

## The Alchins of Sydney via Kent and East London

I came to this family through Lillian ALCHIN, b1868 in Sydney, NSW who married a distant relative of mine, William Edward Wilson BOULTON, b1870. It soon transpired that Lillian neither married William nor was she an Alchin, but in researching this family I discovered a series of confusing and complicated relationships and the following is an attempt to untangle some of the web of intrigue surrounding various branches of this family.

The Alchins hailed from Meopham in the north west of the county of Kent, England. The parish of Meopham is presently a constituent part of the Borough of Gravesham. William Alchin b.circa 1772 married Ann KNOCK at St Mary's Chatham, Kent on 5 May 1796.

They had at least 6 children as follows. Anthony (b1797), Henry (b1798), William (b1800), John (b1804), George (b1806) and Francis (b1808). Australian interest rests in the brothers, George and John, who both had sons named Francis that would immigrate to the colony of NSW.

Ann died at Camer, Kent in 1813 and William, with 5 surviving boys all under the age of 18, soon remarried to the 27 year old Jane MIDDLETON. In the 1820's William relocated the family to Poplar, Middx in the east end of London, though it seems his only son to Jane stayed behind<sup>1</sup>.

### George and John Alchin

The two Alchin brothers, George and John, sawyers by trade, both married in east London. John married Sarah Dillon at St George in the East, London on Christmas Day 1830.

George's wife's name was Elizabeth and a number of trees on Ancestry.com contend she was Elizabeth Church, daughter of Richard Church and Mrs Elizabeth Davison. Indeed a place and date is given for their marriage – 29 January 1829 at All Saints, Poplar.

There is however a problem with this. Neither the banns register nor the marriage register for this parish record any such marriage taking place at this time and I have yet to identify any record that confirms the marriage of George Alchin to Elizabeth Church. Someone clearly believed the two married in this church on that date but I haven't identified anyone who has any evidence to support this.

There are however some curious uses of the name Church by children of this couple that strongly suggests that Mrs Elizabeth Alchin was once a Miss Church. More of this later.

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<sup>1</sup> From accounts left by *darwingene* [stevegreen@octa4.net.au](mailto:stevegreen@octa4.net.au) on [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com). Retrieved 6 January 2016.

John and Sarah had the following children. John b1831, James b1833, William b1834, Henry b1835, George b1838, Francis b1843, Jemima Ann b1845 and Alfred Brodie b1850.

George and Elizabeth had the following children. Francis b1830, Sarah Susannah b1834, Charlotte b1837, George b1839, Emma Jane b1843, Richard William b1846 and Elizabeth b1850

### **Francis then Francis Emigrate**

George and Elizabeth's son Francis Alchin b1830 married Ann Eliza Christophers at All Saints, Poplar on 11 July 1852. They had two children Mary Ann Elizabeth and Francis Henry before the young family boarded the *Rose of Sharon* at Southampton on 10 January 1855 and set sail for Port Jackson.

In Sydney Francis worked as a sawyer, just as his father had, living at Wentworth Place and later relocating further west to Marrickville. He and Ann Eliza had a further 7 children with the last, Sarah Ann Alchin, later Mrs Witcombe, born in 1871. In the early 1860's Ann Eliza drops the Ann and is simply known as Mrs Eliza Alchin for the remainder of her days.

The younger cousin, Francis 'Dillon' Alchin arrived in Sydney aboard the Rangitoto on 9 May 1865. The 21 year old had travelled out as crew and was employed as a 'pantryman'. He would stay on in the colony sailing up and down the eastern seaboard. He worked on ships including the *Lady Young* and *Boomerang*.

The last record I have of him working as crew is 1871 where he sailed from Rockhampton aboard the *Lady Bowen* eventually docking at Sydney on the 6<sup>th</sup> September. He was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Steward.

### **A Case of Mistaken Identity?**

At some point Francis took up with the mother of three, Mrs Elizabeth Langley née Gibbons. They had a baby, Maud May Alchin in 1876. There are a number of trees on Ancestry.com that assert that Elizabeth Gibbon's first husband, William Langley, and Francis Alchin were in fact one in the same person and that Francis was the father of all four of Elizabeth's children.

I believe this is based on the mistaken belief that Elizabeth had five children and that her first child was Arthur Charles Alchin, born the same year that she married, 1867.

The NSW index for Arthur C Alchin's 1867 birth records his parents as Francis H and Eliza. It appears that from this it has been presumed this was a reference to Francis Alchin and Elizabeth Gibbons, rather than the cousin Francis 'Henry' Alchin and his wife Ann Eliza Christophers, who are the correct parents of Arthur Charles.

If then, your starting point is that Elizabeth Gibbons had 5 children as follows; Arthur C Alchin b1867, Lilian Langley b1868, Edith Langley b1870, Sarah Frances A Langley b1874 and Maud May Alchin b1876, it is not entirely implausible to deduce that Elizabeth's husband spent a few years under the assumed name of 'William Langley'. But it is almost certain this was not the case.

Firstly there really is a William Langley. He was born in London in 1844 and arrived in NSW in 1855 with his parents Thomas Langley and Maria Skeet aboard the *Constitution*. Elizabeth Gibbons married this man and not Francis Alchin on 25 November 1867. Subsequent notices in the Sydney Morning Herald on 14 December (pg.1 col.1) read as follows;

On the 25th November, by the Rev. Dr. Bailey, of the Free Church of England, Brisbane-street, Mr. WILLIAM LANGLEY, of 402, Riley-street, Surry Hills, to ELIZABETH, daughter of the late Mr. JAMES GIBBONS, of 283, Sussex-street.

On the 25th November, by the Rev. Dr. Bailey, Mr. WILLIAM LANGLEY, eldest son of Mr. Thomas Langley, carpenter and builder, to Miss ELIZABETH GIBBONS, only daughter of Mr. James Gibbons, both of Sydney.

It is very probable that Elizabeth was still married to Wm Langley when she began her relationship with Francis Alchin. I am not aware of any record of the two marrying and equally I cannot find a record of William Langley's death. The 3 Langley girls, likely still toddlers when Francis became head of the household, all assume the surname Alchin and each of them marry under this name, with at least two of them recording Francis as their father in the marriage register. All of this no doubt fuelled the notion that Francis was their biological father.

The two Francis cousins left their respective siblings behind in London. The younger Francis had 5 surviving brothers and one sister. The elder Francis had 4 younger sisters with one brother who died in infancy and another who survived.

### **Mrs Elizabeth Alchin née ???**

I referred above to the name Church which some contend was the elder Francis' mother's maiden name. Whilst I cannot find a marriage record for Francis' parents, George and Elizabeth, the marriage records of two of his sisters make curious reading. Francis' father, George Alchin, died in 1856, the year after Francis had landed at Sydney, and he was buried at All Saints, Poplar.

In 1858 George's daughter, who had been baptised as Charlotte Alchin married under the name Charlotte CHURCH to Richard CRAMP. Her father was given as George Alchin Church, a sawyer. There is little doubt that this marriage is of Charlotte Alchin and not Charlotte Church. In the 1861 census, resident in Charlotte and Richard's home is Elizabeth Alchin (mother-in-law) and her youngest daughter, Elizabeth Alchin b1850.

One of the witnesses to Charlotte and Richard's marriage is Sarah Susannah Church. This must be Sarah Susannah Alchin b1834, sister of Charlotte. In 1871 the twin Cramp daughters, Emily Frances and Charlotte George are recorded in the census in the same house as their aunt Mrs Sarah WILLIAMS née Alchin.

There is a second family document where the name Church makes a curious appearance. In 1867 another sister of the elder Francis, Emma Jane Alchin married John James HARRIS at Croydon under the name 'Emma Church Alchin'. There is no other record that I am aware of where Emma uses the middle name 'Church' instead of 'Jane'.

It is difficult to explain these uses of the name 'Church'. Charlotte was a spinster when she married in 1858, equally her sister Sarah was never a Mrs Church. Their mother was still George's widow in 1861 so 'Church' wasn't the name of any step-father. Even more inexplicable is the use of the Church surname for George himself, with Alchin seemingly his middle name.

It is very probable that the wife of George Alchin was Elizabeth Church and it is also worth noting that the last boy born to George and Elizabeth was named Richard William. Was he given the names of his two grandfathers? If so, this would fit with Elizabeth's father being *Richard* Church while we know that the other grandfather was *William* Alchin.

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LONDON      11 January 2016

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