

JOHN BELL CHIRNSIDE (1833 – 1902)

His life, family and descendants.

Forebears and Siblings

John Bell Chirnside (referred to as Jack in this account of his life) was born in Northumberland on the 23rd June 1833, the son of Peter Chirnside and Margaret his wife, née Bell. The Chirnsides can be traced back to the village of Chirnside in Berwickshire and Heather Ronald in her book “Wool Past The Winning Post” (Landvale Enterprises 1977) gives a comprehensive history of the family from John Chirnside, who married Alisone Miller at Chirnside in 1699 to the numerous descendants who were so successful in Australia in the 19th century. Peter Chirnside was born in 1804 in the village of Cockburnspath, Berwickshire. He moved to Northumberland to manage a farm, Chatton Park, for a Mrs Pratt, but in 1834 he took on the tenancy of a 500 acre farm on the Duke of Northumberland’s estate, Smiley Law Farm (now known as Newham Buildings Farm). His two younger sons, James and Albert, later joined him in the tenancy and at the same time they took the tenancy of another 535 acres at Newstead Farm. The family were to farm successfully in Northumberland for 70 years, James eventually taking the additional lease of Newham Hall, a farm of 1,142 acres.

Peter and Margaret had three other sons, apart from Jack, and four daughters. Robert, the eldest son, was born in 1829 and eventually went to Australia, where he prospered by hard work, an astute business brain and the sponsorship of his two uncles, Thomas and Andrew Chirnside. Heather Ronald gives an account of him and his descendants in her book. James, born in 1835, and Albert, born in 1837, farmed with their father. James died in 1903 shortly after retiring from Newham Hall. The newspaper report of his farm sale mentions him as a keen sportsman and good farmer, having carried the farm through the ‘darkest era of farm depression’. Albert had left the farm many years earlier for Yorkshire, where he died in 1905 after a period of ill health. He was one of the executors of Jack’s will and, from his letters, he comes across as something of a crusty old bachelor.

Little is known about Mary Chirnside, Peter and Margaret’s eldest daughter who may have died young, but more is known of her sisters. The older, Matilda, born 28th July 1838 and baptised at the Presbyterian Chapel at Warrenford, Northumberland, didn’t marry and lived in Berwickshire, mostly in lodgings. She was deeply religious, strongly teetotal and a great influence on Jack’s elder daughter, Percie. Her letters to the family read like sermons and she would not attend the marriage of her niece, Blanche, deeming the occasion too frivolous for her. It is not known when she died, but letters survive from her up to around 1905.

Margaretta Chirnside was born at Smiley Law Farm the 1st February 1843 and in her late teens went to stay with other members of the family in Australia. In 1862 at Point Cooke, one of the Chirnside properties near Melbourne, she

married a well known pastoralist, John Bell, of Warrambine and Bell Park, Geelong. Sometimes known as Major Bell, as he had been a volunteer in the local Geelong Light Horse Brigade, he was over twenty years older than Margaretta but it would have been considered a good match, uniting as it did two of the prominent landowning families of Victoria. He was an immensely powerful man, who in his prime could clear a four rail fence holding a sheep under each arm and was also said to have smashed a 'striking machine' when visiting the Great Exhibition in 1851. John and Margaretta had no children and he died after only fourteen years of marriage in 1876. Margaretta was left very well off and appears to have travelled a great deal in company with her younger sister, Emily Isabella. There is a photo of the two sisters in San Francisco, they were both in Cairo in 1883 at the time when Emily met her future husband and they were together in Geneva, where Margaretta died on the 13th December 1892. She was remembered in the family as a great beauty and the grieving angel placed over John Bell's grave in Geelong Cemetery is supposed to have been modelled on her.

Emily Isabella Chirnside (known as Emmie) was the youngest in the family, born in 1845 and beautiful and elegant like her sister, Margaretta. There is a striking pastel portrait of her painted around the time of her marriage. She never settled anywhere for very long and spent most of her life travelling abroad. In 1883, she met Andrew Charles Parker Haggard, then a Major attached to the Egyptian army, and, after a very short courtship, married him in May at the British Consulate in Cairo. She was some nine years older than him and described on the marriage certificate as a resident of Cairo and of independent means. Coming from a respectable, but not rich, family of Northumberland farmers, it is interesting to speculate where her income came from as she obviously had sufficient means to live in some style. Later on, the Haggard family comment in family letters as to how Andrew is getting through her money and her own family refer to him swindling her.

Andrew Haggard came from a large family of brothers and sisters who travelled the world, of whom the most famous was Rider Haggard. Their exploits have recently been chronicled by Victoria Manthorpe in her book "Children of the Empire" (Victor Gollancz 1995). The 1880s were a period of conflict in Egypt and the Sudan and Andrew had a distinguished career in the army there, described in his book "Under Crescent and Star" (Blackwood and Sons 1895). Many of his friends, including the dashing and intrepid army officer Frederick Burnaby, died in action against the Mahdi's army and at the siege of Khartoum; and Andrew himself was involved in many skirmishes, earning himself a DSO and sundry Egyptian medals. In 1886 his health began to break down and he resigned his commission with the Egyptian army, he and Emmie leaving Cairo for England. Later on they spent time in India, before returning again to England where Andrew started writing historical novels. He retired from the army in 1891 with the rank of colonel, but he and Emmie did not settle down in England. She seems to have spent her time travelling on the continent and he began to spend more and more time in the USA and Canada. Inevitably the marriage broke down and they were divorced in 1902, although, oddly, records of the divorce have not been found.

Emmie died in Vienna in July 1914 after a short illness just as Austria was declaring war on Serbia, and her niece, Blanche Shuckburgh who was in Belgium at the time, had a hazardous journey to attend to her funeral. She had to leave most of Emmie's luggage behind and, in her haste to get out of Austria, found that she had rescued a box containing false teeth rather than the jewellery she meant to bring. Emmie had been a favourite with Jack's children and grandchildren and most of her possessions, together with Andrew's, had been stored for some years at Hatch Court, the home of her niece, Percie Lloyd. After her death, the family sorted out her boxes and also annexed Andrew's possessions, feeling that he had forfeited his right to them by his behaviour to Emmie. Family letters do not refer to him in flattering terms. Once divorced, he had married again and he eventually died in May 1923.

Jack's father, Peter Chirnside, died in May 1885 at Newham, leaving personal estate valued at £13,000. His wife, Margaret, had predeceased him. In his will, he left £50 towards a piece of silver for his eldest son, Robert, he being rich enough not to need money. For the same reason, he left nothing to his son, James, who already had the farm lease and stock. Daughters Matilda and Emily Isabella were left annuities of £100 per annum and the residue of his estate was left in trust for his son Albert. Interestingly two of his children, Jack and Margaret, are not mentioned at all in the will, although a silver snuff box and miniatures of Peter and Margaret Chirnside have descended through Jack's side of the family.

Pioneering days in Australia

Jack's uncle, Thomas Chirnside, had gone to Australia in 1839 and was followed a little later by his younger brother Andrew. They prospered and within a short time began to lease and purchase the first of their extensive land holdings in Victoria. Thomas returned home to his parents in Berwickshire in 1845. Apart from the chance to see his family, he also needed to buy stock and to persuade men to emigrate from Britain to work the stations in Australia. He sailed back to Victoria in 1847 on the ship Hashemy, taking stock, stores, a thoroughbred stallion and groom and his nephew, Jack, with him. Jack was only fourteen and it must have been a great adventure for a boy brought up on a Northumberland farm. For the next few years he worked with his Uncle Thomas as the Chirnside enterprises expanded. In 1851, Thomas bought his first land at Werribee a few miles to the west of Melbourne; a property that was eventually to be over 80,000 acres in extent and the site of the grandiose mansion built in the 1870s, Werribee Park. Jack was proud to boast in later years that he had been the first member of the family to establish a homestead at Werribee and this would have been the first small stone cottage built on the east bank of the Werribee River in 1853.

Thomas was the driving force behind the building of the Chirnside pastoral empire in those early days and it was important to him to have as many of his nephews with him as he could. He was always trying to persuade those at home to come and try their luck in Australia. Apart from love of family, there was another consideration. The government would grant every man a pre-emptive section of 640 acres (the area of land that you were allowed to buy at

a low price) and they could then lease as much land round those sections as they could get hold of. By placing nephews and other men they could trust on these sections, Thomas and Andrew came to control huge acreages of land in the 1850s and 1860s. It was said that at the height of their prosperity, they were shearing a million sheep a year.

Thomas Chirnside sailed for Scotland again in 1854 and returned to Australia the following year, this time bringing a number of stonemasons with him to work on the buildings planned for the various Chirnside properties. Jack went with him, but for some reason did not return to Australia until 1858. In the meantime, Thomas persuaded Jack's older brother, Robert, to come out to manage the Werribee for him and Robert proved to be a man after his own heart. Apart from managing, and at times leasing, the Werribee, he built up his own property nearby on the Little River and eventually built a large house, Mount Rothwell, there. His descendants still farm some of the land, although recently the house has been sold.

Jack returned to Australia in 1858 on the ship Copenhagen. On the voyage he met his future wife, Ellen Emma Cobham Watson, reputedly falling in love with her as she lay reclining in a deckchair. She was the daughter of Lieutenant George Watson, who had fought in the Napoleonic Wars and who had eventually taken his large family to Australia in 1839. After difficult years trying to farm in New South Wales, followed by four years as Superintendent of the Lunatic asylum in Melbourne, George Watson moved in 1852 to Lexton, a small township in the gold fields near Ballarat in Victoria. Here, in the near chaos of the gold rush years, he played a key role in the development of his small community; holding many of the posts of local government such as postmaster, deputy registrar and clerk of petty sessions. There are hundreds of his descendants, mostly in Australia, and one of them, John Watson, wrote a family history "The Watson Family in England and Australia" in 1979. Ellen was one of his younger daughters and had been sent home to complete her education in England.

Only two of Ellen's letters have survived, one a charming childhood note to her brother George and this one which is interesting as it refers to Jack's relationship with his uncles and his wish to strike out on his own. It can be dated to 1858.

GEELONG
October 26th

My dearest Mr Chirnside

I cannot tell you how pleased I was to receive your letter yesterday for I was beginning to be afraid that I should be going to Sydney before I heard from you. Papa left here yesterday, but before he went he had a long talk with Mr Martyr about us and they came to the conclusion that there was no objection to our engagement. Papa will of course tell you all that when he writes to you in answer to your letter. He is a very nice man and I am quite sure you will like each other when you know each other. I rather dreaded seeing him, but we were very soon quite at home.

I am sure you are very awkwardly placed with regard to your future plans. It would of course be very much nicer if you were to have a station of your own, but it would be a very great pity to offend your uncle. As you really think that you would not agree with your Uncle Andrew, it would be better if you could, do you not think so? But do not think too much of me in your plans, for I should not feel happy if I thought that I had been the means of destroying your future prospects. Do not think it is because I do not care for you that I say this, for it is that I care so much for you that I should feel so sorry if you were to displease your uncle.

I am going to Sydney some day this week. Papa is afraid that I shall be not quite comfortable there, but I mean to make myself happy and, if it does not all go on as it should do with my brother and sister in law, I shall comfort myself with the hope that it is only for a few short months.

The Doctor has been staying here for a few days. He told me you had invited him to Point Cooke and I think he will go there next Saturday if he can. The old nurse told me if I should ever be writing to that 'handsome gentleman' Mr Chirnside, I was to tell him with her duty that Miss Kathie has very much improved and often talks of Mr Tinsides! I must say goodbye as someone is calling me.

Please write soon and tell me all about yourself. Believe me dearest Mr Chirnside, ever and always your own

Nelly

Jack and Ellen had to wait awhile before they got married, which they did at Christ Church, Geelong in 1859. In the meantime, Jack presumably got over his doubts about working with his Uncle Andrew as he took over the management of the Mouyong station alongside the Werribee and he did this for a few years. Andrew Chirnside had purchased this, together with the surrounding leasehold of 10,000 acres, in anticipation of Jack's arrival back from England. Jack still wanted to take up land of his own however and in 1859 he took over the lease of West Charlton station, 119,000 acres of poorer land in a newly opened area about 150 miles North West of Melbourne. It was situated on the Avoca River and not thought capable of carrying the stock that other Chirnside holdings could. Whether he had saved up the capital to finance this venture or whether his father or uncles helped is not known. As he was still at Mouyong, he needed someone to manage the station and he took his prospective brother-in-law, Joseph Cobham Watson into partnership. He intended however to live there himself now he was married and in 1860 purchased the 640 acre pre-emptive right section of West Charlton, intending to build a house there.

Things did not work out as planned and, after Jack and Ellen were married, they remained at the house at Mouyong. Ellen was not strong and the tough life out at West Charlton would have been too much for her. They had two children while living there; Margaret Percie (always known as Percie) born in

1861 at Fitzroy, Melbourne, and Charles Peter Martyr (known as Charlie) born in 1862 at Mouyong. Ellen's delicate health led to them deciding to spend a few years in England and they sailed in 1863, settling at Clifton-Upon-Dunsmore near Rugby in Warwickshire. Whether he knew this at the time or not, Jack Chirnside was not to live permanently in Australia again; he did however make a number of trips to visit his holdings, sometimes staying for up to six months at a time.

West Charlton was not an easy station to run and there were droughts and other setbacks in the early years. The brothers-in-law prospered however and Joseph Watson began to spend more time in Melbourne, leaving two of his brothers, Alexander and William to manage the property. By the mid 1860s, they were looking after about 21,000 sheep, 30 horses and 300 cattle. All this changed in the 1870s, as the station was divided up into smaller blocks by 'selectors'. Under the 1869 Land act, any resident of Victoria could select certain areas of leased or Crown land for farming at a very low price, a measure designed to break up the huge holdings of families like the Chirnsides. West Charlton was invaded by these men, who carved out choice areas for themselves near to the creeks and dams. As many of them did not fence their blocks, the brothers-in-law were losing hundreds of sheep annually. The only solution to this problem was to reduce the area under lease and to purchase as much of the freehold as they could, between 10,000 and 20,000 acres. Alexander Watson separately bought several hundred acres of west Charlton land and established his own small sheep station, Fairview, which he eventually sold in about 1910. William Watson moved to Goolagong in New South Wales. Joseph Watson died in 1877 and, once his estate was settled, West Charlton was once again in Jack Chirnside's sole name when it was about 6,750 acres. He appears to have sold it in the late 1880s.

In 1871, probably in anticipation of the reduction in size and profitability of West Charlton, Jack Chirnside bought Bealiba Station; situated again on the Avoca River but about 50 miles nearer to Melbourne. The freehold was just over 7,000 acres and there was the remaining term of a grazing lease over a further 20,000 acres. Jack persuaded a local Rugby man, Thomas Lee, to manage this for him and he sailed out to Australia in 1871 in the ship Macduff, together with his wife and large family. They also took with them a Clydesdale stallion, pedigree Southdown sheep and other breeding stock. The journey was a terrible one, with storms and the ship becalmed for a long period, and the Lees had to guard the animals day and night to prevent the crew seizing them for food. Water was also running short. They arrived at Bealiba after a three month journey and lived in the large ramshackle wooden house there. Sadly Thomas Lee did not work out well as a station manager, having probably been promoted beyond his capabilities. He got into a legal dispute which cost over £1,000 and Jack had to dismiss him in 1878, when on one of his long visits. The Lees took up land of their own in the area and members of the family are buried in the Bealiba township cemetery. Bealiba was leased to the Cameron family, who eventually bought it from Jack's executors in 1907. Like all the Chirnside family, Jack relied on Dalgety and Co Ltd as his agent in these matters and many of the records survive for the

period. They also dealt with sales of wool and other produce from West Charlton and Bealiba and the shipping of produce and stock from the railheads.

A new life in Warwickshire

On their arrival in Warwickshire in 1863, the family lived at Clifton Lodge near Clifton-Upon-Dunsmore; a house rebuilt and called Dunsmore by a later owner. At first they rented the property which had a fair acreage of land, but Jack slowly bought the freehold over the next fifteen years. Although he farmed there, in particular breeding shorthorn cattle, his main interests were sporting and he planted fox covers and spinneys around the estate. With the profits from West Charlton, he could afford to indulge his love of hunting and coursing and he had considerable success with the latter. He was a great owner and breeder of greyhounds; his most famous, Caledonia, won a number of prizes and went on in October 1875 to divide the Derby at Ashdown Park, one of the premier coursing meetings at the time. Jack's share of the prize money on that occasion was substantial and to celebrate he had a Minton dessert service made showing scenes from the day. This is still in the family, as well as the silver watch that was part of his prize. He bred greyhounds for many years, last registering a dog with the Greyhound Stud book in 1891.

Jack and Ellen Chirnside had three more children once they were living at Clifton Lodge; Cecilia Marie (known as Lily) born c1864 in London, Eliza Emily born c1865 and Blanche Cobham born on the 24th September 1867 in Paris. Eliza Emily died as a small child and sadly Ellen herself died in July 1868, aged only 31. Jack would only have been 35 when she died and it is perhaps surprising that he did not remarry, with four small children left on his hands. They were looked after by a nurse and governess, Miss Peden, and had a somewhat strict upbringing. Blanche remembered being made to stand on a chair in the garden for any misdemeanour, with only bread and water to eat, and Lily refers in her diary to their childhood not being happy, but not miserable either. Charlie was sent away to school in Yorkshire at the age of seven and later on went to Uppingham, where he died suddenly at the age of 15 in 1878. He had written the following letter to his father only a short while before.

**CLIFTON LODGE
RUGBY**
May 2nd 1878

My dear Papa

Thank you very much for your letter which I received this morning. Today has been very fine; Johnnie and I have been playing cricket and this evening we are going to fish. Barnett took the harness into Rugby this afternoon and brought out a lot of my cousins' things. There are two letters that came for you this morning, which I am going to enclose.

Mrs Buchanan asked Johnnie and me to come to her house this afternoon but as Johnnie felt rather ill we did not go. I am going to drive Johnnie home tomorrow as I go back to school at 5 o'clock. I am going to take Mrs Haslam some strawberries that Collins is going to give me. I wrote to Brussels yesterday and told them all I had done in the holidays and I said that I would see them at midsummer.

I have just met Bowley going the rounds with his gun and he told me that he has turned out five young hares near the fox cover.

I will do my best to work hard and get a scholarship and be a good boy. But now I must say goodbye, hoping you will have a prosperous voyage. I will write in two months time to Bealiba.

I am your affectionate Son

Charlie

It must have been a devastating blow for Jack Chirnside to lose his only son and it is perhaps surprising that he retained his Australian properties, when he did not have a son's inheritance to consider. With the problems at West Charlton and at Bealiba, the Australian income had declined dramatically from the heady days of the 1860s and he must have wondered whether it was worth carrying on. He did however put the Clifton Lodge estate on the market and sold it for £26,000 in 1880, retaining only Clifton Hall and about 30 acres on the edge of the village. Clifton Hall, later renamed The Old Hall, was a charming old half timbered house on the roadside in Clifton, but it was in a terrible state of repair. Much of the capital for the Clifton Lodge estate had been provided by mortgages and, once these were paid off, Jack only had about £6,000 of the purchase price left. The family moved for the next ten years to Avoca House in Rugby, presumably named after the river that had passed through West Charlton and Bealiba.

During the 1880s Jack visited Australia a number of times and his daughters also made trips of their own, Lily in 1883 and Percie and Blanche in 1889. Lily's trip, according to her diary, was not an unqualified success, but Percie and Blanche seem to have enjoyed themselves, visiting Bealiba and their Chirnside relations. There is a photo of them sitting with their Great Aunt Mary, Andrew Chirnside's wife, and cousins under the arcade at Werribee Park. Thomas Chirnside had become ill and depressed in the mid 1880s and had eventually shot himself in 1887. His brother Andrew died after a short illness in 1890. Thomas had given Percie the sum of £2,000 around the time of her 21st birthday and had apparently promised to do something similar for Lily and Blanche. Jack tried hard to get Thomas's executors to make good this promise and wrote a number of letters on this subject to the family and to his agent at Dalgetys, but without any success.

A new Clifton Hall was built in 1890 on the land that Jack had retained at the edge of the village; the cost of £2,500 possibly being funded by the sale of the remaining land at West Charlton. It is a rather ugly square house, typical of

its period and with a billiard room extension to one side. It also had a large conservatory leading from the hall, but that has been demolished at some time. Building a house of this size was a mistake, as Jack had financial problems all through the 1890s. A series of droughts and low agricultural prices meant poor returns from Bealiba; two Australian banks in which he had invested were in trouble and making calls for further capital; and he had been living above his income for some years. After threatening letters from his bank manager about his overdraft, he took out a mortgage on Clifton Hall for £3,000 and one on Bealiba for £2,200. After his death, his brother Albert commented that it was lucky that Dalgetys would not allow him to borrow more on Bealiba, as 'Jack was inclined to boast how much it was worth when in good spirits'.

In March 1892, Lily died after a long illness having been nursed by her two sisters, Percie and Blanche. Something of her character can be gleaned from the diary that she kept of her trip to Australia. Some years after that trip, she added these two passages to the diary which are rather poignant.

"The last time I wrote in my diary was on my 19th birthday. It is now November 12th 1889 and six years have passed since I put down my thoughts in you my diary. Alas what a long time to have wasted, what a lot of wicked things I have done and what few good ones, but I can say truthfully that I am nearer God than I was on my 19th birthday. If I had asked myself this question two years ago I should have said no, but now thank God I can say yes.

"Perhaps I had better go back and tell you my diary a little of my past history. My Mother died early leaving four little children, Percie 6, Charlie 5, Lily 4 and Blanche 10 months. We girls were left to the care of our nurse and governess and Charlie was sent to school at the age of 7. Our childhood was not a happy one, although it was not a miserable one. My first real trouble was when in 1878 Charlie was taken home. How I simply worshipped my brother; nobody but he ever knew all my private thoughts. He was equally fond of me and we shared everything, so you can imagine what it was like to lose him. In fact I never accepted that he was gone from me for ever and for many years when a door opened or a bell rang, I always looked up expecting to see him."

By the time that Lily died, Blanche was already engaged and she was married in December 1892. Her husband was Charles James Shuckburgh (known as Charlie), elder son of Richard Henry Shuckburgh of Bourton Hall near Rugby. Although it was a fine house and had an estate of 1,700 acres, the Shuckburghs were not well off. Jack comments in a letter to Dalgetys that 'the fall in land prices in this country has made the best of them poor' and that he will need to raise money in contemplation of the event. Percie married William Henry Lloyd in 1895, a man a lot older than herself but luckily somewhat richer than Blanche's husband.

Jack Chirside had always had an inclination to go and follow the good life in Brighton and other resorts; an inclination disapproved of especially by his sister Matilda. Now with Lily gone and Percie and Blanche married, he spent more and more time at his club in Brighton and this was a great worry to

Percie. She, who had always been influenced by her Aunt Matilda, tried to persuade him to become more religious, probably in the hope that he would mend his ways. To no avail! His financial position did not improve and his health and mental faculties began to fail. By 1899, he was incapable of managing his affairs and power of attorney was given to a Mr Buchanan of Rugby, who managed to avert disaster by imposing a strict budget. Mr Buchanan suggested that, given that 'paralysis of the brain' had been diagnosed, perhaps Jack should be put into an asylum, but mercifully another solution presented itself. At the end of 1899, the Lloyds had bought the Hatch Court estate in Somerset and there was a suitable cottage where he could live. He moved into Rose Cottage, Hatch Beauchamp, in June 1900, together with two man servants to nurse and look after him. There are a few photos, one a charming one with his two young granddaughters, showing him at Rose Cottage, frail but contented. He died of pneumonia Sunday 5th January 1902, aged 68.

Jack's coffin was taken by rail to Rugby on the 8th January and he was buried in the family grave at Clifton-Upon-Dunsmore the following day. Apart from his immediate family, his brother Albert attended the funeral and also Alice Chirside from Australia, together with her eldest son Gordon. Executorship papers show how much his assets had been depleted by the time of his death. His few investments were more of a liability than an asset and, although Clifton Hall and the Old Hall sold for a combined £5,600, his debts reduced his English estate to under £2,000. Bealiba, the only asset in his Australian estate sold for £24,000 in 1906/07, which was reduced to £21,000 after costs and the mortgage had been repaid. One third of the estate went to Percie Lloyd and two thirds to Blanche Shuckburgh, reflecting their relative wealth or lack of it! A number of personal possessions have come down through the family, including the Minton dessert service. Two small watercolours, 'Overlanders' and 'Cattle Branding', found at Hatch Court in the 1980s proved to be by the 19th century Australian painter, S.T.Gill and must have belonged to Jack. They sold for £7,000, even though they were in poor condition. There was also a fine book on Australian Flora and Fauna.

Children and descendants

At his death, Jack Chirside left only two surviving children, Percie and Blanche, and two grandchildren, Lily Ellen Margaret Shuckburgh (known as Pearl) and Dorothy Blanche Shuckburgh. Percie and Henry Lloyd were living at Hatch Court and Blanche and Charlie Shuckburgh, with their two children, were leading a peripatetic life, settling wherever they could live cheaply.

Percie, as indicated, was much under the influence of her Aunt Matilda as a young woman and remained very religious all her life. This was luckily tempered with kindness, a good sense of humour and a streak of eccentricity, so she became known by people as a 'character'. She travelled a fair bit and, while in Italy, she became friendly with Anna Lloyd, from the Lloyd family of Birmingham who were Quakers. They had come from Wales in the late 17th century and were involved in coal mining and the iron industry, founding the bank (now Lloyds TSB) in the mid 18th century. Anna and her brother, William Henry Lloyd, lived together at Hall Green, near Wednesbury, on the north side

of Birmingham and Percie made a number of visits to them there. After a time, Percie and Henry Lloyd came to love each other and they married in September 1895. Henry was 22 years older than Percie, having been born in 1839. At the time of their marriage, he had a steel tube making business in Birmingham, having been a coal master and iron master as a young man. He was also a JP and had been Mayor of Wednesbury in 1892 to 1894.

After a few years living at Hall Green, Henry and Percie decided to move from Birmingham and they bought Hatch Court in Somerset, together with its small estate of 360 acres. They moved there in 1900 and Anna Lloyd, who moved in artistic circles and had been a friend of John Ruskin, was placed in charge of the interior decorations. As well as the Shuckburghs, who spent a lot of time at Hatch, and members of the Lloyd family, many Chirside cousins from Australia came to stay. There was much discussion with the cousins as to what should be done about Bealiba, which was still being run by the executors of Jack Chirside's estate. In the end it was decided to sell Bealiba, once certain legal formalities had been completed, and Henry and Percie made a trip to Australia in 1907 to see it sold. They visited a number of other countries, including Japan, China and India, and were away for about fifteen months, sending home many packing cases full of porcelain, metal ware and other artefacts they bought. Percie kept a fascinating journal throughout the trip and collected numerous post cards of the places they visited.

Henry Lloyd had originally learnt to farm, before becoming involved in the iron business, and he now took a great interest in all that went on at Hatch, especially the woodlands. Percie kept bees and ran a small poultry farm. They laid out a tennis court and bowling green and held a number of garden parties in the summer, as well as holding religious meetings and talks in the house. Large parties were held at Christmas, when as many as 150 children from Hatch Beauchamp and the surrounding villages would be invited for lantern slides and coffee and cakes. The house parties continued and would usually include a rather eccentric selection of guests, although they all got on in the happy atmosphere of Hatch Court. All this changed with the outbreak of the First World War, when Henry and Percie did what they could for the war effort. Henry's health had begun to decline however and he died in March 1916.

Much to everyone's surprise, Percie married again the following year and her choice of husband was perhaps more surprising; the Rev'd Herbert Stanley Gallimore, Rector of Hatch Beauchamp, and a man 20 years younger than herself. Percie had a life interest in Hatch Court, but Herbert Gallimore felt that it was wrong for the parson to live in the 'big house' and so they moved to Laburnum Cottage at the bottom of the drive with Percie making the former Methodist Chapel next door her bedroom. At first the surroundings gave her terrible nightmares and many was the night when Herbert had to chase down the road in his night gown to comfort her! Otherwise they lived quietly at Laburnum. She died in February 1933 and was buried with Henry Lloyd in Hatch Beauchamp churchyard. Herbert Gallimore was the main beneficiary under her Will and moved away shortly after her death.

Percie's younger sister Blanche had married Charles James Shuckburgh in 1892. He had been to Oxford, but does not seem to have pursued any career; which was unfortunate as he only had a very small allowance from his father. Jack Chirnside also did what he could to support them, but the couple lived a very precarious existence during the years of their marriage. The only jobs that Charlie could get were tutoring ones and this took them to Friedberg-im-Baden in Germany, where Pearl was born in July 1894, and then to Dinard in France, where Dorothy was born in June 1898. They lived for a while at Clifton Hall after Jack Chirnside died and then at The Old Hall, before making their home in Jersey where they could live more cheaply on Blanche's small income from her father's estate. Charlie is rather a shadowy figure with not much known about him, except that he was a very good amateur photographer. He died in May 1908 and is buried at Grouville in Jersey. Henry Lloyd's nephew, Edward Sturge, tells an amusing tale of the Shuckburghs in a letter to Percie dated August 1907.

"I met your sister at Farm (The Lloyd family home in Birmingham); she was reclining on a sofa. She was glad to hear about her Australian relations. After reading Maida's book on Alcohol and the Human Body, Mr Shuckburgh has turned teetotaler for six months! He hopes you will be back at Hatch Court when the six months are up. He ordered a whisky and soda with his lunch at a hotel the other day. On its arrival, he told the waiter that he could drink it as he had forgotten he was a teetotaler. The waiter replied that he hoped that he would often forget that he was a teetotaler."

Blanche and the children lived in Jersey until the outbreak of the war in 1914, when they moved to a house near Exeter in Devon. They spent much of their time during the war in London, however, where Blanche worked with Belgian refugees; work for which she received a medal from the Queen of the Belgians. Pearl worked at the station canteens, providing refreshments for the troops going to and from the continent. Dorothy, who loved horses, worked at a remount depot in Worcester.

At the end of the war Pearl met Walter Cecil Collett Sykes, a temporary officer in the Royal Flying Corps, and they married in 1920, making their home near Horsham in Sussex. Cecil's family were relatively affluent and so he and Pearl lived comfortably at Bashurst, where he farmed and also ran a small engineering business. They had three daughters, Anne Blanche born in 1922, Hazel Dorothy born in 1925 and Veronica born in 1930. Cecil Sykes died at Bashurst in 1945 and Pearl moved first to Bignor in Sussex and then to Itchen Abbas in Hampshire, where she died in 1981.

Dorothy married a Canadian, Andrew Hamilton Gault, a remarkable man whose life has been the subject of a biography "First In The Field" by Jeffery Williams (Leo Cooper 1995). His family had made their money from cotton mills across Canada and they had also been founders and directors of the Sun Life Insurance Company. Hamilton Gault was not as keen on business as his father and uncles and sought a more adventurous life. His chance came at the outbreak of the First World War, when he offered to raise and equip at his own expense a regiment for service in Europe. That regiment

was Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and they were ready to ship to Europe within weeks of the outbreak of war. Hamilton served in the regiment, eventually commanding it. After the war, he spent time in Somerset and met Dorothy one day while hunting near Hatch. They married in 1922. Not having a home in England and not wishing to return to his home in Montreal, Canada, they rented Hatch Court and the estate from Percie Lloyd, eventually buying the reversion from the heirs of Henry Lloyd. Hamilton became MP for Taunton in 1924 and Dorothy was a great asset to him in the constituency. They also shared a love of hunting and flying; buying their first plane in 1930 and flying themselves throughout Europe and also North Africa. Hamilton served again in the Second World War as a Brigadier, before being invalided out of the army after an accident. For tax reasons the Gaults had to leave England for Montreal after the war, where Hamilton died in 1958. They had no children.

With both of her daughters married, Blanche Shuckburgh moved to Budleigh Salterton in Devon; living first at Little Orchard at the top of the town and then at Huntley Cottage on the sea front. Her money worries were luckily now over as her two sons in law, especially Hamilton Gault, were able to give financial assistance when needed. She became much involved with the life of the town, where she was a well known figure at cricket matches and other local events. A maid, Alice Trace, looked after her and between them they did the cricket teas for many years. At first she had a small car in Budleigh, but gave up driving after letting the car roll over into the flower beds at Little Orchard. Towards the end of her life, she spent much more time with Pearl and Dorothy and with her grandchildren and their young families. She died at Budleigh Salterton in March 1959, aged 91, and her ashes were interred at Hatch Beauchamp next to the grave of Henry and Percie Lloyd.

Hatch Court had been let since the war, but Dorothy Gault returned to England in 1959 after Hamilton's death. The house was too big for her on her own and her niece Anne, with her family, moved into part of the house. Anne had married a naval officer, John Strover Townson (known as Jack), in 1946 and they had two children, John Hamilton Townson born in 1949 and Jane Margaret Townson born in 1951. Jack Townson retired from the navy and ran the farm at Hatch until his early death in 1967. Anne married again in 1971, her husband being a retired Fleet Air Arm officer Barry Nation, and they continued to live at Hatch Court; taking over the whole house on Dorothy's death in 1972. They opened the house to the public and, also, created a small museum commemorating the founding of the PPCLI and the lives of Hamilton and Dorothy Gault.

Anne Nation died in March 1995, by which time she had handed over the house to her daughter Jane, who had married a doctor, Robin Odgers, in 1980. They have two children, Susannah and Emma Jane. They sold Hatch Court and the land around it in 2000 and moved to Corton Denham House near Sherborne. John Townson took over the home farm, now called Belmont Farm, in 1978 and lives in the farmhouse behind the church at Hatch Beauchamp. He still owns about 200 acres of the former Hatch Court estate including the woodlands that Henry Lloyd took such an interest in.

Pearl's second daughter, Hazel Sykes, married an army officer, Henry Richard Wentworth Vernon in 1947, and they live in Hampshire. They have two children, Richard Wentworth Vernon born in 1947 and Gay Dorothy Vernon born in 1950. Richard has two daughters and Gay a son and daughter. Gay also has five grandchildren, who would be John Bell Chirnside's only gt gt gt gt grandchildren.

Veronica married Mark Lyndon Hepburn Stent in 1956 and they farm at Avington in Hampshire, with one of their sons, Robert born in 1960, farming with them and living with his family nearby. They also have a daughter, Diana born in 1958 and a son, Ian born in 1964.

Sources and Acknowledgements.

Much of the information in this account of John Bell Chirnside's life comes from family papers formerly at Hatch Court and now in my possession. Henry and Percie Lloyd were luckily very good at keeping correspondence and photographs and at writing diaries and journals. Heather Ronald's book "Wool Past The Winning Post" and John Watson's account of the Watson family in Australia have been a great help to me in writing about Jack Chirnside's time in Australia and Victoria Manthorpe's book "Children of the Empire" gave me information about Andrew Haggard. Information on the Bell family of Australia has come from Stephanie Kihlstrom's website. Charles Blanning of the National Coursing Club was able to trace Jack Chirnside's involvement with greyhounds and coursing and to give me an account of the Derby at Ashdown in 1875. I have also tried to record a few of the stories told to me by my Grandmother, Pearl Sykes, and my Great Aunt, Dorothy Gault.

John Townson October 2005, amended March 2009.