

Elliott family origins

In search of the origins of our Elliott family

by James Michael Fleming

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Introduction

This research report outlines the outcomes from my research into the antecedents of my 3G-grandmother Emma Elliott and her mother Frances Gibson. I was inspired to undertake this research by Louise Kemp who is currently working on a book about Isaac Kemp (Emma's father-in-law). Louise had expressed frustration at the difficulties that she had encountered in researching these families due to a dearth of English evidence to corroborate the Australian historical documentation. There is also a significant amount of family lore that has not been substantiated. My intention was to work with Louise to see if we could solve some of the riddles together.



Jim Fleming is a retired Customs Manager and lives on Sydney's lower north shore. He began researching his family history in 1983 and has been a member of the Society of Australian Genealogists since then. Aside from genealogy he was enjoying travelling and singing baritone in two choirs - before COVID19 interrupted those activities, thus leaving more time for family history!

Researching: Bowen, Flowerdew, Gardner, Gordon, Grady, Hanrahan, Jolliffe, Kemp, Kessey, Murphy, Poulton, Press and so many more!

Website: <http://jimfleming.id.au/up/index.htm>

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The Elliott and Gibson families in Australia

This research report outlines the outcomes from my research into the antecedents of my 3G-grandmother Emma Elliott and her mother Frances Gibson. Before looking into the origins of the Elliott and Gibson families, it is useful to summarise what is known so that this then forms a firm basis for further research.

Emma Elliott and Frances Gibson

Emma arrived in Australia on 2 October 1855 as a free immigrant aboard the sailing ship *Hilton* that had left England a few weeks earlier¹. She was accompanied by her brother George and their mother Frances.

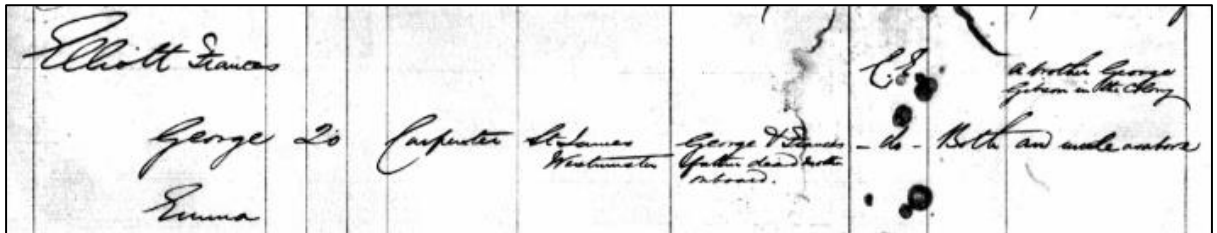


Illustration 1: The Elliott family as listed in the passenger manifest for the *Hilton* in 1855

The passenger list records that George was a 20-year-old carpenter whose native place was St James Westminster (in London). His father (George) was dead and his widowed mother Frances was aboard. It also records that Frances had a brother, George Gibson, in the colony.

Another copy of the passenger manifest provides additional details. George's details were the same (except that he was said to be a year younger). His sister Emma was a 17-year-old domestic servant who was also from St James Westminster. Their mother Frances was a 50-year-old domestic servant from Rosemary Lane, London, about 3 miles from St James Westminster. Rosemary Lane had long been viewed as a "disorderly area" of inner London. By the 1850s it was the venue for the Rag Fair, a collection of shops and street vendors that sold second-hand clothes. Rosemary Lane was later re-named Royal Mint Street.

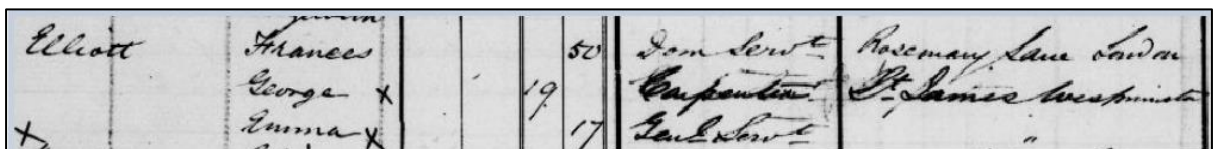


Illustration 2: A second passenger list for the *Hilton*

A year earlier (on 7 December 1854), George Gibson (Frances' brother) had paid 55 pounds through the Remittance Scheme for the emigration of his family-members². This comprised 35 pounds towards their fares and 20 pounds for expenses.

George Gibson	35.0.0	20.0.0	55.0.0	Frances	Elliott 50
				James	Elliott 22
				George	Elliott 19
				Emma	Elliott 17

Illustration 3: George Gibson's 55 pounds remittance recorded in the Immigration Deposits Journal in 1854

This entry makes it plain that George was expecting a family of four to emigrate, not just the three who eventually made the journey. Frances Elliott's oldest son (22-year-old James) stayed behind in England. Note that this record gives Frances' age as just 46 years.

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Frances' brother, George Gibson, was a wealthy squatter who owned or part-owned several cattle stations including *Wallamgambone* and *The Mole* near Quambone, NSW³. He owned a house in nearby Coonamble; one in Mudgee; and a large house on the corner of Balmain Road and Margaret Street in the Sydney suburb of Petersham. It is now number 23 Crystal Street, Petersham.

Prior to sailing, Frances arranged for the baptism of her adult children George and Emma. They were baptised by J Beames at St James Westminster on 5 April 1855⁴. Their address (4 Crown Court) is a laneway in Cheapside, about 3 miles from St James Church. George had been born on 18 Oct 1835 and Emma on 17 Oct 1837, so they were 19 and 17 in 1854; and 20 and 18 on arrival in 1855.

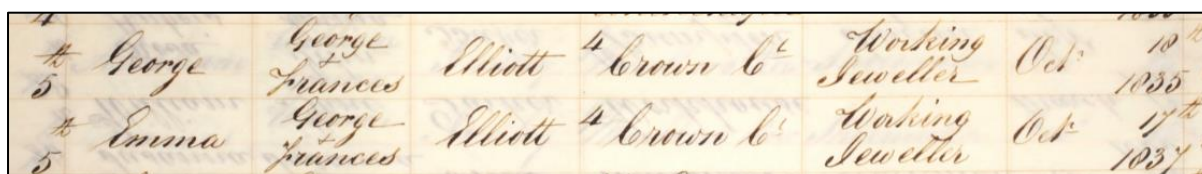


Illustration 4: George and Emma's baptisms recorded in the Register of St James Church Westminster on 5 April 1855

The baptism record confirms that their father's name was George. It adds that he was a "working jeweller". I understand that a working jeweller is one who has completed an apprenticeship and is fully qualified in his trade which involves working with precious metals and gems to make items of jewellery. This role would be the equivalent of a journeyman in other industries.

Soon after their arrival in Sydney, Emma Elliott journeyed across the Blue Mountains to her uncle's cattle station³. Presumably, she was accompanied by her mother Frances, but it is not clear what happened to her brother George Elliot. I have not been able to definitely identify any Australian records that pertain to him.

Just a year later, on 10 November 1856, Emma married William Kemp at Montefiore (Wellington) naming her uncle's station *The Mole* as her usual place of residence⁵. William was a rural labourer-cum-blacksmith whose mother was an aboriginal woman from the Mudgee district and whose father was Isaac Kemp, an ex-convict⁶. Isaac was a bullock waggoneer who had, in 1850, submitted a successful tender for land that was subsequently taken up by George Gibson. It is possible that he had transported Frances and Emma Elliott on the last leg of their journey to George Gibson's cattle property in 1855.

Little is known about Frances Elliott after her arrival in Australia. She married 45-year-old Alexander Pirie at Budgeon (near Gulargambone) on 9 April 1862⁷. The marriage certificate records her as a 46-year-old widow, but (based on the emigration records) she was closer to 56. Interestingly, she signed the marriage register with a mark, thus confirming the information on the passenger list for the *Hilton* which says that she could read but not write. Her name is recorded as "Frances Gibson or Elliot" and her parents' names were recorded as James Gibson and Elizabeth Nepp.

Frances died at Bokemah on 12 January 1870 with her age given as 66 years⁸. She was buried by her son-in-law, William Kemp. It is likely that his wife, Emma Kemp, was the real source of the information on the death certificate despite it naming Mary Burgess (the local inn keeper) as informant. It correctly identifies her children as George, James and Emma but names her parents as G Gibson and Ellen Knapp.

William and Emma Kemp had 16 children between 1857 and 1881, born at different properties in western NSW⁹. They were living at Coonamble when William died on 29 April 1897. Emma survived him by 34 years. She died at Coonamble on 12 December 1931 aged 94 (even though her death

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certificate says she was 96)¹⁰. Her son (Herbert Ernest Kemp) provided the information on her death certificate that her father was George Elliott and that her mother's maiden name was Gibson (but he could not remember Frances' Christian name).

George Gibson

Frances' brother George had arrived in Australia as a 17-year-old convict aboard the *Surry* on 6 March 1823¹¹. He was assigned to John Oxley¹², who was the Surveyor General of NSW and was to be recorded in history as one of Australia's foremost explorers. George gained his Ticket of Leave in September 1831¹³.

George later worked as a stockman for James Walker, a wealthy Scottish pastoralist who had land near Wallarewang³. He became a free man when he was granted a Conditional Pardon in October 1840¹⁴. Before long he acquired land (named *Bimble*) at Coonamble in partnership with John Angus³.

Soon afterwards he married Edith Eldridge¹⁵. Their family comprised George 1844, James 1848, Maria 1851, Henry 1857 and Edith 1861¹⁶. Meanwhile, George staked a claim to more land to the west of Coonamble³ that he named *Wallamgambone*.

When gold was discovered near Bathurst in the 1850s, George is reputed to have made a lot of money by droving his cattle to the goldfields where they fetched high prices from butchers who were struggling to keep up with the diggers' demand for meat³. This newly-acquired wealth allowed George to finance the expansion of his holdings; and to offer assistance to his sister Frances in England.

We do not know how it came about that George sponsored the emigration of his sister Frances and her children. By 1854 he had been in Australia for 31 years, so it is surprising that he was still in touch with his sister so far away. The only explanation seems to be that they had been communicating with each other by letter.

He died at *Wallamgambone* on 18 May 1862 and is buried there¹⁷. He was about 56 years old. His Death Certificate names his parents as James and Elizabeth.

Family lore

In addition to what we know (outlined above), there is a lot of Gibson and Elliott family lore that has come down to us verbally. In my experience as a family historian, there is usually a grain of truth in these family stories; but often that grain has been embellished and added to with abandon! So, it is wise to acknowledge these stories, but to treat them with scepticism until the facts can be established through research. With that in mind, I will outline some of the stories that have been passed down. Some of these were recorded by my father (Bruce Fleming) in a document that he wrote many years ago headlined *Frances Elliott nee Gibson*.

Doctor James Gibson

The first of these is that James Gibson, the father of George and Frances Gibson, was a doctor who worked at Guy's Hospital in London. He is supposed to have died when his children were quite young and his wife remarried.

Frances' medical skills

Frances is supposed to have had significant medical skills. According to one story, the man escorting her family over the blue mountains in 1855 broke a bone; Frances re-set the bone and it was mostly healed by the time they reached their destination.

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Frances is also supposed to have been an experienced midwife who supported herself by providing midwifery services in western NSW. These skills were also passed on to her daughter Emma Kemp, who subsequently provided midwifery services.

Silversmiths

Frances' first husband (George Elliot) was reportedly a silversmith in London. Her sons (James Elliott and George) were also silversmiths.

This aspect of the family lore was embellished by an encounter that probably happened in the 1950s or early 1960s between my grandmother (Stella Jolliffe) and a woman named Evelyn le Grand. They met aboard a ship in the Atlantic Ocean and discovered that both had Elliott ancestry. Evelyn's grandfather was a silversmith named James Elliott who had married a Belgian woman and gone to live in Antwerp. Stella and Evelyn concluded that Evelyn's grandfather was Frances Gibson's eldest son and that, therefore, Evelyn was Frances great-granddaughter. Stella was Frances' GG-granddaughter.

Evelyn provided Stella with a photocopy of an indenture dated 13 March 1838 that recorded the apprenticeship of George Elliott to silversmith James Elliott of 4 Denton Street, St Pancras. The document was witnessed by James Elliott junior.

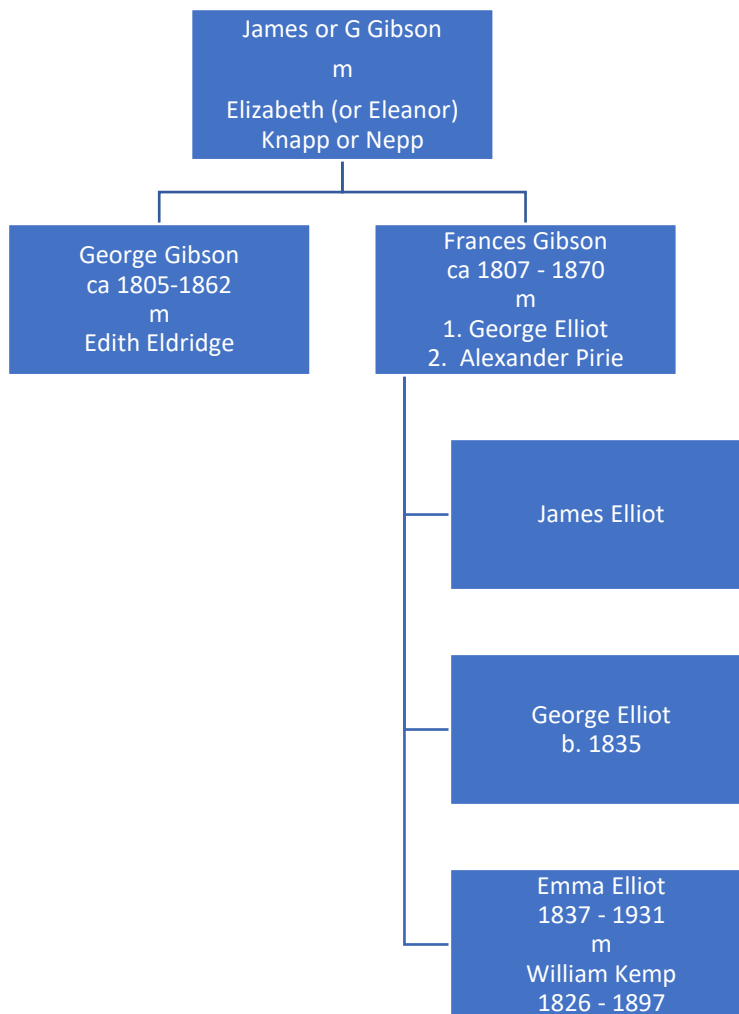


Chart 1: Summary of what is documented about the Gibson and Elliott families

The remainder of this report documents the outcomes from my further research into the background of the Elliott and Gibson families.

Frances Elliott in England

I decided to firstly research the life that Frances and her family led in England before they emigrated in 1855. That would, hopefully, uncover additional information that might assist in later research into the origins of Frances and her brother, George Gibson.

The apprenticeship document

Louise Kemp had already undertaken research on James Elliott junior (Frances' elder son) and concluded, based on census evidence, that Evelyn le Grand's grandfather was not Frances' son; and that Frances' son had not left England.

I confirmed this conclusion by focussing on the photocopied apprenticeship document. This is supposed to record the apprenticeship of Frances' younger son George Elliott to his father James Elliott and to be counter-signed by George's older brother James. There are at least three problems with this. Firstly, the father of our James, George and Emma was George Elliott, not James (see baptism record at Illustration 4 above). Secondly, young George was born on 18 Oct 1835, so he would have been just 2 years and 5 months old when the apprenticeship document was created on 13 March 1838. Thirdly, George was recorded on the *Hilton* passenger manifest as a carpenter, not a silversmith.

So, Louise's census evidence and my apprenticeship analysis agree that the people associated with the apprenticeship are a different family. Nevertheless, they lived near our family in London and Frances' husband George Elliott was a "working jeweller" – which is akin to a silversmith. It is possible that George Elliott was related to the silversmith, James Elliot.

Baptism records for the Elliott children

It is unusual that George and Emma Elliott were baptised as adults in 1855. I searched unsuccessfully for baptism records for James, George and Emma closer to their birth dates.

Elliott – Gibson marriage

I could not find any record of a George Elliott marrying a wife named Gibson near London around 1830. I was able to find two marriages for a Frances Gibson in this area:

1. 21 Jan 1833 to William Thomas Bosley at Lambeth St Mary, Surrey;
2. 13 Feb 1828 to Joseph Moore at St Giles Cripplegate.

I could not find any baptism records for children of couple number 1 (Bosley), but it seems that couple number 2 had two children baptised: James William 1834; and Ellen Frances 1837.

Based on this research, there is no evidence of a marriage between George Elliott and Frances Gibson near London. So, I widened my search to the whole of England. Between 1825 and 1835 there is only one marriage of a George Elliott to a woman whose first name starts with F. Her name was Frances Elizabeth Piper and they were married at St James Norton on 6 April 1831.

I also searched the records of all the English marriages of a Frances Gibson around that time, but none of them married a George Elliot.

George Elliot's death

We do not know when George Elliott died. It must have been after 1837 when his youngest child (Emma) was born and before 1855 (when Frances was described as a widow on the *Hilton* passenger manifest).

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I could not find any 1841 or 1851 census record that included a George and Frances Elliott that fitted with the other facts that we know about Frances and her children. So, it is likely that George died before 1841.

He may be the 36-year-old George Elliott who was buried at St Clement Danes Church on 26 Oct 1838¹⁸. Furthermore, he may be the George Elliott who was baptised at St Clement Danes Church on 24 Mar 1805 (parents James and Allison).

1841 census

Since I was not able to find an 1841 census record that showed Frances with her husband and family, I had to conclude that her husband George had died before that. I then searched the general area near London for a Frances Elliott who was born between 1800 and 1810. There were several matches, but most of them were clearly the wife of a man named Elliott and included children other than James, George and Emma. There were only two records remaining after eliminating these other families.

Firstly, there was a 40-year-old Fanny Elliott in the household of 50-year-old Elizabeth Pinkerton in Brompton Row, Kensington. It is likely that Fanny was born in 1801 or earlier, because the ages of adults in this census were rounded down to the nearest 5 years. Based on information in later documents, Frances was born between 1804 and 1816, so it is very unlikely that this record relates to our Frances.

Secondly there was 35-year-old Frances Elliott who was Matron of the London Fever Hospital¹⁹. She had not been born in the same county. This is the only record that fits with what we know of Frances. It provides some corroboration of the family lore that she had medical skills. The fact that her children are not present is not surprising because she would have probably worked long hours and lived on the hospital premises. She would have had to make alternative arrangements for her children.

In July 1841 Maria Willessee was tried at the Old Bailey court for a stealing money. She was alleged to have misrepresented to Mr William Best that his creditor (Mrs Frances Elliott of Holborn, a seamstress and employer) had sent her to collect a debt of 8 shillings. He paid the money to Willessee but Frances Elliott denied knowing her. Maria Willessee was gaoled for three months. This Frances Elliott did not match my search of the 1841 census for our Frances – probably because her age was significantly different to our Frances.

A search for Emma (born 1836-38) yields 23 matches across England. Most of these are accompanied by other members of their family and are clearly not our Emma. There are two possible records remaining after eliminating those records. These are:

1. Aged 4; household of John Menhenitt (builder), his wife and two adult children in Plymouth, Devon;
2. Aged 3; household of John French (agricultural labourer), his wife Ann Gibbons (married 16 Aug 1806) and two adult children in Frome, Somerset.

Since there is no record in the 1841 census with Frances Elliott and her three children together, it is possible that she had to put them into boarding school or into the care of a foster family while she worked. So, either of these records could be our Emma, but neither seems more likely than the other.

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A search for James (born 1831-33) yields 59 matches across England. Most of these are clearly children living with their parents and can be eliminated. There are 3 possible records remaining:

1. Aged 10; household of James Elliott (Frame Work Knitter, aged 68) and Elizabeth Elliott (aged 61) at St Mary, Nottingham;
2. Aged 10; pupil in the household of Ruth Matthews (school maid) at St Marylebone, St Pancras;
3. Aged 10; schoolboy at the Royal Hospital School, Greenwich.

It seems unlikely that James was a pupil at the prestigious Royal Hospital School because it was generally associated with the children of military men. Nevertheless, if his mother was indeed matron at the London Fever Hospital, she may have been able to get him in there. It seems more likely, however, that he would have been a pupil at a local school near where Frances was working. For this reason, number 2 is more likely.

A search for George (born 1835-36) yields 57 matches across England. Most of these are clearly children living with their parents and can be eliminated. There are 6 possible records remaining:

1. Aged 5; household of John Turner (porter), his wife and others in Lambeth, London;
2. Aged 7; household of James Burrows (schoolmaster), wife and children and others in Wimbledon, Surrey;
3. Aged 7; household of Diana Walker (victualler) with others in Guildford, Surrey;
4. Aged 6; probably a school run by Emma Pugh (governess) and her daughters in Stroud, Gloucestershire;
5. Aged 6; pupil at a school run by William Woodland and his daughters in Bedminster, Somerset;
6. Aged 6; household of John Makin (agricultural labourer), wife and son in Pontrefact, Yorkshire.

Three of these (2, 4 and 5) are more likely than the others because they are schools. Number 2 seems the most likely because it is at Wimbledon, just a few miles from central London where his mother was most probably working.

Based on the evidence of the 1841 census, it seems that Frances' husband George had already died and that she had been forced to seek full-time employment. This demand on her time meant that she had to board her three children, either at a school or with foster parents.

This conclusion is also consistent with the fact (recorded on the passenger manifest of the *Hilton* in 1855) that both George and Emma could read and write. Therefore, they must have attended school for a significant period of their childhood.

1851 census

I searched for a record of Frances (born 1801-1811) on the 1851 census and found 23 matches. Restricting the search to the area near London reduced this to 5 matches, but 3 of these are males (Francis). One of the other two was a 49-year-old widow living at Cripplegate with three children. But none of these children were James, George or Emma.

The only remaining London record is for a 42-year-old char woman living at St James Westminster in the household of Sarah Jones aged 52 (also a char woman)²⁰. Importantly, she is accompanied by her daughter Emma aged 13 – just the right age to be our Emma. This record also appeals because they were living at St James Westminster, which is the exact abode that is listed for the family on the passenger manifest for the *Hilton*, four years later. The record says that both women were married, even though there is no husband in the household. It also provides the unhelpful information that both Frances and Emma were born in England, without specifying where.

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There are only two other records near London that could relate to Emma. One can be eliminated because she was part of a large family. The other one was a 15-year-old house servant in the household of Charles Churcher (a hatter) and his wife at Newington, London. While our Emma was indeed described as a general servant on the *Hilton* passenger manifest, she was at least a year younger than this girl.

But if Frances and Emma were living together at St James Westminster, why would Frances be working as a charwoman if she had been the matron of a hospital ten years earlier? The hospital had moved to different premises in the meantime but was still nearby. The only explanation that occurs to me is that Frances may have lost her position because (while she could read) she could not write.

After eliminating several records that do not match the known facts about Frances' son James, I identified three possible records for him on the 1851 census:

1. Aged 19, a labourer from Battersea living in the household of William Wright (railway fitter) and his wife at Battersea;
2. Aged 18, a servant from Buckinghamshire living in the household of Patience Guirrier, the cook and housekeeper at 8 Portman Square, St Marylebone (where the head of the household seems to have been absent);
3. Aged 18, a civil engineer from London lodging with Anne Morris at St Mary, Putney.

Number 2 is unlikely, because our Elliott family did not come from Buckinghamshire. Number 3 is unlikely because he is probably the civil engineer who married Eliza Hopley Barber on 19 April 1854 and whose father's name was James Elliott (a Gentleman). Therefore, it is likely that number 1 is our James.

There are two possible 1851 census records near London for George Elliott (born 1834-1836).

1. Aged 15, an apprentice (from St Pancras) to James William Maddin (coopers' tool maker) who was the head of a large family household at Graham Street, Islington;
2. Aged 16, a clock maker apprentice (from Westminster) to Thomas Chester (master clock case maker) who was head of a large family household at Bakers Row, Clerkenwell.

The entry for George on the passenger manifest for the *Hilton* in 1855 gives his profession as carpenter. Neither of these records lines up with that. While a cooper does work with wood (like a carpenter) making barrels, number 1 was not an apprentice cooper; he was an apprentice toolmaker. Those tools would be made from metal.

The second entry is intriguing. George's father James was described on George's 1855 baptism record as a working jeweller. While this is different from a clock maker, they are allied professions. It is noteworthy that Thomas Chester's daughter (Eliza) was employed in the jewellery industry as a gold spinner.

Based on the evidence of the 1851 census I have concluded that it is highly likely that Frances was living at St James Westminster and working as a charwoman. Emma was living with her. George may be the apprentice clock maker who was living at nearby Clerkenwell with the Chester family. James was probably the labourer who was living at nearby Battersea.

Elliott family summary

Unfortunately, despite a thorough search of online census, birth and marriage records I have not been able to identify many records as definitely relating to the Elliott family. The only record that I am close to confident about is the 1851 census record that includes both Frances and Emma. The records identified in this census for both James and George are less definitive. I am even less certain about the 1841 census records that I have identified.

It seems that none of the children were baptised as newborns; and there is no evidence that Frances was officially married to George Elliot. It is possible that George Elliott was born at St Clement Danes in 1805 and buried there in 1838.

Gibson origins

Baptism records for George and Frances Gibson

Before searching for baptism records for George and Frances, I wanted to narrow the search down as closely as possible to their birth year; and to establish the names of their parents, if possible. But there is a lot of conflicting evidence, as outlined in the following tables.

Frances Gibson's birth year			
Source	Source Date	Stated Age	Implied birth year
Death Certificate	1870	66	1804
<i>Hilton</i> passenger manifest	1855	50	1805
1841 census for London Fever Hospital	1841	35	1806
Immigration Deposit Journal	1854	46	1808
1851 census at St James Westminster	1851	42	1809
MC to Alexander Pirie	1862	46	1816

Table 1: Evidence relating to Frances Gibson's birth year

It is highly likely that she lied about her age when she married Alexander Pirie in 1862, so I would disregard that evidence. It is likely that she was born between 1804 and 1809.

George Gibson's birth year			
Source	Source Date	Stated Age	Implied birth year
Death Certificate	1862		
Old Bailey trial record	1822	17	1805
Arrival indent for <i>Surry</i>	1823	17	1806
Conditional Pardon butt and register	1840		1806

Table 2: Evidence relating to George Gibson's birth year

Given George's relative youth at the time of his arrest and trial, that age is likely to be quite accurate. So, he was probably born about 1804-1806.

George's 1862 death certificate states that his father was James Gibson (a doctor) and his mother's name was Elizabeth (see Table 3 below). The 1862 marriage certificate of his sister Frances (to Alexander Pirie) agrees about the parents' names and is silent about their father's occupation. But there is conflicting evidence.

Frances and George Gibson's parents' names					
Source	Source Date	Informant	Father	Mother	Father's occupation
Frances' Death Certificate	1870	Mary Burgess or Emma Kemp	G Gibson	Ellen Knapp	Farmer
MC to Alexander Pirie	1862	Self	James Gibson	Elizabeth Nepp	
George's Death Certificate	1862		James Gibson	Elizabeth	Doctor
George's Marriage Certificate	1843	Self	blank		

Table 3: Evidence relating to the names of George and Frances Gibson's parents

Frances' death certificate gives her father's initial as G (not James) and his occupation as farmer (not doctor). Her marriage certificate agrees with George's death certificate that their mother's name was Elizabeth and supplies the additional information that her maiden name was Nepp. But Frances'

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death certificate gives her mother's name as Ellen (not Elizabeth) and her maiden name as Knapp (not Nepp).

Unfortunately, that it not the end of the discrepancies. During George's trial at the Old Bailey on 22 May 1822²¹, Constable James Beachey gave evidence about the arrest and his subsequent enquiries. He said that George had told him:

"that his father was a cabinet maker, and lived at No. 9, Great Compton-street - I found he did live there".

Constable Alexander Mitchell of the Police Vessel also deposed that:

"Gibson was brought there on the 19th of April - I went to his father, and next morning his father came on board. I asked Gibson in his father's presence, whether the story he told the night before of his father's sending him to sell them, was true; he said No, it was not - that his father knew nothing of the transaction."

So, two policemen had been in contact with George's father who was a cabinet maker. How are we to make sense of this? Was the father a doctor, a farmer or a cabinet maker? Was his name James or something that starts with a G? Furthermore, was their mother's name Elizabeth or Ellen? Was her maiden name Nepp or Knapp?

One explanation for the discrepancies about their father could be that the family lore may be correct: perhaps their doctor father died and their widowed mother remarried. The cabinet maker could, in fact, be George's stepfather, not his biological father. Furthermore, George's nephew (George Elliot) was later apprenticed to a master clock case maker (akin to a cabinet maker). Could there be a connection between George's cabinet maker stepfather and his nephew's apprentice master, Thomas Chester?

Armed with all this conflicting evidence, I started to research the online indexes at Ancestry.com and FindMyPast in the hope of finding a record that would fit with this somehow.

Search for George Gibson's baptism

Since George was probably born in a narrow period (1804-1806), I started looking for his baptism first. Given the conflicting evidence, I kept the search parameters (aside from the years) broad: child's name George Gibson; father James; for all of England. There are 5 matches:

1. 10 Jun 1804 at Wigan Lancashire to James Gibson (cordwainer of Standishgate) and Margaret Houghton – 4th son;
2. 1806 to James Gibson and Mary at Hull, Yorkshire;
3. 22 Oct 1806 at St Giles in the field Holborn Camden to James Gibson and Elizabeth (bap 3 Feb 1811;)
4. May 1807 to James Gibson and Elizabeth Dodd, Todd or Jock at Norwich, Norfolk;
5. 25 Dec 1807 to James Gibson at Mirfield, Yorkshire.

It is highly likely that baptism number 3 is for our George because it complies with what we know about him on birth year, birthplace, father's name and mother's name²².

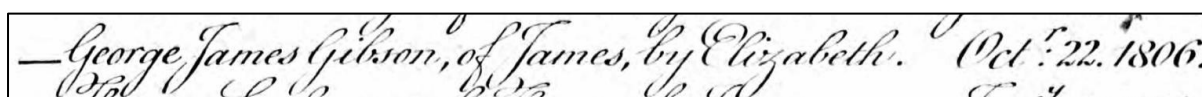
A rectangular box containing a handwritten entry in cursive script. The text reads: "George James Gibson, of James, by Elizabeth. Oct: 22. 1806." There are some faint initials and marks around the text.

Illustration 5: Likely baptism record for George Gibson at St Giles in the field Holborn on 3 Feb 1811 (but born 22 Oct

Search for Frances Gibson's baptism

I could not find any baptism records around 1808 for a Frances (or Fanny) Gibson whose father was James. There is a July 1808 baptism at St Giles Cripplegate (London), but her father Methewin was a saddler.

It is strange that I could find a baptism for George but not for his sister Frances. It is especially strange that Frances was not baptised when 4-year-old George was, in February 1811. She would have certainly been born before that.

Marriage of James Gibson and Elizabeth Knapp

Before searching for a marriage record for James Gibson and his wife Elizabeth Knapp (or Nepp), I decided to narrow down the search period by searching for the baptism of other children aside from George and Frances. A search for London baptisms between 1790 and 1810 for parents James and Elizabeth Gibson matches the following records:

1. 1 Nov 1801 Elizabeth; St Leonard, Shoreditch Hackney, Middlesex (abode: Holywell Lane);
2. 1 Oct 1805 Harriott Matildia; St Matthew, Bethnal Green (bap 27 Oct 1805);
3. 22 Oct 1806 George James; St Giles in the field Holborn (bap 3 Feb 1811;)
4. 30 Sep 1807 James; St Matthew, Bethnal Green (bap 8 Nov 1807).

Number 3 is the record that I have concluded relates to our George. It is feasible that the other 3 are his siblings. Nevertheless, I searched twenty years before the 1806 birth for his parents' marriage: 1786 – 1806. The only match of significance was on 10 Dec 1799 between James Gibson and Elizabeth Chester at St Dunstan, Stepney, London. This record is a good match for most of the known facts. If it wasn't for the information that the maiden name of Frances' mother was Knapp or Nepp, I would conclude that this 1799 marriage was highly likely to be the one we are looking for; and that the mother of George and Frances was Elizabeth Chester.

Given that there is evidence that Elizabeth's maiden name was Nepp or Knapp, I also searched for a marriage record in England between 1878 and 1807 for James Gibson and Elizabeth (or Ellen) Knapp (or similar). This search found nothing.

A search for George Gibson and Elizabeth/Ellen Knapp finds a marriage on 9 Dec 1790 at Middleton Westmorland (now Cumbria) between George Gibson and Eleanor Knipe. The Pallot's Marriage Index record for that marriage says that George was "of Whitehaven in St Bee's parish" (70 miles north-west of Middleton).

I could not find the baptism of any children that were likely to have come from this 1790 marriage. There was a couple named George and Eleanor Gibson who had ten children baptised at Harbottle, Northumberland between 1781 and 1801, but Harbottle is 100 miles north east of Middleton. This couple is much more likely to be the George Gibson and Eleanor Muris who married at Rothbury (8 miles from Harbottle) on 13 June 1781.

Based on this research, I conclude that George Gibson was probably born 22 October 1806, a son of James Gibson and Elizabeth Knapp or Nepp (despite the absence of a marriage record). It is noteworthy that this baptism record provides George with a second name – James. This is consistent with George's death certificate and with the birth certificate and newspaper birth notices for his daughter Edith²³.

I note that all the subsequent references to Knapp or Nepp relate to Frances' mother. It is possible that George and Frances had different mothers. This could explain why there is no record of Frances' baptism. I will explore this idea later in this report.

Death of James Gibson

Bearing in mind the family lore that Doctor James Gibson had died when his children were young, I decided to search for a burial record near London in the few years after 1806. This found the following matches:

1. 18 May 1806; St George, Hanover Square, London;
2. 22 May 1809; St George, Hanover Square, London;
3. 3 Dec 1809; St George, Hanover Square, London;
4. 19 Mar 1810; age 42 years; St Ann Blackfriars, London;
5. 16 Oct 1810; aged 27; St Mary, Islington, Middlesex.

Any of these could relate to the father of George and Frances Gibson; or they could be completely unrelated.

Review of the evidence

Unfortunately, the evidence revealed by this research project is insufficient to support any definitive conclusions about the origins of Frances and George Gibson. At best there is some corroboration of the information in Australian documents that their parents were James Gibson and Elizabeth; but even this is subject to conflicting evidence. There is also firm evidence that the father of Frances' children was George Elliott who was a working jeweller. There is some support for the idea that Frances may have had medical knowledge, but this is far from certain.

I was able to refute the family lore that her son George Elliott was apprenticed to his father (based on analysis of the apprenticeship document), thus supporting Louise Kemp's earlier conclusion (that was based on census evidence).

I was not able to find any evidence:

- that Frances was married to George Elliot;
- that her mother's maiden name was Knapp (or Nepp);
- that her father died when she was young;
- that her father was a doctor or a farmer; or
- that her mother remarried.

The fact that research undertaken more than 200 years later fails to find any evidence does not mean that those things did not happen. While record-keeping in England at that time was mostly very good, a small proportion of records have not survived; and some surviving records are not available for online research. Nevertheless, it is unusual for one family to have so many missing records.

One explanation for this could be that the Gibson and Elliott families were non-conformists – that is, not members of the Church of England. This would mean that they baptised their children and got married in another church. But I did search the non-conformist records as part of this research project, finding nothing.

It is far less likely that they simply did not formally marry and did not baptise their children. That approach to life was exceedingly rare in the first half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, Frances did give George and Emma an Anglican baptism (albeit as adults); and I have concluded that her brother George was also baptised Anglican (albeit as a 4-year-old).

I have allowed for the possibility that George and Frances originated from somewhere other than London but have found no evidence for this either.

Naming analysis

I analysed the names that this family gave to its older children to ascertain whether they correspond with the naming conventions that were very popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. If it could be shown that they used the naming convention in later generations, this could provide hints about earlier generations.

Father	Atwood Charles Gardner	William Isaac Kemp	George Elliot	George Gibson
Mother	Frances Kemp	Emma Elliot	Frances Gibson	Edith Eldridge
Paternal GP	George; Mary	Isaac; Mary	James?; Allison?	James; Elizabeth (Eleanor)
Maternal GP	William; Emma	George; Frances	James; Elizabeth (Eleanor)	?
1st son	Attwood Charles	William	James	George
2nd son	Albert George	George	George	James
3rd son		Alfred		Henry
1st daughter	Frances	Frances	Emma	Maria
2nd daughter	Bertha Ada	Emily		Edith Eldridge
3rd daughter	Emma Mary	Elizabeth		

Table 4: Evidence relating to the family names

Some family names (shown with the yellow background) do correspond with known earlier generations but they do not follow the naming convention correctly. For example, Attwood and Frances Gardner named their eldest son and daughter after themselves rather than after their parents. But they did use their parents' names for later children (sometimes as their second name).

The only couple that is even close to following the naming convention is William Kemp and Emma Elliot. The names of their first daughter (named for her maternal grandmother Frances Elliott nee Gibson) and second son (named for his maternal grandfather George Elliot) comply with the convention. But the eldest son was named for his father, rather than for his paternal grandfather (Isaac Kemp) as the convention would dictate. And none of the other children's names comply at all.

The naming convention would require Frances Elliott nee Gibson to name her eldest son after his paternal grandfather (George Elliot's father). We do not definitively know George's parents but (if he was the George Elliott baptised at St Clement Danes on 24 Mar 1805) they may have been James and Allison. If so, then it seems that George and Frances may have used the naming convention in naming their eldest son James.

Since Frances' father was also named James and this name had already been used, the naming convention would skip to the father's name (George) for their second son. Sure enough, he was named George.

But is this seeming compliance with the naming convention nothing more than coincidence? Because the naming convention would result in Frances' eldest daughter being named Elizabeth (or Eleanor), not Emma. Furthermore, Frances' brother (George Gibson) did not follow the naming convention for his children.

So, this analysis of family names does not offer us anything approaching strong evidence to corroborate the Australian documents that give the Gibson siblings' parents as James and Elizabeth. Nor does it corroborate the English baptism that suggests that the parents of George Elliott were James and Allison.

The Knapp connection

The most curious aspect of this research project is the absence of any evidence in support of the Knapp connection. This alleged maiden name of her mother is recorded on Frances' marriage and death certificates. The marriage certificate information would have been supplied by Frances personally, so it cannot be dismissed. But it is curious that the name is not mentioned in certificates associated with her brother George.

Were Frances and George full siblings?

It occurred to me that some of the conflicting evidence could be a result of George and Frances being half-siblings rather than full siblings. In other words, that they could have had only one common parent, not two. This could explain, for example, why the maiden name Knapp appears on Frances' certificates but not on George's.

Since they share the Gibson surname, this would mean that they had different mothers. But George's death certificate agrees with Frances' marriage certificate that they both had a mother named Elizabeth. (Nevertheless, Frances' death certificate says her mother was Ellen.)

Furthermore, George's documents say that his father was a doctor named James while Frances' documents say that her father was a farmer whose name started with G, suggesting that they had different fathers. Just to confuse matters further, George's father in 1822 was a cabinet maker.

All this conflicting evidence means that it would be unwise to draw any firm conclusions. The better approach is to give more weight to the evidence that was supplied by people with first-hand knowledge. For example, death certificate information (supplied by survivors) would generally be less reliable than marriage certificate information (supplied by a person with direct knowledge of their own parents).

Gibson origin theory

In the absence of further evidence, I suggest that the best course of action is to form a working theory about the origins of the Gibson family. This theory comprises several hypotheses that fit the facts as closely as possible. These hypotheses can be tested against any additional evidence that is found through future research. Where that future evidence contradicts a hypothesis, the working theory can be updated accordingly.

Hypothesis 1. That Frances and George were full siblings whose parents were James Gibson and Elizabeth Knapp (or Nepp).

- This is consistent with the information supplied by Frances for her marriage certificate; and by Emma for Frances' death certificate (albeit that Emma confused her grandmother's name as Ellen rather than Elizabeth). It is also consistent with George's death certificate.
- This is consistent with the St Giles in the field (Holborn) baptism record for George Gibson (born 22 October 1806). But there is no corresponding baptism for Frances.
- Nevertheless, I could find no record of the marriage of James Gibson to Elizabeth (Ellen) Knapp (or Nepp).

Hypothesis 2. That George's father was (in 1822) a cabinet maker.

- There is strong evidence to this effect that was sworn by two policemen at George's Old Bailey trial.
- Nevertheless, this could have been George's stepfather, not his natural father.

Hypothesis 3. That the father of Frances' three children was George Elliott (a working jeweller).

- There is no doubt that George (working jeweller) was the father of both George and Emma because this is recorded on both their baptism records in 1855. He was probably also the father of their older brother, James Elliot.
- Nevertheless, I could find no record of the marriage of George Elliott to Frances Gibson.

Hypothesis 4. That George Elliott was buried at St Clement Danes Church on 26 Oct 1838.

- George's youngest child was born in 1837. He is not recorded with any family member on the 1841 census.
- This church is part of the inner-London area where the family lived.

Hypothesis 5. That George Elliott was baptised at St Clement Danes Church on 24 March 1805 (parents James and Allison).

- This gels with hypothesis 4 in terms of proximity to where the family lived; the age of the person buried in 1838; and has a birth year similar to Frances.

Hypothesis 6. That Frances Elliott (nee Gibson) worked as a nurse in London.

- This is consistent with the only plausible record for her on the 1841 census.
- This could explain why she was separated from her children for this census.
- Her reduced circumstances in 1851 could be a result of losing her position because she could not write.

Hypothesis 7. Frances' son George Elliott was a carpenter.

- This is consistent with:
 - Information on the passenger manifest for the *Hilton* in 1855;
 - him starting (but not finishing) an apprenticeship as a clock case maker;
 - the fact that his mother's father (or stepfather) was a cabinet maker in 1822; and
 - the fact that his father was a working jeweller (an allied craft).

Endnotes

- ¹ Elliott family entry, *Hilton*, Passenger List, 2 Oct 1855; in (Kingswood: NSW Government Archives).
- ² Frances Gibson and children, Immigrant Deposit Journal, Kingswood; Archives Office of NSW.
- ³ Joan McKenzie, *Gibson's Way*, 24 Zoccoli Street Coonamble NSW 2829.
- ⁴ Baptism Register of St James Piccadilly for Elliott, George and Emma, Vol 1855, No STM/PR/6/30, City of Westminster Archives, 5 Apr 1855.
- ⁵ Marriage Certificate, William Kemp and Emma Elliott, 10 November 1856, Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, NSW. 1856/10.
- ⁶ Death Certificate, William Isaac Kemp, Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, NSW, No 17 4464/1897.
- ⁷ Marriage Certificate, Alexander Pirie and Frances Gibson, 9 April 1862, Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, NSW. 1862/1846 56
- ⁸ Death Certificate, Frances Pirie, Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, NSW, Vol 1870 No 3353.
- ⁹ Death Certificate, William Isaac Kemp, Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, NSW, No 17 4464/1897.
- ¹⁰ Death Certificate, Emma Kemp, Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, NSW, Vol 1931 No 19973.
- ¹¹ George Gibson, *Convict Indent 1823 NSW Surry: Gibson, George*, (Sydney: NSW State Records), 4 Mar 1823, Surry. Master: Thomas Raine.
- ¹² George Gibson, *Convict Assignment 1823 NSW: Gibson, George*, (Kingswood NSW: NSW State Archives), 22 March 1823, page 44. Sydney
- ¹³ George Gibson, *Convict TOL Butt: 1831 Gibson, George*, (Kingswood: NSW State Archives), 29 Sep 1831, No. 31/763.
- ¹⁴ George Gibson, *Convict TOL Butt: 1839 Gibson, George*, (Kingswood: NSW State Archives), 17 Dec 1839, No. 39/2423.
- ¹⁵ NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, *Index to NSW Marriages*. 1812/1844 V18441812 76.
- ¹⁶ NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, *Index to NSW Births and Baptisms*. 4988/1844; 840/1848; 839/1850; 8223/1857; and 9776/1861.
- ¹⁷ NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, *Index to NSW Deaths*. 3501/1862.
- ¹⁸ Ancestry, *Bur: Elliott, George 1838 at St Clement Danes*, (City of Westminster Archives, 1838), HTVBR/PR/1/4, aged 36, Burial Register for the Holy Spirit Church, St Clement Danes.
- ¹⁹ Frances Elliott, 6 Jun 1841 Census UK, London, Camden Town, St Pancras, Public Record Office, piece 681, book 8, folio 14, p 1.
- ²⁰ Frances Elliott, 30 Mar 1851 Census UK, London, St James Westminster, Public Record Office, p 323.
- ²¹ The University of Sheffield, publisher, "Trial of George Gibson and others," court proceedings, London's Central Criminal Court. Digital Humanities Institute, *The Proceedings of the Old Bailey* (<https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/index.jsp>: downloaded 22 October 2020), reference number t18220522-50.
- ²² Baptismal Record: Gibson, George James, (3 Feb 1811), born 22 Oct 1806, London Metropolitan Archives, London.
- ²³ Births, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 Jan 1861, p1.