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## AN OLD FAMILY BIBLE

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A couple of years ago, as my son Matthew was leaving bell-ringing practice at St.Mary's, Ewell, someone came up to him with a huge bible, saying that it had been found in a house clearance and would he like it? Maybe in the dark he had been mistaken for a clergyman? Anyway, he said yes and took it home.

It had been printed in 1837 and had obviously been used as a 'family bible' as inside the cover was part of a list of 20<sup>th</sup> century marriages and births, stuck over an older and more neatly written 19<sup>th</sup> century one.

The first few characters of most, and last few characters of some, lines were missing, so it took quite a bit of detective work, including a trip to the late Family Record Centre, to fill in the gaps. The top list began with Nellie Wiltshire who married a Mr Stilwell. Details of their descendants are given but as they appear to have no direct connection with Epsom or Ewell are not given in this paper.

The list underneath begins with George Giberne and there are connections with Epsom which make it of interest, as does a connection with Gerard Manley Hopkins, the famous poet. With the aid of the Family Record Centre's Birth and Marriage indexes, and the International Genealogical Index, it can probably be reconstructed as:

George Giberne of the Civil Service Bombay  
First son and fourth child of Rebecca Giberne.  
Married at St.Mary's Church, Reigate on July 28 1846 to Maria Smith.

Evelyn, the first child, born June 7, 1847, baptized July 8, 1847 at Christchurch, Epsom Common.

Harold, first son and second child, born October 18, 1848, baptized October 26, 1848 at Epsom and there buried on November 12, 1848.

Edgar, second son and third child, born June 24, 1850 at Epsom and there registered, christened July 25, 1850 at St.Martin's Epsom, sponsors Charles Ge....Bannister, Manley Hopkins and Kate Hopkins.

Isabel, second daughter and fourth child, born October 6, 1857 at Epsom and there registered, christened 6 November at St.Martin's Epsom, sponsors Laura Smith, Clara Lane and John Sinn...

Further information was obtained by trawling the web, from census records, from Jeremy Harte of Bourne Hall Museum and John Parsloe's *'Woodcote House'*

George's father Mark and grandfather George Gabriel had been wine merchants, descendants of a family which had fled France in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century after their two castles in south-central France had been destroyed by Protestants. His mother was Rebecca, nee Sharp.

George was born on 10 November, 1797 in London. He had two distinguished careers, first as a judge in Bombay, and then as an early photographer in England, typically photographing ivy-clad medieval ruins. He arrived in Bombay in 1817 but his health suffered in an earthquake in 1820. He returned to Europe to undertake the 'Grand Tour' in 1823-5, to help recover his health, only to suffer from another earthquake whilst on the top of Vesuvius.

His younger brothers Mark, Charles and Henry also served out in India. Mark was shipwrecked on his way out in 1821, and the survivors subsisted on sea elephants, penguins and their eggs and wild celery before they managed to build a boat and some of them sailed to Tristan da Cunha to fetch help.

Possibly in the light of his brother's unfortunate experience, when George returned to India in 1826 he travelled overland, on horseback with a companion. Whilst in Italy they fell out in an argument over whether lavatory seats were best made of wood or marble, and went their separate ways.

Out in India George rose to become a judge. When asked if he minded sentencing people to death, he replied that anyone he had condemned had richly deserved it. George retired in 1843 whilst still aged only 45 and single, until he married Maria in 1846. Maria was less than half of George's age when they married, having been born c.1823 in London, so she was about 23 and he was 48.

Her elder sister Catherine, known as Kate, (1821-1900), had married Manley Hopkins on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1843 at Chigwell. Their son Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89) was the famous poet, and the National Portrait Gallery possesses a couple of George's photographs of him. Maria taught Gerard how to sketch when he was living in Croydon.

George's unmarried sister, Maria Rosina (1802-85) was a painter and convert to Roman Catholicism. It was after she rejected an offer of marriage from Cardinal Newman's brother Francis (1805-97) that he became a missionary in Iraq. George's other unmarried sister Caroline Cuffley (1803-85) was a missionary to Ceylon and south India. Brother-in-law Walter Mayers was tutor at Oxford to Cardinal Newman (1801-90), another convert to Roman Catholicism. When, in the mid-1850s, the expected conferment of a bishopric upon Newman did not materialise, Maria bluntly asked Pope Pius IX why not. Under Newman's influence, Gerard Manley Hopkins became yet another convert to Roman Catholicism in 1866.

George's niece Agnes (1845-1939) was a prolific writer, in particular of religious and children's short stories, though the 1881 census for Willesden lists her as a science fiction author- I was surprised to see that the term went back so far.

George and Maria spent their married life in a house on the west side of Church Street, Epsom, variously described as number 36 (1851 census), next to the vicarage (though this stood further back on what is now St.Martin's Avenue), between 'The Grove' and 'Parkhurst' (1881 census)

or Richmond House. Richmond House had been built in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, and is now the Beaumont Care Home at number 20. The Hopkins' daughter Grace used to spend Easter with Isabel at this house, and later wrote fondly of the happy days the two young girls spent running around in the garden. The visitors' book records Gerard Manley Hopkins as visiting on 5-6th August 1881. The 1851, 1881 and 1911 censuses all list the household as including four servants.

George died on 2nd October 1876 in Epsom, of pneumonia after getting soaked whilst out riding and was buried 4 days later in the Ashley Road cemetery.

The 1881 census lists his wife Maria and children at Church Street, Epsom; the 1911 census just Maria and daughter Evelyn. Maria died on 26 September, 1911 in Epsom. Possibly it was after her death that the Bible found its way to the other family listed in it, as their entries begin in 1915.

Of the children of George and Maria who survived infancy:

Evelyn died on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1932.

Edgar was a prodigious artist as a child, and became a book illustrator. On 20 February, 1884 he married Caroline Alexandra Buller at Epsom St.Martin's. Sadly his wife's sister, Emily Katherine, who had been one of the bridesmaids, died only a few days later. They had a son Harold Buller Giberne, born in the first quarter of 1885 in Kensington. Edgar had been living at 35 Kensington Square when he died at Woodcote Park, Epsom on 21 September 1889, and he was buried 4 days later at Epsom cemetery. He left an estate worth a little over £2000. When Epsom St.Martin's was extended in 1922, the new east window was dedicated to Edgar and three of his Buller relatives by marriage.

Isabel had friendships with both sexes, but was eventually married, to Edward Gustavus Sieveking on 25 April 1891 at Epsom, given away by her uncle, Manley Hopkins. Edward had been born c.1847 in Upper Clapton, though not baptised until 12 October, 1865 at Stamford Hill. Isabel was only 5'2" tall and Edward was over 6'6"!

They had children: Valentine Edgar, born on 5 February, 1892 at 5 Portman Mansions, Baker Street and baptised on 23 April, 1892 at Epsom; Geoffrey Edward, born on 9 March, 1893 at the same address and baptised on 25 April, 1893 at Epsom; Lancelot Giberne, born 19 March, 1896 at 4 Lyon Road, Harrow and baptised on 25 April, 1896 at Epsom; and Elinor Beatrice, born 14 April, 1898 at the same address and baptised on 21 May, 1898 at Harrow.

Isabel became an author. Her books included *Memoirs and letters of Francis W. Newman* (1909) (the younger brother of Cardinal Newman), *A turning point in the Indian Mutiny* (1910) – probably inspired by her father's tales of life in India, *Autumn Impressions of the Gironde* (1910), *The memoir of Sir Horace Mann* (1912) and *The Great Postponement* (1912).