, with some wearing fancy dress. I remember Chrissie Lavis in a man's suit, which was considered very risqué. In the middle of it all, my baby brother was stood up on the table and the assembly sang "*Happy Birthday to You*". The party ended with a bonfire on 'the Patch', where Hitler and the rest of his evil gang were burnt in effigy.

In due course we grew up. Though we had little in the way of consumer goods, we did have books, and especially in the dark winter evenings Mum would read to us, including Dad, round the fire, Milly Molly Mandy, The Famous Five, What Katy Did, Little Women, Treasure Island and Kidnapped. Every Christmas, Scrooge, Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim joined us amid much sobbing. We also had 'the wireless'. Most of my acquaintance with 'the classics' was through the Sunday evening serial; Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield, Barnaby Rudge and Henry Esmond. Lorna Doone was on Radio4extra recently: what a load of tosh it is, but I loved it once! A few days ago my eldest grandson said to me, wonderingly, "*What do you mean? You listened?*" He could not comprehend an era not only without IT but without **Television?** But we did listen. We sat and listened, an hour at a time. Sometimes there would be interference, or the thing would break down and Dad would have to take 'the accumulator' – a sort of battery – to be charged 'up the road'. What frustration, and what relief once we had 'Rediffusion' for which we paid two shillings a week for the radio to be pumped direct into our house. Just as well, for it does not bear thinking about if the appliance had stalled during one particular radio programme which began in 1952 and like my 'hippy trail' through Brislington graveyard accounts directly for a turn of events which came after. Everybody tuned in to this programme, and I mean EVERYBODY, not just our family. It came on Monday nights between 7.30 and eight and the streets would be denuded of all the kids. It was called 'Journey into Space'. The exploits of the astronauts Jet, Doc, Mitch and Lemmy gripped the nation and none more so than my brother Colin. The rest as they say is history. It has taken a long time for the nation to catch up. At the time of writing, (15th January 2016) our astronaut, Tim Peake is due within minutes to commence his first walk in space. Undoubtedly Colin would have been on TV commentating. If only he was still alive. If only.



Colin, aged about nine. The scar on his face was described on TV at the time of his untimely death as

“an early rocketry experiment gone wrong”.

....nonsense, of course, but as they said in the old Wild West, *‘print the legend’.*

Jack continued at the Gas Company. It was hard, heavy, and sometimes dangerous work, out in “all winds and weathers”, but steady, and he stuck it out, usually greatly frustrated for he was capable of better things. When on ‘Standby’ he would be called out to deal with escapes of gas, and occasionally Colin would go with him, sitting proudly in the cab of the lorry. For a girl, this was simply not done, and I never went in the wagon, much to my annoyance, although I think I was Dad’s favourite. I was involved in the only "crime" (as far as I know) that he ever committed (or for which he was caught that is!) was for letting me ride on the cross bar of his bike. He was fined 10 bob, which seems a bit harsh. If ever he was working near my school, he would let me go and sit in the cabin, with the men, warming myself at the coke brazier, where they would fry bacon on their shovels. I would drink tea brewed in an enamel jug, which came out strong, smoky and boiling hot, sweetened with condensed milk, and had all the tea leaves floating on the top. I can taste that tea and bacon now; I thought it was lovely.

Jack Pillinger and the Gas Company Hole



“Young Frank on the peck and shovel, I on the compressor and Bill on the punner,” said Dad. (He is on the right.)

In the 1950's Jack was with his mates working opposite the Horse Shoe at Downend outside a chemist's shop. The chemist, John Uren, came out and took a photograph of the gang working on "the Gas Company Hole" which became locally infamous. From 1939, and 1981

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SHOPPERS WHO PAY TO LOOK DOWN HOLE

By Judith Pike

DOWNEND shoppers are paying 2p each for the chance of looking down a hole in the road outside their local chemist.

Mr John Uren who owns the Badminton Road shop has put a sign outside asking people to donate 2p to charity for a peep.

"It is not just any old hole. It has become quite a favourite. The gas board has dug it up about 100 times since I moved here in 1939.

"The trouble is the gas main in question had they have had the gas company to patch it up. They would have had the road other side of the hole..."

DOWNEND... novel... charity... for the disabled.

Mr. Uren claimed the hole had been dug up 100 times. It was still going strong nearly thirty years later. To mark the 100th hole, Mr Uren charged shoppers 2d to look down it, with the proceeds going to charity. I love this photograph: even now, people are much less often snapped in their working clothes than in their finery at weddings and 'casual' on holiday. Incidentally I worked just around the corner, left of the photo, at Downend Garage in about 1957/8, as a pump attendant, one among my many jobs.

A few decades later, to celebrate the "centenary" hole, Mr Uren hit on a novel idea for a charity collection (left).

In 1948, I 'passed the scholarship' to Kingswood Grammar School where Colin would follow in

1954. At this less than grand-looking establishment (called "the cowsheds" by those who were jealous that they didn't go there) the descendants of those rough Kingswood colliers of old, hatters and shoemakers of old were given a classical education undreamt of by the Sunday Scholars of only a century before. My main criticism of KGS, which after all would eventually boast two Fellows of the Royal Society, (Sir Bernard Lovell of Jodrell Bank was the other) is that our plebian heritage was ignored by our teachers, and swept under the carpet in the manner also beloved by the educators of native peoples, such as the American Indians, with whom we had been compared by Whitfield the preacher in 1739.

I left school in 1953 which was only rectified forty years later when I went "back to school" as the Americans would say and took a belatedly degree. Colin became the first in our family to go on to University at Swansea.



The newly fledged Dr Colin Pillinger, BSc, PhD, returned from Swansea in 1968, and went into Space. (On a visit home *"E came in, and I thought, God Almighty, it's Jesus!"* As far as Dad was concerned the end was definitely nigh. *"I said, get thee 'air cut."*) He became one of a six-man team from the Chemistry Department of Bristol University chosen to analyse "moondust" brought to earth by the historic Apollo 11 mission. Under the headline 'Bristol is to get slice of moon' this caused a great stir, and in October 1969 Colin brought a precious cargo to Bristol sealed in a metal box in his briefcase, 'the rarest cargo in the world protected by a casually dressed young man in a polo-necked sweater and corduroy jacket. *'It seemed the best bet not to make a fuss,'* said 26-year-old Dr. Pillinger. *'I kept a careful eye on the sample.'*"



Colin, short hair, but now with the famous sideburns is second left.

The 'moon-rock' lab stayed open in Bristol until 1976, and moved to Cambridge with Colin as team leader, by which time he was married to Judith Hunter, formerly Hay (1975) and they had a daughter, Shusanah (aka Susy, later Shu) and a son, Nicolas Joseph, (Nic) in 1977. Shu is an ultra-cyclist, ultra-swimmer, ultra-runner,

ultra-triathlete, ultra-traveller and the first British woman to complete the Race Across America – an ultra-bike ride, solo in 2015. Nic is also an athlete, and has ridden in the Tour de France. He is married to Zoe and they have two children, Jacob, (the fifth Pillinger of that name) and Maisie.

On 9 July 1985, Colin received a Doctor of Science degree at Bristol University, in recognition of his work 'on the Moon' and we all attended the ceremony, Judith and the children, Mum and Dad, and me. Jack was almost bursting with pride. It was almost his last happy day. A short while before a small nodule had appeared on his lip and when it refused to heal, he sought medical opinion. He was diagnosed with cancer which had already spread to his liver. Colin made enquiries about a transplant, but even if a liver had become available, his age was against him. He had never before had a day's illness in his life. As far as I am aware, apart from pain killers, he received no medication and no hope. It was a death sentence. At the end he was in extreme pain and though I have no religious belief I remember praying on the last night that I stayed 'at home' in Victoria Park that my cranky, opinionated, wonderful Dad would mercifully die. Colin, Judith, Shu and Joe came to visit him for the final time, and he still managed to hang on. Early on Christmas Day he was taken to Frenchay Hospital where he died on Boxing Day, 1985.

Colin's star continued to rise and it was as Professor Pillinger that in March 1993, he received the accolade of being elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. The Bristol Observer's headline was "Prof's final frontier?" but this was far from being final, for his greatest, yet most disappointing time was yet to come. He became the lead scientist (and usual mouthpiece) on the British "Beagle 2" Project to try to find Life on Mars. The name was thought up by his wife Judith in honour of the ship, HMS Beagle, in which Darwin made his five year voyage of discovery during which he devised the theory of natural selection on which "The Origin of Species" was based. The design for the tiny Beagle 2 which folded up to the size of an old-fashioned dustbin lid was dreamed up on a beer mat in a pub during a brainstorming session.

Mum had never expected to outlive Dad and after his death she managed bravely on her own for several years at Victoria Park. She was burgled twice, the second time by a snatch thief who ran up the back garden and through the open back door, allegedly looking for a lost kitten. Instead he grabbed her pension money which was lying on the table having just been fetched by the Home Help. After this she decided she had "had enough" and came to

live with us until she too died in March 2001 aged 95. I am delighted to say that Colin brought the full scale model of Beagle 2 to show her, unfolded on our living room floor, and it really was just the size of a dustbin lid. So she too shared in the adventure.

Colin had become a TV “star” by the time of the launch in Autumn 2003, even receiving the accolade of an appearance on Desert Island Discs, in which he revealed his execrable in music, a topic over which he and I had always disagreed. When Beagle 2 hitched a ride aboard ESA’s Mars Express Orbiter which took off from Kazakhstan powered by a Soyuz rocket on 2 June 2003 for its five month voyage. Norman I were among the celebrity guests at the Royal Geographical Society for the event who included Prince Andrew, Patrick Moore, several pop stars, MPs and TV weather girls (!) as well as Colin’s especial idols, the last remaining actor and writer, David Jacobs and Charles Chilton from “Journey into Space” the 1950s classic radio series which had inspired the boy Colin all those years ago. Mars Express began its orbit of Mars in December 2003; Beagle detached safely and began its descent to the surface. It was due to land on Christmas Day. We watched with thumping hearts and dry mouths for “the dog to bark” ready to crack open the bubbly, when Colin said “It’s a little bit disappointing...” many of us cried. Colin in front of the World with the TV cameras focused on him had to remain brave. He kept up hope for some weeks when there were further windows of opportunity to hear a signal. But there was nothing. Space is a very big place.

And as to me, my adventures are too numerous to be told here, - you will have to wait for my memoirs, currently ‘a work in progress’. In 1967 I married Norman Lindegaard, whose ancestors are Danish and Irish. He saved my life. We have three beautiful and talented children called Caroline, Celia and Kevin, and four grandchildren, three boys and a girl, Leon, Evan and Finn Boothroyd and Kendra Lindegaard. In due course they will write their own stories.



NB: This is only an interim report.

Probably, as everyone now knows, the errant Beagle 2 was eventually found, having landed safely on Mars after all. One of its flaps had not opened so it could not transmit – or failed to bark - as we said. Unfortunately this astonishing, though bitter-sweet news, was too late for Colin. After a long battle with MS with which he coped with his usual stoicism, he died suddenly of a brain haemorrhage two days short of his 70th birthday, May 7th 2015. How he would have enjoyed getting his own back on those who had held him up to ridicule as “Another British Failure”

.....and my Memoirs are still ‘a work in progress’, but as I am now 82, and half-blind, I need to get on with it. I can’t help getting involved in other projects in between.

With grateful thanks to all members of the family far and near who so generously donated information as well as photos in their care.



Quotes from Terry Pratchett:

3. 'a man is not dead while his name is still spoken' – Going Postal (Terry Pratchett)

9. 'So much universe, and so little time.' – The Last Hero Terry Pratchett