

MOVING ON – THE FAMILY IN & AFTER NORWICH

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1. Background

In Birmingham, at the annual conference two years ago, Stuart Hobday and I made a short presentation about the family in Birmingham – specifically about the five members of the family (the last of whom was my father Denis) who served as Mayor or Lord Mayor.

That set me on a path of discovery researching and writing quite a long paper – which I have still not quite finished. It is a history of the family in Birmingham from the first arrival there, around 1820, of Robert, my great-great-great grandfather, who was the youngest of Harriet's and James' three elder brothers. I had four objectives in writing that paper – one of them to properly understand the background to, and reasons for, the family leaving Norwich which, I am a sorry to say, I knew very little about.

From the 1780s various members of the family left until, by the end of the 1830s, the only ones left were Philip Meadows' widow, Dorothy, and their daughter Frances Anne – known in the family as Fannie Annie – who died there at Bracondale in 1877.

To understand this 'migration' is really the subject of this paper. I want to start by looking quickly at how the family ended up in Norwich.

2. Huguenots

Gaston and Marie had arrived in London as Huguenot refugees in 1686. They met on the crossing from Dieppe and were the great-great-grandparents of Harriet, James and my own three times great-grandfather Robert. They were married at the French Church of La Patente (which has long since gone) in Spitalfields. The family tree records that Gaston was naturalised as an English citizen by letters patent in March 1689 – so, presumably, was Marie.

I wanted to understand what they were escaping in France and get some idea of what they found on arriving in England.

In France, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, life for Huguenots was fraught with danger – so was any attempt to escape. There is direct family evidence for this in a handwritten note that I have a copy of; it contains a brief account of the tribulations suffered by Paul Turquand of Poitiers, his wife Madeleine Martineau, and their family in escaping to England. The family relationship is unclear, but Madeleine may have been an elder sister of Gaston's.

A footnote states that the account is taken from *'the History of the families of the Turquands, translated from the French manuscripts carefully preserved & solemnly enjoined on each head of a family to transmit the same in writing for a memorial & edification of those who may be born in after ages, as a most valuable & extraordinary record'*.

The account itself, though quite short and not that detailed, presents the personal reality both of physical persecution and of the life-and-death consequences for Huguenots of being true to their religious convictions. This is 'big picture' history at a personal level.

3. London

Gaston and Marie were among the lucky ones; they managed to get out of France and arrive safely in London.

In London at this time the old mediaeval city had not long been swept away in the Great Fire of 1666. Twenty years later, when Gaston and Marie arrived, much of London was in the process of being rebuilt by Wren and Hawksmoor; the city we recognise today was emerging. St Paul's Cathedral was beginning to take shape. The last vestige of the old wooden cathedral, the portico, was only knocked down in the year of Gaston's and Marie's arrival.

We do not know where Gaston and Marie lived – only that they settled among the Huguenot community in Spitalfields just outside the City of London. Spitalfields was favoured by many artisans (weavers and others) because it was not under the control of the Guilds that dominated economic activity in the City of London itself. It became a centre for Huguenot immigrants.

The physical reality of their new surroundings must have been very foreign and quite confronting for Gaston and Marie:

- A strange language that, as far as we know, was completely new to them;
- An unfamiliar culture; and of course
- Physical surroundings quite different from Bergerac and the Dieppe in an emerging metropolis with a population already over half a million.

4. Norwich

In 1694 or 1695 Gaston and Marie moved to Norwich where the family settled and quickly became established.

Norwich at this time was the second city of the Kingdom – only London was larger. Norwich had a population of around 30,000 and a thriving economy based predominantly on weaving and textiles.

There were strong trade links to the continent and, to my surprise, further afield as well. The Continental links were natural enough given the influx of skilled Dutch and French settlers from the late middle ages. However, to my amazement, I found that goods from Norwich were traded through Hamburg and Danzig (both old Hanseatic ports) as far east as Siberia. Goods were shipped down the River Yare to Great Yarmouth, Norwich's traditional port, and on to Rotterdam for markets around the Mediterranean.

5. Trade

This highlights just how connected the world already was in the eighteenth century – something that is very easy to forget. In 1700, at the beginning of the century, the great age of exploration – during which European explorers 'discovered' (or rediscovered) far-flung parts of the world – was already well past its peak, and the world was shrinking fast.

It is easy in our own age to forget the extent of international trade three hundred or more years ago. In 1700 the focus was on high-value commodities – in particular spices. Here are two celebrated examples:

- In 1667 the Dutch had traded away Manhattan to consolidate their nutmeg monopoly in the Banda Islands in Indonesia – New Amsterdam became New York; and

- In the next half-century the Dutch had also developed a highly lucrative monopoly in tulips; this ended in tears with the South Sea Bubble in 1720.

Both nutmeg and tulips in their time were fantastically valuable.

Over the course of the eighteenth century international trade expanded dramatically. Sugar, coffee, tea, tobacco, cotton, silk and rice were all important international trade items – so of course, unfortunately, were slaves. A new well-to-do middle class fuelled demand for imported goods and domestic manufactures alike. Domestic manufactures included such items as porcelain from the Potteries, mass-produced coloured textiles (clothes but also furnishing fabrics) from Lancashire and Yorkshire, and a wide range of utilitarian and decorative wares in metal from Birmingham.

In the last third of the eighteenth century trade goods were being shipped long distances via the newly-built canal network. Traffic went to emerging mass markets domestically but also, increasingly, to overseas markets. Boulton and Watt steam engines manufactured in Birmingham are a good example – the canal network took them north to the fast-developing industrial towns, where they powered the textile mills, but also south to Bristol, via the River Severn, and on to the West Indies for cane crushing.

6. The Textile Industry in Norwich

This expansion of trade turns out to be the key to why the family line did not continue in Norwich.

The drift away from the city began in the 1780s with the generation before Robert, Harriet and James. It reflects relative economic decline in Norwich at a time of rapid economic development elsewhere. It is simply economic opportunity that drew so many members of the family away – mainly to London.

To understand this it is necessary to look at what was happening in Norwich at the time.

By 1700 Norwich had a well-developed and highly specialised cloth trade. From the sixteenth century a significant influx of immigrants from the Continent, escaping religious persecution in the Netherlands and in France, had brought specialist textile craft skills to the local economy. Protestant England had been a natural destination for both Dutch Calvinists and French Huguenots. Settling across the Channel made sense for commercial reasons, though, as well as religious ones. Norwich, with its established cultural and trade links to their countries of origin, was a destination of choice for many of these immigrants.

The local textile trade in Norwich retained a sizeable export business, both domestically and internationally, despite growing competitive pressures. Generally, through much of the eighteenth century, it prospered. Competitive pressure took two forms in particular:

- Imports – as with the Calico Crisis of 1719 to 1721 when the threat of widespread civil disorder in the face of competition from Indian printed calico resulted in it being banned; and
- New technology – the threat posed by gradual advances in technology and the mechanisation of production.

Exports were initially handled by the London factors but came progressively to be undertaken by the producers in Norwich themselves. A decline in trade with the Continent towards the end of the Seven Years War (1756 to 1763) and emerging differences with the American colonies resulted in the London warehouses holding surplus stock; this of course had to be shifted. Changing market conditions resulted in local producers in Norwich – particularly the larger ones – increasingly handling

their own export business. These producers began to establish their own relationships with Continental buyers and to by-pass the middlemen in London altogether. Goods were moved down the River Yare to Great Yarmouth for shipment to Rotterdam (and, as we have seen, Hamburg and Danzig) for sale in export markets. London, with its large population and changing fashions, still remained a significant market – though a notoriously fickle one.

What turned out to be fatal for Norwich was, above all, new technology and the mechanisation that came with it. As the Industrial Revolution took off, Norwich found itself at a major competitive disadvantage to the emerging northern centres of production, having neither fast-flowing water nor local coalfields. There was no viable source of power for local producers to mechanise their operations; also, with no local spinning industry, yarn had to be sent away for spinning before it could be woven – which of course lengthened production and delivery times and added cost. Local producers seem to have stuck with what they knew – specialisation and high product quality – without ever attempting to appeal to the emerging mass-market with its increasing demand for lower-cost mass-produced fabrics.

This is the background to the gradual drift away of the family starting in the 1780s. The family had by then been in Norwich for the best part of a century.

7. The Family in Norwich

The traditional family occupation had been surgery. The original settler Gaston had been a surgeon. His son and grandson – both called David – were also surgeons practising in Norwich. It is known that the younger David, born in 1726, performed lithotomy – as did his son Philip Meadows after him.

David and his wife Sarah Meadows are the first members of the family of whom we have pictures recording their likenesses. The portrait of Sarah is by the eminent Cornish painter John Opie who was a member of the Royal Academy.

There is an interesting connection here because John Opie was married to Amelia Opie who, like Harriet after her, was a leading abolitionist of her day and also came from Norwich.

David and Sarah are part of what I call the '*Enlightenment Generation*'. The next generation – David and Sarah's five sons and two daughters – grew up during the early Industrial Revolution. Unusually by the standards of the time all seven children reached adulthood; all but one of them (the youngest, Sarah, who was named after her mother) also lived to relative old age.

David and Sarah's eldest child, Philip Meadows, born in 1852, also practised as a surgeon in Norwich and became a leading practitioner of his day; he specialised in lithotomy – as we heard from Lyn Holt in her most interesting paper at the 2016 conference in Birmingham – and lost only two patients in eighty-four operations over seventeen years! His success as a surgeon enabled him to buy a substantial estate on the edge of the city at Bracondale.

There he built an imposing house (Bracondale Lodge) with sweeping views to the south towards Trowse and the River Yare – all designed and landscaped by Humphry Repton and lavishly documented in one of the trademark 'Red Books' presented to his client.

Of David and Sarah's five sons only Philip Meadows and the youngest, Thomas, stayed in Norwich. Their two sisters, Margaret and Sarah, also lived in Norwich.

Margaret and Sarah married the same man; he was James Lee, who the family tree describes as a linen draper, but, on the evidence of Harriet's letters, seems to have had some medical training. Sarah, the younger sister, died in 1802 not long after giving birth to a baby boy who died in infancy.

Margaret, who had no children and outlived James Lee, did not die until 1840. By this time she had moved to London with her sister-in-law Elizabeth and her niece Harriet and was living at 17 Fludyer Street in Westminster. She was known in the family as Aunt Lee.

The youngest child Thomas was born in 1764 around the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. In 1793 he married Elizabeth Rankin, the daughter of a merchant from Newcastle, fully two hundred and fifty miles by road from Norwich. Thomas and Elizabeth had eight children including Robert, Harriet and James; the other five were Lissey, Tom, Henry, Rachel and Ellen. Again, as with the previous generation, all the children survived into adulthood.

In the early years of the new century the family in Norwich **would** have been quite large but for the fact that Philip Meadows' and Thomas' three brothers had already left; they were David, Peter Finch – after his mother's family – and John.

David, Peter Finch and John had been busy pursuing economic opportunity in London and had settled there. Meanwhile, in Norwich, Philip Meadows had built up his very successful surgical practice while Thomas had set up his camlet and bombazine business. Philip Meadows (the eldest brother) followed his father's profession of surgery while his younger brothers found new directions of their own. All four of them – David, Peter Finch, John and Thomas – were very much entrepreneurs of their day; David, Peter Finch, and John were serial entrepreneurs and became quite wealthy.

We should remember that economic opportunity in Norwich at this time, already over-specialised and past its peak, had also been constricted by the revolutionary wars with France. London, in contrast, was growing strongly and, around 1800, had a population of almost a million – a natural magnet for the three enterprising brothers.

8. Moving On

David, Peter Finch and John were all highly successful in business. They must, by temperament, have relished commercial opportunity; they were also probably comfortable with at least **some** degree of calculated commercial risk. They seem to have been quite close as brothers; this would have made for effective working relationships as they started out together in Norwich and then in London. I can imagine that, as they went their different ways with businesses in the East End, they still kept in close contact, consulted together, shared ideas and supported both one another and their younger brother, Thomas, still in Norwich through its local outlet at King Street, off Cheapside, in London.

In any case, at different times, they established family businesses in four economically important sectors in Norwich and in London beginning with textiles.

8.1 Textiles

The two older brothers, David and Peter Finch, started out together as scarlet-dyers in Norwich. The business '*diminished yearly*' (according to Beverley Reynolds in her excellent paper in the Society's newsletter in February) and evidently could not survive. Peter Finch moved first, finally leaving Norwich in 1788, although he spent much of his time in London from 1784; David did not move to London till 1797 when the scarlet-dying business must have been finally abandoned.

The textile industry had by then been in gradual decline for some time but, from 1793, was also beset by war with France; the war cut producers off from many of their Continental

customers. This is the background to the three brothers' move to London for new opportunities.

8.2 Brewing

The first of those opportunities was brewing. David (the eldest of the three) had, as early as 1783, founded a brewery at King's Arm Stairs, in Lambeth, which he financed with Peter Finch and John. There seems to be no earlier record of John (the youngest of the three) in Norwich, and in 1783 he turned twenty-five, so it seems that he was always an active partner in the brewery – most likely Peter Finch was too. Elder brother David, meanwhile, carried on in Norwich as a scarlet-dyer until (as we have seen) he too moved to London in 1797.

In the late 1700s brewing was an expanding trade and often highly lucrative. Traditional (unhopped) ales and hopped beers were thought to be healthy drinks and offered a cheaper alternative to gin. We may smile at the description 'healthy' but should remember that what we may think of as a healthier alternative – water – was often contaminated. Gin, by the way, had first been imported from the Netherlands after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 but caused such social problems on an epidemic scale (as documented by Hogarth) that there was eventually no escaping the need for regulation. By the middle of the century the notorious gin palaces had been duly regulated – which helped set up brewing as a large-scale commercial opportunity.

Whitbread's, dating from 1742, was an early starter. It had been based at Chiswell Street close to the City since 1750; in mid-century it was already making sales as far north as Scotland – which, following the Act of Union in 1707, was becoming, economically, more closely integrated with England. At the same time beer was being exported from Chiswell Street as far afield as Gibraltar, Jamaica and New York.

The King's Arm Stairs brewery merged with Whitbread's in 1812. John, who was a respected figure in the trade and had served as Master of the Brewers' Company in 1806, became a partner when the merger took effect. The merged business was a large and highly profitable enterprise with a capital base of £375,000 – equivalent to almost £17.5m in today's terms. For Whitbread's the family business at King's Arm Stairs offered three key advantages as a merger partner:

1. It had its own maltings in Norfolk – and Norfolk had a reputation for producing the best quality malt;
2. It had thirty-eight tied houses and therefore a substantial retail footprint; and
3. It came with management succession in that John's eldest son, Joseph, was active in the business.

Joseph in fact became a partner in the business at the time of the merger – the same time as his father. Three years later, in 1815, annual production reached 161,672 barrels, which at 36 gallons each, equated to over forty-six and a half million pints! Another of John's sons, Richard, later also became a partner. The business was known as Whitbread Martineau & Co until the mid-1840s. John and his sons Joseph and Richard all became wealthy through their partnerships in Whitbread's.

The maltings in Norfolk were managed by Richard. Richard was a lifelong friend and support to Harriet and handled her financial affairs when she left for the Continent in 1839. In a letter of 28 March to James she wrote: *'My mother hopes for some paying inmate in*

Harriet's absence, but Richard M. has instruction to supply (on Harriet's behalf) both her and Henry with adequate means'.

In the 1820s Richard lived in King Street in Norwich but also had premises at Gorlaston (pronounced 'Gorston') by the mouth of the River Yare. From there malt was shipped south to the Thames estuary and then upriver to the Chiswell Street brewery. In 1828, on becoming a partner in Whitbread's, Richard and his wife Lucy Needham moved to London and lived in the brewery dwelling house. Their daughter Mary Constance in later life remembered it as being '*a large commodious house, but very noisy and very smoky*'. This is where Harriet stayed for three weeks in December 1831 when at her lowest ebb. Richard and Lucy's drawing room later became the Whitbread's board room.

Richard bought a substantial estate ('The Lawn') at Walsham-le-Willows, in Suffolk, thereby establishing the branch of the family that still lives in the village today. His older brother Joseph also bought a country estate and moved away from London – in his case to Basing Park, near Alton, in Hampshire, where he was a JP and became High Sherriff of the County.

The Chiswell Street brewery produced mainly strong porter ale, which was very popular at the time, along with much smaller quantities of stout. It is porter that was sold by Henry in Norwich and by Robert in Birmingham, acting as agent for Whitbread's, in the years around 1830. Henry and my forebear Robert were brothers – nephews to John and first cousins to his sons Joseph and Richard.

Production at Chiswell Street only came to an end in 1976 after a run of two hundred and twenty-five years. Today the site is occupied by the Montcalm London City Hotel (fronting Chiswell Street) and a conference and events centre appropriately known as the 'The Brewery'. The buildings themselves are listed. A Boulton and Watt steam engine (made in Birmingham) operated on site from 1785 to 1865.

8.3 Sugar Refining

After the successful brewery venture at King's Arm Stairs the other two brothers (David and Peter Finch) went into sugar refining – each with his own business. John too, not content with just the brewery venture, had already done so on his own account.

There was apparently a family precedent for sugar refining – Vera Wheatley states in '*The Life and Work of Harriet Martineau*' that an uncle was in the trade in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This presumably refers to one of Elizabeth's brothers (a Rankin) and therefore an uncle to David, Peter Finch and John.

John started his own firm under the name Martineau, Son & Reid at Lemn Street in Whitechapel. This was from 1808 to 1812. The continuation of the brewery at King's Arm Stairs over the four years to 1812 until the merger with Whitbread's can only be explained if John's son Joseph, who turned twenty-two in 1808, was already active in the family brewery and effectively running it - John would then have been able to concentrate on the sugar refinery. This conclusion is necessary to make sense of the dates but is also supported by two other facts:

1. In 1812, at the time of the merger, the family business was carried on under the name '*Martineau, **Son** & Bland*'; and
2. Whitbread's were attracted in part because management succession in the family was already in place.

In 1808, though, four years before the merger, elder brothers David and Peter Finch both withdrew from the brewery concern and, like John, set up in business as sugar refiners. Initially they were in partnership with a Mr Spurrell at Old Fish Street Hill just a couple of hundred yards from St Paul's Cathedral. From 1812, though, each had his own firm – David Martineau & Sons, in Christian Street, at St-George-in-the-East (not far from what is now St Katherine Docks) and Peter Martineau & Sons, no more than a few hundred yards away, at Goulston Street.

From 1808, therefore, all three brothers were active in the booming sugar refining industry. Sugar refining (which had always been centred strongly on London) had by then become the dominant activity in the Whitechapel and St George-in-the-East area; the industry had become tightly concentrated there after the opening of the West India Docks in 1802. Changes in fire regulations, which forced the industry out of the City altogether, then effectively reinforced this concentration – locations such as Old Fish Street Hill were simply no longer viable on regulatory grounds.

Sugar refining boomed over the course of the eighteenth century; consumption per year per head of population **shot** up from four pounds in 1700 to eighteen pounds (and still growing) in 1800 – no wonder the three brothers saw a major business opportunity.

David evidently very did well in business because he gave substantial financial support to his younger brother Thomas for his camlet and bombazine business back in Norwich. A letter of Harriet's (dated 22 December 1825) refers to the sum of £2,000 (around £115,000 in today's money) as being owed only six months before Thomas' untimely death: *'He has to ask Uncle David for an extension of time of repayment of £2,000 due next February. The suspension of business, the failure of banks, and universal distress, creating insuperable dangers.'*

David was succeeded in the business by his son George, grandson David and great-grandson Sydney; the business itself finally closed in 1895.

Peter Finch was also very successful. He got started with the opportunistic acquisition of stock and premises in Goulston Street after the previous owner went bankrupt in 1806. He then extended the premises, expanded the business and was successful enough to be able to move into banking with his own business. This followed a stint as manager of an early savings bank, the London Provident Institution, where he first gained relevant experience.

As Peter Finch set up in banking, his sugar refining business was taken on by his son – also called Peter – and in due course by Peter's sons. That, though, was the end of the line, and the business closed in the 1870s – I have found both 1873 and 1878 mentioned in source material but have been unable (as yet) to pinpoint a precise date.

8.4 Banking

The precise timing and other details of Peter Finch's entry into banking are unclear, but he probably saw an opportunity (as he had in sugar refining) at a time of business stress. In her autobiography Harriet, referring to her tale of *'Berkeley the Banker, or Bank Notes and Bullion'*, says that she took *'some facts from the crisis of 1825-6 for the basis of my story'*, so Peter Finch may by then already have been in banking. It has been suggested that he may have been the model for Berkeley in Harriet's tale.

In any case, regardless of the precise timing, he was definitely in banking in 1827. We know this because his signature is recorded as appearing on a one-pound note issued by the firm of Martineau & Story in St Albans in August of that year.

In 1827 banking would certainly have represented a major commercial opportunity for someone with the necessary capital and business acumen. As many as seventy banks around the country had failed after a major stock market crash in 1825, and the needs of commerce still had to be met. The ever-growing demand for credit driven by the Industrial Revolution resulted, in 1826, in new legislation to address this demand. The new legislation, for the first time, allowed the creation of joint stock banks with investor shareholders. The old local banks, which had been limited to a maximum of six partners and had very limited capital bases, were consolidated into these new 'corporate' lenders or simply died out.

We are fortunate to have portraits of all three brothers as well as of the eldest brother Philip Meadows. In fact Thomas – the youngest brother and my great-great-great-great-grandfather – is the only one for whom there is no recorded likeness. We do know, though, what his wife Elizabeth looked like – at least near the end of her life – because of a sketch by Hilary Bonham-Carter in 1847 at Robert's house in Birmingham.

9. Diaspora

These three entrepreneurial brothers – David, Peter Finch and John – found business success in London but still kept in touch with the family in Norwich. In a letter of 28 November 1819 Harriet says: '*my three uncles came, driving from London to vote*'. The election, in which their nephew Tom was standing, was for the position of visiting surgeon at the Norwich and Norfolk General Hospital. David, Peter Finch and John could vote because they must have still had property in Norwich.

The family tree records an address for David of 13 James Street, Buckingham Gate, from 1797 till 1810 before he moved out to rural Clapham. We now also know where Peter Finch lived (thanks to Beverley Reynolds' research) but, to the best of my knowledge, have no record of where John lived during his early years in London. The three of them were at least working in close proximity and all within a few blocks from where Gaston and Marie must have lived three generations previously.

With their generation – the '*Industrial Revolution Generation*' – there is the start of a steady drift away from Norwich. The drift continues through the next generation as Thomas' and Elizabeth's children all settled elsewhere:

- Lissey married the doctor and surgeon Thomas Greenhow and moved to Newcastle where her mother had come from;
- Tom died on board ship returning from Madeira – his promising medical career as a surgeon in Norwich cut short by tuberculosis;
- Henry eventually moved to London after winding up his father's old textile business and then emigrated to Wellington where he died two years later;
- Robert (my great-great-great-grandfather) settled in Birmingham where he had a successful brass-founding business and was elected Mayor;
- Rachel started a girls' school in Liverpool and twenty or so years later retired, as a lady of independent means, to Weybridge in Surrey;
- Harriet went to London, travelled overseas and eventually (after her long convalescence at Tynemouth) settled at Ambleside;

- James lived in Dublin and then settled in Liverpool before eventually moving to London; and
- Ellen also lived in Liverpool, met her husband (James' brother-in-law) there, and settled there.

The list of leavers, across the two generations, has thirteen names. There are, in contrast, only six who stayed.

The two brothers who had stayed in Norwich both died there – first Thomas in 1826 (after which his widow Elizabeth and sister Margaret – ie Aunt Lee – moved to London) and then Philip Meadows in 1829.

That left only Philip Meadows' widow, Dorothy Clarke, and their daughter Fannie Annie. Fannie Annie, born in 1812, died at Bracondale in 1877 – and there the family line in Norwich comes to an end.

10. Drawing the Threads Together

There is something rather poignant about this 'extinction'. It is easy to imagine that Fannie Annie, as the only child of older parents, may have felt quite distant from her older cousins – even lonely perhaps. She was a year younger than Ellen, the youngest of the cousins, and there is a rather dismissive remark about her by Harriet (then aged twenty-one) in a letter of 30 October 1823: *'Ellen's rapid improvement and maturity are warmly attested, in contrast, unfortunately with her cousin Fanny's declination into terrestrial life which alone is offered to her'*. This comment may sound a bit obscure to our ears but smacks of harsh religiosity at a time when Harriet certainly 'had' religion; it also sounds unfairly judgmental when Philip Meadows, Fannie Annie's father, was a respected member of the congregation at the Octagon Chapel and, though not in the best of health, very much still alive. I cannot help thinking that, once her mother died in 1851, Fannie Annie must have led a rather sad and isolated life on her own at Bracondale.

Away from Norwich later generations produced quite an interesting cast of characters away from Norwich – mainly in London and Birmingham.

Two of these characters have, to my mind and in quite different ways, particularly interesting stories:

1. Horace - 1874 to 1916

Horace, a great-grandson of Peter Finch, served in the Boer War and was involved in the siege of Mafeking where, as a sergeant, he won the Victoria Cross in the action at Game Tree; this was for dragging a wounded corporal to safety while under sustained fire from the Boers. He was wounded three times in the process and, as can be seen from photos, lost an arm as a result. After this action he returned to England but later settled in South Africa before moving to New Zealand. Later he served at Gallipoli but was invalided back to New Zealand where he died of fever contracted at Gallipoli, soon after arriving back, in 1916. His grave is buried in the Anderson's Bay Cemetery in Dunedin and is remembered in New Zealand as a New Zealand recipient of the Victoria Cross. His service medals can be seen in the Lord Ashcroft Gallery at the Imperial War Museum.

2. Hubert Melville - 1891 to 1976

Perhaps my own favourite is a descendant of John's, a great-great-grandson, Hubert Melville. Hubert Melville was a very keen and quite accomplished cricketer. In the early 1930s he played in three games against the university sides (Oxford and Cambridge) that then still qualified as first-class fixtures. He hosted matches against the touring Australian, New Zealand,

West Indian and Indian sides from 1926 to 1932 at his own private ground at Holyport, near Maidenhead, in Berkshire and played in three of the four matches himself. The 1926 Australian side (in the one match that he did not play in) included some legendary names – notably Woodfull, Ponsford, Oldfield and Grimmett – and ended in an honourable draw. This match is generally billed as having involved a Minor Counties XI, but I have also seen the side referred to as HM Martineau's XI. During the 1930s Hubert Melville's side – also known as the Water Martins – went on several early-season tours to Egypt and must have one of the first touring sides (even **the** first touring side) to travel by air. Hubert Melville was obviously a real cricket tragic but must also have been quite a character.

11. Drawing the Threads Together

Why the family did not endure in Norwich is, in the end, pretty clear and comes down to two things:

- First and foremost the relative lack of economic opportunity compared with elsewhere – the effect of the Industrial Revolution; and
- Also the fact that Philip Meadows (who stayed in Norwich) had only the one child, a daughter, who never married and had family.

Those who moved on, over a period of two generations, played active and sometimes quite prominent roles in a range of sectors in London, Birmingham and Liverpool. Their chosen sectors – brewing, sugar refining and banking but later also brass-founding and education – were all socially and economically significant in the context of the times. David, Peter Finch, John and his sons Joseph and Richard, and Thomas' children Robert and Rachel, are all still remembered to varying degrees as a result. This is even before one considers either Harriet or James.

From Harriet's letters and her autobiography it is clear that family connections endured after Norwich – even at some distance. In Harriet's own case she was close in particular to her cousin Richard and his wife Lucy Needham in London, but she also stayed close to her two remaining brothers, Robert in Birmingham, and (at least until they fell out over her religious views) James in Liverpool as well.

With hindsight – given the economic conditions of the times and in light of their education and upbringing – the drift away from Norwich is hardly surprising. It is entirely natural that Philip Meadows' three younger brothers – and also Thomas' and Elizabeth's eight children – should (as it were) have spread their wings and left the nest as they did.

Perhaps, in a fast-changing world, the nest was no longer big enough.

Jeremy Martineau

26 July 2018

Main information sources

- *Family tree*
- *Harriet's letters*
- *'The Fabric of Stuffs – the Norwich Textile Industry from 1565'* by Ursula Priestley
- *'Norwich on the Cusp'* by Penelope Corfield
- *'The Story of Whitbread PLC 1742-1990'* by Nicholas Barritt Redman