

Children of James Edwards and Elizabeth Bradford

When Elizabeth and James emigrated to Australia aboard the Priam in the (northern) summer of 1852 they had 5 children with them; Elizabeth 15, Catherine 14, Albert, 11, Alice 6, and Herbert 3. All of these children can be accounted for in English birth registration and/or baptism records. However, it seems that they had another 2 children who it appears had died before they set sail and most likely before the English census of 1851.

We know this because both James and Elizabeth's death records report children other than those who travelled to Australia and the 2 who were subsequently born in Portland, Victoria.

James died in 1875 and his widow provided the following details on his children -

Elizabeth 38,
Catherine 36,
Albert 34,
Charles 'dead',
Annie 'dead',
Herbert 27,
Ewen 20,
Blanche 18

Elizabeth 38
Catherine 36
Albert 34
Charles dead
Annie dead
Herbert 27
Ewen 20
Blanche 18

Alice appears to have been forgotten as she does not appear here but we know she was still alive at this time and living with her second husband William Simpson in Sydney. The evidence that follows I think rules out Alice being incorrectly recorded here as Annie.

Elizabeth died in 1901 and her death records the following details as provided by her son Ewen -

Jane [age] not known
Kate dead
Amy "
Henry "
Albert "
Alice. "
Herbert dead
Ewen 46 3[months]
Blanche 44 -[months]

Jane not known
Kate dead
Amy "
Henry "
Albert "
Alice "
Herbert dead
Ewen 46. 3
Blanche 44 -

These records need some unpacking. Firstly the 1901 record incorrectly lists Alice as a child who had predeceased her mother while the fact is she survived her a further 8 years. But who were Amy and Henry listed at Elizabeth's death and who were Charles and Annie listed at James'?

We have two other records that should help us here: Ewen (or Evan)¹ and Blanche's birth records. Ewan was born in 1855 and his registration records under the question '[Father] Issue living and deceased' the answer "Three living = One deceased". We know that all 5 of their children were alive at this time with Ewen making it 6. This record must surely then refer to boys only and include 'Evan', along with Albert and Herbert as 'living'.

Two years later when recording the birth of Blanche the entry against the same question states there were 'Three boys and four girls living One boy and one girl deceased'. Blanche is clearly included in this number, and this accounts for the 9 children listed in 1901 in their mother's death registration.

I think it fair to conclude that there were only an additional 2 children to those 7 who survived into adulthood despite there being 4 additional names. I would argue then that the Charles recorded at James' death is the same boy recorded at Elizabeth's death as Henry, with the same going for Annie/Amy.

It is entirely implausible that Elizabeth forgot about Amy and Henry when registering her husband's death while her son included them in 1901 but simultaneously forgot to mention Charles and Annie.

When and where were they born?

The 1901 record suggests that 'Amy' and 'Henry' came after Kate/Catherine and before Albert while the 1875 record has a 'Charles' and 'Annie' after, not before, Albert in the order of children. I see little to be made of Amy coming before Henry in the 1901 list while Charles is recorded before Annie in 1875.

It is much more likely that any additional children were born after Albert. Not just because this ordering was provided by Elizabeth but significantly there was 5½ years between Albert's birth in the second quarter of 1840 and Alice's birth in the 4th quarter of 1845. Conversely the 1901 ordering seems unlikely since there was only 3 years between Catherine's birth in 1837 and Albert's in 1840, hardly enough time for two siblings to be born unless twins or triplets were involved. I have also ruled out them being born after James and Elizabeth arrived in Victoria.

Leaving aside the inexplicable fact that Alice was completely missing from the list reported by Elizabeth this 1875 record is probably the best indication of the true facts of the children of James and Elizabeth. It would certainly fit if Charles/Henry and Annie/Amy were born between Albert and Alice either as twins or singletons.

What is confounding is there seem to be no English records of these children. I can find no records of a registration of their births in the county of Surrey, nor have I been able to locate a baptism record in either the parish of Malden (where EJ, Catherine and Albert were christened) or the parish of Mortlake (where Alice and Herbert were christened).

¹ Whilst throughout his life his name is given as Ewan his birth registration clearly records his name as Evan Edwards.

Neither child appears with the family in the 1851 English census - all the other children at this time do - and I cannot seem to find a death registration for these children before 1852 and the same goes for burial records. A more thorough search may yet find records for these children, but it leads me to wonder if they were both stillborn. If so, they would not have a birth (or death registration) or an official burial. Whilst there were no official registrations of stillbirths in the UK at this time there are records that could be searched at www.anguline.co.uk/stillbirths.html

For the present I am assuming that Charles/Henry and Annie/Amy were born sometime between 1840 and 1845 and died before census night March 1851.

I came to this family in search of my x3 GGF, a sailor named Joseph King, thinking he may be the husband of James and Elizabeth's eldest child Elizabeth Jane Edwards born 1836. I now think that proposition is very unlikely and won't be researching this family any further. Thanks go out to the many people who have been researching this family which most of the above is drawn from. Please if you do find birth and death records for the 2 children it will be much appreciated if you drop me a line and let me know, and the same goes for any errors in the above.

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