



Brighton and Beyond

A History of the Cowley Family

Charles Cowley – 1828 to 1890

This rather complicated family tree page needs some explanation.

In 1852 Charles Cowley emigrated to Australia arriving in Port Phillip Bay in October of that year. In 1856 Charles had a son, Charles, with Jane Davidson (nee Temple), a widow, born in abt 1828 in Hobart Town, Tasmania. Jane already had four children from her marriage to John Davidson who had died in 1854. Charles married Jane on 2 March 1859 and Jane died about 8 months later from a prolonged bout of gastroenteritis. (Oddly, in the official record, Charles Cowley, as the informant of Jane's death, is described as the 'brother in law' and the marriage / family notes state 'No family, married, James Cowley husband long time dead, no further information to be obtained'.)

Charles returned to England in January 1860 accompanied by three children - Mary Ann (age 7), Charles (age 4), and an infant, almost certainly William Henry. All the children are listed in the passenger records with the surname Cowley but we believe that Mary Ann is actually Mary Ann Davidson, born to John and Jane Davidson.

In 1861 Charles married Sophia Hopkins and in the 1861 census two children are listed as being born in Australia - Charles Cowley and Maryann (written as one name, not two) Cowley.

In the 1871 census Charles and Sophia are listed with three children born in Australia - Charles J., Jane M., and William H. - plus two children born in Knightsbridge, London, Sophia Blanch(e), and Edwin Brook.

In 1873 Jane Marion Cowley, daughter of Charles Cowley, dairyman, married Simeon Henry Carter.

As far as records allow we are certain that Mary Ann Davidson, Maryann Cowley, and Jane Marion Cowley are the same person - the youngest daughter of Jane Temple and John Davidson - but how and why the name change came about we will probably never know. We have not traced any definitive records for Jane Marion after her marriage.

Charles Cowley's second wife, Sophia, died in abt 1876 and in 1877 he married Ruth Gurton with whom he had two further children, Frank and Percy Leon.

In his will, drawn up about one month before his death in 1890, Charles Cowley makes bequests to his 'six children' - Sophia Blanche Cowley, Charles James Cowley, Edwin Brook Cowley, Frank Cowley, Percy Leon Cowley, and Ernest William Gurton. William Henry Cowley had pre-deceased his father in abt 1887 so is not mentioned. Charles James Cowley had returned to Australia in 1874 arriving in Melbourne on 19th January of that year. There is no reference in the will to Jane Marion / Mary Ann, possibly because she had already died or perhaps because she was not one of Charles' children. The surprise in the will is the reference to Ernest William Gurton. It is unclear whether Charles was the biological father of Ernest although his inclusion in the will suggests that there was a direct family 'link'.

There are still many unanswered questions relating to Charles Cowley's rather complicated life and relationships. The family tree that I show on the web site is the best that can be offered at present based on available records.

Web site link: www.cowleyfamily.org.uk/familytree43.html