

COLIN RATCLIFFE MAKES CONTACT

Out of the blue in January 2001, I received a letter from Colin Ratcliffe in Hillingdon, Middlesex who had just read the Daily Mail article about the murder of Ann Tennant at Long Compton in 1875.

In his letter Colin said that his RATCLIFFE ancestors came from Long Compton in Warwickshire. His grandfather was Fred Ratcliffe and he believed that he had a brother called James Kent Ratcliffe. He understood that Fred ran away from home to become a boy soldier. Could I confirm that this information was correct?

I checked my Ratcliffe Family Tree and quickly located Fred and his older brother Kent who were the sons of James RATCLIFFE of Long Compton, Stonemason, and his wife Hannah, formerly LANE. Fred was also my second cousin once removed.

My only knowledge of Fred was that he was aged 1 in the 1871 Census of Long Compton and 11 in the 1881 Census of Long Compton and was not living either at home or elsewhere in the Long Compton area in the 1891 Census.

I rang Colin to confirm that we were related and then asked him how could I help.

COLIN'S STORY

Colin then told me an amazing story.

He had been told that Fred had run away from home, joined the Army, fought in the Battle of Omdurman and in the Boer War after which he was discharged and joined the Metropolitan Police Force, got married and had 5 children and lived in Southwark. One night he came home from duty and found his home burnt out and his wife and 4 of his children had perished in the fire. Later he remarried and had 4 further children who were born between 1921 and 1928. The second of these children was named Fred Orlando RATCLIFFE who was Colin's father. Was there any way of proving that Fred's story was true?

Colin was unable to provide any further information except that Fred had died in 1959.

PROVING COLIN'S STORY

My research procedure:

1. I obtained the Birth and Death Certificates of Fred:

1871 June Qtr Ratcliffe, Fred [Chipping Norton R. D. 3a 707]
1871 7th March, FRED s/o James RATCLIFFE and Hannah Ratcliffe, formerly LANE, Stonemason, of Long Compton.

1959 March Qtr Ratcliffe Fred, 87 [Uxbridge R D 5f 145]
1959 21st January at 10 Wescott Waye, Uxbridge, FRED Ratcliffe aged 87 years, General Labourer died of Cardiac failure and chronic bronchitis.

Both certificates indicated that he was called FRED and not Frederick.

2. I then searched for the marriages of Fred. The second marriage was easy to find:

1920 March Qtr Uxbridge 3a 91 - Fred RATCLIFFE, 38, widower, Labourer s/o James Ratcliffe, Stonemason and Frances S PALMER, 33, widow d/o Robert John AXTEN, General Labourer.

The first marriage took much longer to find. I checked the Marriage Indexes starting in 1902 when Fred Was supposed to have returned from fighting in the Boer War, right through to 1920 and found no entry that seemed to fit. So I worked backwards from 1905 to 1889 when Fred would have been 18. I found only one Fred Ratcliffe getting married in the London area - 1892 December Qtr Paddington R.D.I ordered this even though I had no idea of the name of the spouse.

The Marriage Certificate showed that Fred RATCLIFFE, aged 21 , Builder's labourer, s/o James Ratcliffe, Stonemason, married Minnie Matilda STOREY a 20 year old spinster at St Stephen's Parish Church, Paddington on December 12th, 1892 and that Minnie's father was David Lawson Storey, [deceased], Labourer.

3. On my next visit to the FRC, I searched for the Birth of Minnie Matilda STOREY in 1872 and for her death along with 4 children in the same Quarterly index - possibly in Southwark R.D. I quickly located the Birth reference (STOREY, Minnie Matilda - 1872 March Qtr Caxton 3b 469) which I ordered, but found no reference

for her death or for any children between the years 1900 - 1920. Just to be certain that I hadn't overlooked a vital reference or had missed an Index, I did a recheck this time looking at all the variants of the surname Ratcliffe - again I drew a blank.

So I made a search of the Birth indexes from 1892 onwards looking for possible clues. I found one promising entry:

1900 March Qtr, Paddington R.D. RATCLIFFE, George Orlando [which I ordered]. I carried on the search but only came across the Birth references of the 4 children of Fred's second marriage who were born between 1921 - 1928.

RATCLIFFE Minnie Matilda [Axten] 1921 June Qtr Uxbridge 3a 70

RATCLIFFE Fred Orlando [Axten] 1922 September Qtr Uxbridge 3a 76

RATCLIFFE Rita Maud [Axten] 1925 June Qtr Uxbridge 3a 58

RATCLIFFE James Kent [Axten] 1927 June Qtr Uxbridge 3a 90

4. When the 2 Birth certificates arrived in the post, alarm bells started ringing!

Minnie Matilda STOREY's certificate showed that she was born in the Union Workhouse at Caxton, Cambridgeshire on January 14th, 1872, d/o Elizabeth Storey, singlewoman.

I immediately checked the 1881 Census of Cambridgeshire which I have on microfiche and found that Elizabeth was still living in Caxton Workhouse. She gave her age as 40 and her place of birth as Great Eversden, Cambridgeshire. She had 3 daughters with her in the Workhouse:- Sarah aged 12 born at Great Eversden, Minnie aged 9 and Mary Ann aged 4 both born at Caxton.

Also in the 1881 Census of Great Eversden was a Mary Storey, an unmarried woman of 71 living in Back Lane with 2 grandsons - Samuel George Storey aged 18 and David Lawson Storey aged 14, both Labourers and both born in Great Eversden! Was it possible that these STOREYs were related to Minnie Matilda?

The other Birth certificate was equally interesting:

1900 March 10th at 19 Stanley Street, Paddington - George Orlando

s/o Fred RATCLIFFE and Minnie Matilda RATCLIFFE formerly STOREY, Builder's Labourer.

One down - 4 to go if Colin's information was correct.

5. On my next visit to FRC I checked the 1871 Census of Great Eversden.

RG10/1576 Folio ---, Schedule---

Mary	STOREY	Head U	61	Washerwoman	CAM Harlton
Elizabeth	STOREY	Dau U	26	Washerwoman	CAM Gt Eversden
Samuel	STOREY	G/son	8	Scholar	CAM Gt Eversden
David	STOREY	G/son	4	Scholar	CAM Gt Eversden
Sarah	STOREY	G/dau	2		CAM Gt Eversden

Then I checked the 1891 Census of Great Eversden. I found a considerable number of STOREY entries, but no entry for Minnie Matilda.

RG12/1277 Folio 87 Sch 8

William	STOREY	Head M	58	Ag Lab	CAM Gt Eversden
Jane	STOREY	Wife M	49		CAM Gt Eversden
Fred	STOREY	Son	5		CAM Gt Eversden

RG12/1576 Folio 90 Sch 53

Mary	STOREY	Head S	82		CAM Harlton
David	STOREY	G/son S	24	Ag Lab	CAM Gt Eversden
William	FREEMAN	Lodger S	14	Baker's Apprentice	CAM Gt Eversden

RG12/1576 Folio 90 Sch 54

Thomas	FREEMAN	Head W	47	Butcher J'man	BDF Leighton Buzzard
Elizabeth	STOREY	Serv S	47	Housekeeper	CAM Gt Eversden
Mary	STOREY	Lodger S	14		CAM Gt Eversden

RG12/1576 Folio 90 Sch 55

William	MUNCEY	Head W	75	Ag Lab	CAM Gt Eversden
James	STOREY	--- S	26	Ag Lab	CAM Gt Eversden

Where was Minnie Matilda? There was no index on Ancestry.co.uk at this time, so I had to wait nearly 6 months for the 1901 Census to become available.

6. I managed to visit the FRC in January 2002 when it was working and the first names I looked for were Fred and Minnie Matilda

RATCLIFFE.

I located Fred living at 10Theobald Street, Newington, Southwark in a single room, describing himself as a single man of 28, Bricklayer's Labourer born in Long Compton, Warwickshire.

I found Minnie Matilda at 21 Portman Street, St Marylebone, a single woman of 29 and a domestic servant born in Caxton, Cambridgeshire, but of George Orlando RATCLIFFE their son who would have been 13 months old, there was no sign, nor could I find him on the surname index!

7. I then decided to recheck the Death Indexes and this time I noticed the death of a George O Ratcliffe, aged 20 in 1920 June Qtr Brentford R.D. which I ordered. The certificate showed that George Orlando Ratcliffe, aged 20, a Railway Gateman, ex army, had died of Double Pneumonia on 9th May 1920 and the Informant was H. Bourne, Stepfather!
8. Back to the Marriage Indexes. I worked back from 1920 and in 1912 December Qtr found matching references for Henry BOURNE and Minnie Matilda RATCLIFFE - Brentford R.D. I ordered the Certificate which was to show that Henry Bourne, a bachelor of 37, a railway platelayer, married Minnie Matilda Ratcliffe, a widow of 40 d/o David Lawson Storey [deceased] at Brentford Register Office on November 23rd, 1912.
9. Next move was to visit the National Archives [then called the PRO] at Kew and look at the microfiche of the 1901 Census of Great Eversden to see if Minnie Matilda's mother, Elizabeth was still living. Yes, she was - aged 61 – single, a Laundress and surprise, surprise, living with her was George RATLIFF, grandson aged 1 born Paddington!
10. I then paid a long overdue visit to the Society of Genealogists and discovered that they had a printed transcript of the Parish Registers of Great Eversden in their Library compiled by the Cambridgeshire FHS. What a find!

In the Baptismal Register 1813-1992, I discovered that Mary STOREY, Single woman had 3 illegitimate children baptised between 1833 and 1856: William [1833], Elizabeth [1845], and John [1856 - but born in 1849].

That Elizabeth had 4 illegitimate children baptised between 1863 and 1869: Samuel George [1863], Sarah Jane [1865 who died at the age of 3 months], David Lawson [1869 aged 3] and a second Sarah Jane [1869] in addition to Minnie Matilda [1872] and her sister Mary Ann [1877] who had been born in Caxton Workhouse.

The Baptismal Register of Great Eversden also recorded the baptism of Frederick James s/o Fred and Minnie Matilda RATCLIFFE of Home Road, Battersea, London, Bricklayer on December 24th, 1893 and the baptisms of 3 children of Minnie's elder brother, David Lawson STOREY and his wife Florence - Christopher Frederick [1899], Edith Cecilia [1901] and Louis Clifford [1904].

11. I followed this discovery by visiting Cambridgeshire CRO. First I checked the Caxton Workhouse Register of Births and found the Birth entry for Minnie Matilda - January 14th 1872, as well as the entry for Mary Ann - February 11th, 1877 with the additional note that Mary Ann was baptised in Caxton Church on March 6th, 1880. [I was unable to check this as the Caxton Baptismal Registers for that date have not been deposited at the CRO].

Then I checked the transcripts of the Harlton PRs as Mary STOREY, Elizabeth's mother gave Harlton as her place of birth in the Censuses and found her baptism in 1809: 1809 November 5th Mary d/o James Brand and Sarah Story - a natural child.

I also found the burial of Martha d/o of Sarah Storey at Harlton in 1812 but no further Storey references between 1696 and 1812.

A further check of the transcripts of Great Eversden revealed 2 clues that I had overlooked when checking the transcripts at the SOG 3 months. There were 2 baptisms of daughters born to Sarah STOREY spelt STOARY Elizabeth Blacktop STOREY in 1815 and Susannah Blacktop STOREY in 1820. In both references Sarah was described as a Housekeeper.

Then I noted the marriage in 1832 at Great Eversden of Sarah STOREY, single woman to James MUNCEY, singleman of the same parish. Could this be the same Sarah Storey?

A check of the 1851 Census of Great Eversden gave the answer

HO107/1758 folio 388 schedule 49

James MONCEY Head	M 46	Labourer	CAM Gt Eversden
Sarah MONCEY Wife	M 62		CAM Arrington
Eliza MONCEY Dau	U 17		CAM Gt Eversden

Could this be the next breakthrough? A check of the Arrington PRs was the next step. Was there a baptismal entry for a Sarah STOREY in 1790?

The Arrington PRs proved to be a goldmine of STOREY entries going back to 1756. Not only did I find the Baptism of Sarah in 1790, d/o Samuel and Sarah STOREY, but I also found the baptisms of 7 sisters and 1 brother between 1790 and 1807 including a sister called Minny! I also found the Marriage of Sarah's parents Samuel STOREY and Sarah BIRD at Arrington in 1789 and the marriages of 4 of her sisters.

THE SEARCH FOR THE DEATH OF MINNIE MATILDA BOURNE: Finding all this information about Minnie Matilda's family made me determined to try and find her death. Having discovered that she married Henry Bourne in 1912 when she was 40 years of age, in April 2003, I visited the FRC to see if I could locate her death entry.

I started the search in 1912. I found several references for Minnie Bourne but none for Minnie Matilda Bourne or Minnie M Bourne - until the September Qtr 1960 after a search through 48 years of indexes!

BOURNE, Minnie M, 88, Mansfield R.D.

I ordered the Certificate more in hope than certainty - Name and age fitted but Mansfield was a long way from Brentford, West London where she got married. The Certificate turned out to be correct.

1960 August 24th at King's Mill Hospital, Sutton in Ashfield.
Minnie Matilda BOURNE, of 38 Watnall Crescent, Mansfield,
Widow of Henry Bourne, Railway Platelayer [Retired],
Appendicitis [No Operation], C.F STOREY, Nephew, 25
Ravensdale Road, Mansfield.

A check of my extracts from the Great Eversden Baptismal Registers suggested that C.F Storey was Christopher Frederick Storey, a son of Minnie Matilda's brother David Lawson Storey.

DID SHE LEAVE A WILL? On my next visit to London, I went to First Avenue House to check the Wills Indexes. Yes! She had left a will.

1960 BOURNE Minnie Matilda of 38 Watnall Crescent, Mansfield, Notts, widow who died 24th August 1960 at Kings Mill Hospital, Sutton in Ashfield, Notts. Probate, Nottingham, 31 October to Christopher Frederick STOREY, Colliery Deputy. Effects £430/10/-

In her will she names 5 beneficiaries:

Nephew Christopher Frederick Storey of 25 Ravensdale Road, Mansfield

Nephew George Storey of 13 Cedar Street, Mansfield.

Nephew Frank Storey

Niece Mrs Nora Eunice Dove

Niece Mrs Edith Cecilia Parker

BACK TO THE FRC

A further check of the 1901 Census located David Lawson Storey, Minnie's elder brother still living in Great Eversden

RG13/1521 Folio 98 sch 55

David Storey Head M 34 General Labourer CAM Gt Eversden

Florence Storey Wife M 20 LONDON Holbourn

Christopher Storey Son 1 CAM Gt Eversden

Edith Storey Dau 1 mo CAM Gt Eversden

This information fitted in with the Baptismal entries that I had found in the Great Eversden Parish Registers some months earlier.

A search of the Marriage Indexes located the Marriage of David Lawson STOREY in 1899 March Qtr Caxton 3a, while the Birth Indexes suggested that David and Florence had at least 6 children all born in the Caxton R.D. between 1899 and 1913.- Christopher Frederick [1899], Edith Cecilia [1901], Louis Clifford [1904], Alfred Lawson [1905], Victor Henry [1908] and George Augustus [1909].

The Marriage Certificate revealed that David Lawson Storey, 32, General labourer, s/o David Lawson Storey [deceased], Coprolite Digger, married Florence Curtis, 18, Housemaid, d/o Alfred Curtis [deceased], Bus Driver, at Cambridge Register Office on March 8th, 1899.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

In June 2003, I visited Nottinghamshire CRO and spent the day checking the microfiche copies of the Mansfield Electoral Registers to find out how long Minnie Matilda had lived at 38 Watnall Crescent, and how long Christopher Frederick Storey and George Storey had lived at the addresses mentioned in Minnie Matilda's Will of 1960.

I located 38 Watnall Crescent and found Henry Bourne and Minnie Matilda Bourne resided there from 1958 - 1960. I did not find their previous address.

Christopher Frederick Storey and Mabel Elizabeth Storey lived at 25 Ravendale Road from 1934 - 1962. From 1965 - 1969 Christopher Frederick Storey and Elizabeth M Storey resided there and then Christopher appears to have lived there alone until his death in 1981.

George Augustus Storey and Edith Storey lived at 13 Cedar Street with Enos Day [Edith's father?] from 1939-1959 and from 1959-1992 on their own. In 1956 Doreen E Storey and George P Storey [children of George and Edith?] appear but by 1962 both had moved on. Edith is shown on her own in 1993 but there was no entry for 13 Cedar Street in 1994.

12. FREDERICK JAMES RATCLIFFE

The discovery of the baptismal entry for Frederick James Ratcliffe in Great Eversden in 1893 led me to obtain his Birth Certificate. [1893 December Qtr Caxton 3a]. This recorded his birth in Great Eversden 1893.

I then checked the 1901 census but found no entry in the person search or the advanced search.

So I started a search for his death and found a promising entry in 1894 – Frederick James Ratcliffe, 0, [1894, June Qtr, Sudbury] and ordered it without checking all the death indexes up to the June quarter of

1901. Unfortunately the parents of this Frederick James Ratcliffe were not Fred and Minnie Matilda. So I extended the search, by checking all variants of the surname RATCLIFFE including the spelling RATLIFF as shown on the 1901 Census entry for Frederick James, from 1895 onwards. Eventually I came across this entry in 1899 March Qtr:

Frederick James RATCLIFF, 5, Kensington 1a 66 and then noticed 2 other entries in the same quarter with the same reference.
Reta Elizabeth M RATCLIFF – 3 and Dora Mabel RATCLIFF – 1.

Had I found the references of Fred and Minnie's children who had died in a house fire? In great excitement, I ordered the Birth certificates for both girls and all 3 Death Certificates.

The certificates confirmed my strong feeling that I had located the children who had died in a house fire as the cause of death was the same on each Death Certificate:

*1898 29th December at 29 Lonsdale Road, North Kensington.
"Found dead – suffocation- through a fire in a room in which the deceased and the other 2 children were locked at the time when they were playing with matches – Accidental."
Certificate received from C. Luxmoore Drew, Coroner for London.
Inquest held 30th December, 1898.*

I followed this up with a visit to Kensington Local Studies Library where I located a report of the tragedy in the Kensington News dated Saturday, December 31st, 1898 on page 5.

FATAL FIRE AT NOTTING HILL

A disastrous fire, which, while it did not result in serious destruction of the property, was unfortunately attended with loss of life of three little children, broke out last Thursday afternoon at 29 Lonsdale Road, Notting Hill. The house is one of eight rooms and is sub-let to no fewer than five families of lodgers. The front room on the second floor was tenanted by a bricklayer named Ratcliffe, and it appears that soon after one o'clock in the afternoon, Mrs Ratcliffe left the house temporarily, while her three children, a little boy five years old named Frederick, a little girl of three named Rita and a baby daughter 18 months old named Dora remained playing in the room in which there was a fire. About 20 minutes past one o'clock, the other inmates of the house detected a smell of fire, and almost simultaneously passers by noticed a blaze through the windows,

and rushed to raise the alarm. Directly the door was burst open, dense volumes of smoke poured out of the room, and it was with the utmost difficulty that an entry was forced into the place.

A period of Intense excitement ensued, but without a moments delay several people dropped upon their hands and knees and proceeded to search the room, while messengers were dispatched for the firemen and pails and cans of water were requisitioned pending their arrival from Ladbroke Road. One by one the little ones were brought out. They were in an unconscious condition, and when removed to a local surgery, the medical men who were hastily called to the scene pronounced life to be extinct. In the meantime the mother had returned, and some heartrending scenes were witnessed.

The firemen from the local stations attacked the outbreak vigorously with two powerful hydrants, for the fire was increasing in strength every moment, and the task was a very difficult one owing to the densely suffocating smoke which poured from the place. The flames were overcome in the course of half an hour when the following official report of the occurrence was presented to Commander Wells, R.N., by Superintendent T. Smith:-

“Called at half past one p.m. to 29 Lonsdale Road, Notting Hill, W., to premises tenanted by F. Ratcliffe, lodger; back room second floor, ditto, E. Wickens, lodger; front room on ground floor and basement, ditto, A. Friend, lodger; back room on ground floor, ditto, T. Dean, lodger; landlord unknown; cause of the fire unknown – none of the lodgers insured. Damage – Front room on second floor and the contents damaged by fire, heat, smoke and water; back room on ditto and the contents by smoke, water and breakage; rest of house of eight rooms and the contents slightly by water and removal. Frederick Ratcliffe, aged five years, Rita Ratcliffe, aged three years, and Dora Ratcliffe, aged one year and six months, suffocated.

Gallant attempts to rescue, successful as far as their immediate object was concerned, were made by Mr James Bregan who lives at 4, Lonsdale Mews; Mr George Williams and Mr Henry John Redmond. Each rushed into the room and succeeded in bringing out a child.”

I followed this news item by checking the SoG publication “London Cemeteries and Crematoria” for London cemeteries that would have served the Paddington/ Notting Hill/Kensington area in 1898. I identified 3 possibilities and found the contacts to whom I

spoke most helpful. It was the third contact – the lady registrar for the Hanwell Cemetery who came up trumps and rang me back before I had promised to get back to her to tell me that Fred and Minnie's 3 children had been buried in Hanwell Cemetery on 3rd January 1899.