

Back and Forth

In these cold northern winter days, I find myself looking for something to distract me while I hunker down in my little flat, central heating on full blast. Instead of attending to my overdue family history certificate assignments I often end up trolling the Internet looking for genealogical brick walls to break through. And it seems there are no shortage of them.

Recently a fellow researcher posted on the Facebook Ancestry UK group calling for help in tracing an elusive ancestor. This poster had the marriage certificate for her ancestor which gave details of his father, but alas she was unable to identify any records prior to this marriage.

Groom of mystery

The issue related to an Edward Barnes of Manchester, England whose marriage to Lavinia Griffiths took place on 6 September 1868 at Manchester Cathedral. The same year that the new (and current) Cathedral Tower was formally opened. Edward's father was recorded as a shuttle maker named William Barnes.

A shuttle is "a bobbin with two pointed ends used for carrying the weft thread across and between the warp threads in weaving" and as the name suggests a *shuttle maker* made these shuttles for the looms that operated in countless weaving mills situated throughout the northwest of England. It is easy to see from this where we get the modern usage of the term shuttle; to travel back and forth. And I did my fair share of to-ing and fro-ing while looking into this problem.

The witnesses to the wedding were both Griffiths, presumably from the bride's family. Edward was 21 years old and following on from this point in time there is ample documentation of the couple and their subsequent family in the form of birth, baptism and census records.

In my experience the census records often throw up the odd relative beyond the immediate nuclear family that can help piece together the wider family and reveal the antecedence of the household where it is otherwise unknown. In this case there were decennial census records for this family for 1871, 1881 and 1891 but at no point is there the appearance of another Barnes relative. In the preceding censuses of 1861 and 1851, where it might have been expected to find the young Edward Barnes, there were no records that fitted.

A single mother?

A fellow Facebooker who had also taken up this challenge identified a potential birth record in the General Register Office (GRO) index for an Edward Barnes but where no maiden name was recorded indicating this Edward was the son of a single mother. [Registered at Manchester, 4th quarter of 1846. Vol 20. Pg 613]. This Edward would have been 21 years old in September 1868, so that fitted perfectly.

This raised the spectre that between 1846, when this Edward was born, and 1851, when the next census was taken, that his mother had married and that she, along with her son Edward, were to be found in the 1851 census under a completely different surname. If so, it would explain why Edward 'Barnes' doesn't show up in those census records.

The 1846 birth registration referred to above recorded the mother as a single woman named Sarah Barnes of 18 Lad lane, Manchester. At this point it's worth noting that Edward and Lavinia's second daughter was named Sarah and given that their first daughter was named Theresa, the same name as Lavinia's mother, everything seemed to be pointing in the right direction.

However, a search of all 'Sarah Barnes' marriages that took place in that area between 1847 and 1851 failed to throw up anything of any value.

This Edward Barnes had been born at 18 Lad Lane and in the 1851 census a Walker family were living at that same address. This same family had been living in the same street in 1841 but unfortunately the 1841 census did not record a house number so it's difficult to determine whether they had been residing at number 18 continuously between 1841 and 1851 or whether they had been elsewhere on the street when Edward was born. This Walker family had a daughter named Sarah who would've been 12 or 13 at the time of Edward's birth. In any event there was no four-year-old Edward at that address in the 1851 census.

What about Lavinia?

Although the censuses from 1871 onwards did not help in determining where the Barnes line had originated, they were more revealing of Lavinia Griffiths and her family. Whilst it wasn't part of the question put in the Facebook posting it was apparent that as well as Edward's parents, Lavinia's parentage was also unconfirmed.

In the 1871 census the Barnes family was boarding at Smiths Court, Hulme. Along with their surviving son John, born that same year, the household included a '40' year old Irishwoman named Theresa Griffiths, identified as the mother-in-law. This is undoubtedly Lavinia's mother despite her suspiciously under reported age.

In the 1881 census the Barnes family, with an additional 3 children, were living at 17 Flora street, Hulme, and lodging with them was a 38 year old sawyer named Henry Wright and his 36yo wife Betsy. On census night of 1891 it was just mum, dad and the kids in the Barnes home then at 22 Clegg street, Hulme.

In the 1868 marriage record Lavinia's age was recorded as 19 years giving an estimated birth of around 1849. However, based on the ages recorded in the census records we can estimate birth years as follows -

Year	Age	Calculated year of birth
1871 census	20	1850/1
1881 census	29	1851/2
1891 census	39	1851/2
1897 death registration	44	1852/3

In the 2nd quarter of the year 1852, the GRO records the birth of a Lavinia Griffiths registered at Barton, Lancashire [vol.8c pg.443]. However, this Lavinia was the daughter of a Job Griffiths and Mary Turner. Neither of these names fit with the available records of a father named Joseph, as per the 1868 marriage register, and a mother named Theresa, as revealed in the 1871 census.

Now, there was a Joseph and Theresa Griffiths living in Manchester during this period and this couple had the following children

Baptismal name	Birth date	Baptismal date
Alfred	?? Jan 1838	28 Feb 1838
John	17 Apr 1839	19 May 1839
James	30 Aug 1841	10 Oct 1841
Elizabeth	22 Jan 1844	7 Apr 1844
Job Raymund	19 Nov 1846	10 Jan 1847
Mary Malvaina	15 Aug 1849	23 Sep 1849
Mary Ellen	17 Jul 1852	12 Sep 1854

All of the above baptisms took place in Roman Catholic churches in Lancashire and the mother's name was recorded as Theresa Dillon. No occupation was given for Joseph in these baptismal records however he was variously recorded in the censuses as a silk weaver (1841), throwster-silk (1851), silk throwster (1861) and 'labourer in at [sic] cotton mill' (1871). In the 1868 marriage register Lavinia's father is recorded as Joseph Griffiths, a silk throwster.

The eagle-eyed amongst you will have noted there is no 'Lavinia' in the above list of Griffiths children. Although this couple did have daughters born in 1849 and in 1852 which are both in scope as probable birth years for our Lavinia as outlined above.

I had at first conjectured that Lavinia was the Mary Ellen born in the summer of 1852 based on the ages provided in the censuses, however, the records show that this Mary Ellen died at the age of 2 from either diarrhoea or teething, depending on which record you consult. For what it is worth I would argue that the death Registration, which recorded diarrhoea as the cause of death, is likely to be nearer the truth.

That being so the only conclusion I can draw is that Lavinia was the baby girl born 15 August 1849 and registered with the name Mary Malvina (in the baptism record it is spelled 'Malvaina' while the 1861 census renders it 'Malveno').

Lodge a challenge

For those of you who remain sceptical as to whether Mary Malvina Griffiths and Mrs Lavinia Barnes are one in the same person, I will report that I have not found any other records of Mary Malvina after the 1861 census and will note that the lodger Mrs Betsy Wright (census 1881) was Elizabeth Griffiths daughter of Joseph and Theresa born 1844.

Elizabeth Griffiths was recorded as Betsy in the 1851 and 1861 censuses, and she married Henry Wright a cabinet maker at Manchester Cathedral on 13 November 1865. In the 1871 census they were lodging with Betsy's older brother, James Griffiths born 1841. As referenced above, ten years later Betsy and Henry were lodging with Edward and Lavinia, that is, I contend, lodging with Betsy's younger sister Lavinia/Malvina and her brother-in-law Edward.

But what of the question at hand?

Coming back to Edward I decided to research the address he had given when he married in 1868, namely 48 Watson Street, Manchester. Whilst nearly three years had elapsed between when Edward married, and when the subsequent census was conducted it was worth a punt to see who was living at that address in 1871. The address in the 1846 birth record led to a dead end but maybe this address would prove more fruitful. I knew from the census record that Edward Barnes was no longer at Watson street in 1871, but who was?

There were two households in the 1871 census at number 48. A young-ish family named Ramsay and a 58yo widower named James Bradbury with a lodger named Sarah Devereaux, also a widow aged 51. There's that name Sarah again.

Searches of Sarah Devereaux uncovered little, I certainly couldn't find her in the 1881 census or a record of her death. I then investigated James Bradbury and the first thing it threw out was an 1875 marriage to a Sarah 'Decrux'. More than a coincidence surely?

Usually, the online records of English marriages reveal little more than the name of the parties, and the quarter of the year and the registration district where the marriage took place. These are drawn from GRO indexes and at best hint at who the people involved might be. But in addition to these records there are some parishes where there has been significant if not comprehensive digitisation of marriage register entries and Manchester is one such place.

So, it was with a not inconsiderable frisson of anticipation that I spied the thumbnail embedded in the online record from the series; Manchester, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1930. And I was not disappointed.

The marriage register revealed this James to be a 62yo widowed shuttle maker. The couple were by this time living at 1 Strand street but he must be the same elderly James Bradbury shuttle maker found in the 1871 census. Sarah Devereux (not Decrux as transcribed) was the daughter of a William Barnes, silk weaver. Q.E.D.

Establishing maternity

The Sarah who was, in 1871, resident at the same address that Edward Barnes lived in 1868 had the maiden name of Barnes. At 56 yo in 1875 she would have been around 27 years old when Edward was born. Clearly a good candidate for his mother.

In any event the two were unquestionably related some how since Edward and Lavinia Barnes were the official witnesses to the 1875 wedding of James Bradbury and Mrs Sarah Devereux.

Armed with this information further searches revealed –

- 1850 the marriage of 28yo George Devereux to 30yo Sarah Ellen Barnes daughter of William Barnes, a weaver. (I had seen this earlier in the indexes but didn't pursue it as I was looking for Sarahs not Sarah Ellens – sloppy, I know)
- 1851 census Sarah Deverox (31) and Edward Deverox (4) lodging at 71 Wilmott street, Hulme.
- 1861 census Sarah H Devaraur (41) with children Edward (14), Elizabeth (9), William (1) at Newton street, Dukinfield, Cheshire.

Sarah's first husband, and Edward's stepfather, was a soldier and Corporal in the 63rd Regiment of Foot. He served in the Crimean War (1853-1856) which likely explains why he was away on census nights and the gap between the births of Elizabeth and William. Having said that George was in England for the 1861 census, at 28 St James street, Ashton under Lyne. George 38yo had by this time been pensioned out of the army and he had a boarder with him on census night, a 31-year-old married woman named Ann Lockwood.

In the 1871 census Sarah was described as a widow. She was not. On census night her very much alive first husband was twenty miles away in Blackburn with their now 10-year-old son William. At that time Edward as we know was with his new wife Lavinia at Hulme while 19-year-old Elizabeth is very likely the Elizabeth 'Debero' boarding at 4 Worsley street Manchester on census night. She was not well and soon after the census she entered the workhouse with tuberculosis where she died on 10 May 1871.

Conclusion

The challenge posed in the FB Group was to find William Barnes, shuttle maker and father of the groom, Edward. I think we can safely conclude that whoever Edward's father was it was not a William Barnes. Was the use of that name a nod to his namesake paternal grandfather? Probably. Did he borrow from his mother's latest beau the profession of shuttle maker? Possibly.

There is still much to be researched on this family. There is probably a baptism record for Sarah to be uncovered and the question of where she was on census night 1841 is yet to be answered. A search of court records may reveal legal action taken by Sarah to sue Edward's father for his upkeep in the years before she married George Devereux. And DNA matching may yet reveal Edward's paternity.

Thanks go to GB for posing this challenge. I enjoyed it immensely. Many thanks go to all those fellow researchers who publish their work on the web. Much of the above has been drawn from that work, though of course any errors are mine. Should you find any errors in what I have said or wish to challenge and/or add to the analysis please feel free to email at gatp63@hotmail.com . All my research and supporting documentation can be found at my ZZ Odds and Sods Family Tree at Ancestry.co.uk.

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