

# Nelson Briggs - our Great Grandfather

## **Nelson's Birth**

Nelson Briggs was born on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1867, and was christened on 13<sup>th</sup> Nov 1867 at Ripley All Saints, Derbyshire. His parents, Timothy Briggs, a coal miner, and Elizabeth Burgoyne had married at St Peter's Church, Belper on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1854. Nelson was their eighth child, and 5th son. Timothy and Elizabeth had a further 2 boys and 2 girls making twelve children in total.

## **Timothy & Elizabeth in Census**

In 1871, Nelson lived with his family at 20 Pentich Road, Swanwick, Alfreton, Derbyshire. Nelson had been born in Ripley in 1867, but brother John was born in Swanwick in 1868, so the family must have moved from Ripley to Swanwick soon after Nelson was born.

By 1881 the family had moved to Tibshelf, where their last 2 children Elizabeth (c.1873) and Alice (c.1875) were born. Nelson was no longer living with his parents : he was a farm servant at West House Farm, Blackwell, Mansfield.

## **Nelson's Marriage**

On 15<sup>th</sup> March 1890 Nelson Briggs married Annie Sparrow at the Parish Church in Blackwell. His occupation was collier.

## **Annie Sparrow**

Annie Sparrow was born in South Normanton, Blackwell on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1868, daughter of Francis Sparrow, an agricultural labourer, and Elizabeth Richards. Before she met Nelson, she had an illegitimate daughter, Phoebe Sparrow, born in 1883 at Basford in Nottingham when she was only 15.

## **Nelson & Annie in Census**

In the 1891 Blackwell census, Nelson and Annie were living with Annie's parents Francis and Elizabeth Sparrow, along with their first child, 8 month old John William Briggs, as well as Annie's daughter Phoebe Sparrow. Francis Sparrow and Nelson Briggs are listed as coal miners.

## **Nelson & Annie separate**

Nelson and Annie had separated before the 1901 census, possibly about 1896.

## **William Harvey & Annie Briggs**

In 1901 Annie Briggs is a 'widowed' housekeeper living at the house of William Harvey, an unmarried coalminer hewer, at Blackwell Road, Hucknall under Hutherwaite. Annie's 3 children John (10), Edith (7) and Elizabeth (5) also lived there. By 1901 Phoebe Sparrow, Annie's first child, had taken the name Briggs and was a 17 year old housemaid in Mapperley, Nottingham.

In the 1911 Newton, Alfreton census, William Harvey and Annie say they have been married for 10 years. Living with them are Beatrice Maud Harvey (9), Sabra Harvey (8), John William Briggs, step son (20) and Elizabeth Briggs step daughter (15). (*Sabra was a twin - her sister Eva Harvey died shortly after her birth in 1903.*)

No marriage has been found for William Harvey to Annie Briggs or Sparrow.

## **Nelson Briggs & Emma Priestley**

Nelson Briggs has not been found in the 1901 census but he re-appears in 1911 when he was living at 507 Stonebroom Blocks, Shirland & Higham, Derbyshire. With him is his 'wife' Emma. They stated that they had been

married for 3 years and had one child, Gladys Briggs, aged 1, born at Stonebroom. Also with them was Cissie Priestley aged 7, born at Poole, Dorset, daughter of Emma. Emma was a shop keeper, Nelson was a coal miner. No marriage of a Nelson Briggs to an Emma (Harriet) Whitehead or Priestley has been found.

Emma Briggs (Nelson's 'wife' per 1911 census) was born c.1876 as Emma (Harriett) Whitehead in Nottingham.

### **John Longbottom Priestley & Emma Whitehead**

In 1896, and at Nottingham, Emma had married Longbottom Priestley), known as 'Jack' (born c 1871 Liversedge, Yorkshire. In the 1901 census she, as Emma Priestley, is at 12 Launder Street, Meadows, Nottingham with a one month old, unnamed baby son. Her husband was not at home.

The couple then had a daughter Emma Harriet Priestley on 16th Jun 1903 in Dorset. We believe that the daughter was known as Cissie to distinguish her from her mother Emma Harriet Priestley.

### **Longbottom & Emma Priestley separate**

In the 1911 Nottingham census, Jack Priestley was living in lodgings with his children. He says he is married but there is no wife present. His children were Harry (12), Walter (10) and twins Frederick & Frank (5). Jack was an engineer fitter. *His wife Emma was by now living with Nelson Briggs.* Jack and Emma must have split up sometime after the twins Fred and Frank were born in Nottingham in 1905.

John Longbottom Priestley died in 1938. He must never have changed his will because the sole beneficiary was his widow Emma Harriett Priestley.

### **Nelson Briggs & Emma Priestley (again)**

Nelson Briggs and his 'wife' Emma had the following children

Gladys (1910), May (1911), Nelson Albert (1914 in Stonebroom), and Edna (1921 in Thanet, Kent)

Tales from the family of Nelson Albert Briggs say that Emma Whitehead had married into a wealthy family who had servants and who was driven around in carriages. (We have found no evidence of this although John Longbottom Priestley as an engineer at the coal mine probably had a good job). When Emma left her husband Jack and set up home with Nelson Briggs, she took her daughter Cissie with her and left their 4 sons with her husband.

The family say that when the Derbyshire coalmines hit hard times, Nelson, Emma and their 4 children walked to Ramsgate in Kent looking for work.

Family life could not have been very happy. Nelson Albert Briggs ran away to work on sailing barges at an early age. His half-sister Cissie Priestley fell in love with a barge captain called Roy Rands from Ipswich. Her step-father Nelson Briggs called him 'a bad un' and did not approve. He gave an ultimatum that either Roy Rands stayed with the family or he did - one had to go. Nelson Briggs left home again.

Tragedy struck in 1926. Cissie joined Roy Rands on his ketch at Great Yarmouth. Her half-sister Gladys joined them at Deal. One evening, the ketch was harboured at Cowes, Isle of Wight and Cissie went to wash out a bowl and seems to have slipped overboard and despite attempts at rescue, she drowned.

### **Roy Rands & Gladys Briggs**

Suspicion was raised by the family as shortly after Cissie's death Roy Rands married Cissie's half-sister Gladys Briggs. Roy and Gladys had 2 daughters. One Cissie or Carol Rands married a scrap dealer from Nottingham named John (Jack) Wright!

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Nelson Briggs died in 1941 in Bridge, Kent. Emma Harriet Briggs died in 1956 in Ipswich.

## Annie Briggs (née Sparrow)



Annie Briggs née Sparrow (1868 – 1928) c.1900



Annie & William Harvey (b.1869) her 'second husband'

## Annie's children



Phoebe Sparrow or Briggs (1883- 1948) daughter of Annie Sparrow (father unknown) with husband William Spice who she married in 1919.

We have no photo of Annie's second child John William (Jack) Briggs (1890 - 1952). Son of Annie Sparrow and Nelson Briggs, he married a widow Mabel Annie Reed (née Jefford) in 1919.



Edith Briggs (1893 -1960), daughter of Annie Sparrow and Nelson Briggs with husband Henry Wright, who she married in 1915.



Elizabeth Briggs (1896 - 1965), daughter of Annie Sparrow and Nelson Briggs with her half-sisters Beatrice Harvey (1901 - 1985) and Sabra Harvey (1903 - 1985), daughters of Annie Briggs and William Harvey.



Elizabeth (Bett) Briggs with husband William Spice, widower of her half-sister Phoebe. They married in 1948.



Beatrice Maud Harvey (1901 - 1985). Taken at her sister Sabra's wedding in 1927. Beattie never married.



Sabra Harvey (1903 – 1985) & Fred Wesley. They married about 1927.