

Chapter 1

I have now turned my attention to the Stock family on Alan's side of the family and, much to my surprise, have found a Lincolnshire connection.

Brothers George and Charles Stock, cousins of Alan's grandmother Jane Elizabeth Ryder (nee Stock), both served in the Lincolnshire Regiment. George was a colour sergeant with the 3rd Battalion, on the 1901 census at Folkstone, and Charles was a non-commissioned officer with the 1st Battalion, on the 1891 census at Hulme, South Manchester. What is more, George's three sons were all born in Lincoln and baptised at St Nicholas Church on Newport in 1896, 1900 and 1902; George was presumably based at the barracks further up the road. My family used to live on Broadway, off Newport, and Alan and I were married at St Nicholas Church in 1986.

The boys would have been second cousins to Alan's mother, Joan Freeman (nee Ryder). The oldest one, Dudley George Stock, served with the 5th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment and was killed in action in France on 13th October 1915, an acting corporal.

After leaving the army, George lived in Gainsborough, but eventually joined his brother Charles in Shepshed, Leicestershire, where many of their immediate family had moved.

It's a shame I didn't come across this information a couple of years ago when I could have told Alan and his mother about it.

I have been continuing further back with Alan's Stock family and have come across an interesting set of circumstances.

James Stock of Ashdon, Essex, married Mary Ann Marshall of Debden, Essex, at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, London in 1832. They had three children before he died in January 1840, at the age of 26, back in Ashdon.

Their son George Stock married Mary Jane Blackwell in 1868 in West Norwood, Surrey, daughter of James and Martha Blackwell (nee Gowlett) of Ashdon. Martha Blackwell died in 1853, so widower James remarried in 1858, to Mary Ann Stock (nee Marshall) widow of James Stock! This made Mary Ann both step mother and mother-in-law to Mary Jane Stock (nee Blackwell).

In 1868 George Stock died, so Mary Jane moved back to Ashdon with her four children. On the 1871 census they are living with her father James Blackwell and his second wife Mary Ann, both the natural grandparents of children Charles, Frank, James and Elizabeth!!!

Mary Jane also remarried, in 1875, and moved away to start a second family, going on to live to the age of 95.

Chapter 2

I am now looking at Alan's Wakeling family of Saffron Walden, Essex - they married into the Stock family of nearby Linton, Cambridgeshire.

Daughter Mary Wakeling married Henry Willett in 1832 and they had five children, most becoming, or marrying, grocers, ironmongers or carpenters. However, their eldest son Samuel became a

schoolmaster, starting off in Saffron Walden, then moving to Buckinghamshire and finally Corby in Northamptonshire. He and his dressmaker wife, Ann Knowlden, had nine children who ended up in Windsor, Chertsey, Newquay, Chester, Glamorgan, Dublin, Jersey, Vancouver and China. They included two professors of music and a missionary with the China Inland Mission!

Wilfred Audley Willett, born in 1878, taught music on Jersey; he married there in 1906 which involved a bi-lingual marriage certificate in French and English. He then migrated to Vancouver in 1911, with wife Ruth following in 1912, and died there in 1933.

One of his elder brothers, Tom Gear Willett, born in 1867, probably met his future wife as a school child as they were both living in Upton cum Chalvey, Buckinghamshire, on the 1871 census, and of course his father was the schoolmaster. By 1894 they are both missionaries in China, and were married at the British Consulate in Chungking (now Chongqing). Unfortunately, Charlotte Willett died in 1901, so Tom married another missionary, Florence Campbell, daughter of the Honourable James Campbell, in 1904 at the British Consulate in Chefoo (Yantai) a coastal town in North China. Their daughter, Jean Campbell Cooper (nee Willett) became an internationally renowned speaker and author on Taoism, Chinese religions and spiritualism; she died in Cumbria in 1999 aged 93.

One of my tasks once we return to a new normal will be to investigate whether there are any records pertaining to Tom Gear Willett within the archives of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, which is where the papers of the China Inland Mission are held.