

In Search of a Glemsford Family

George and Susannah Brown

Tracey Foulds was looking for the family of her great grandfather, Jacob Smith Brown (born 1888), and his parents, George and Susannah (née Smith). Tracey believed that Susannah had died before 1900.

Using the 1901 Census for Glemsford, this is what I was able to say about the family in the first instance:

In the 1901 Census, George is listed as being 50, and a widower - so her information about Susannah would seem to be right.

His children are listed as:

Esau and Jacob (both famous names from the Bible!) both 13 - so I presume they were twins -

Ethel (10)

and Olive (8).

George was a "Cocoa Mat Weaver"; both boys were "Cocoa fibre winders": this means they worked in one of Glemsford's main industries, using the fibres from the outside of coconuts to make mats and suchlike. They were living on Hunts Hill. I can't be 100% sure, because the census isn't totally clear, but I think their house would be just above the Angel Inn, near Flax Lane.

Despite the fact that "Brown" was such a common name in Glemsford, with Christian names like theirs, it was not too difficult to track the family back.

This is what I was able to tell Tracey at the time:

"I warn everybody that there has to be a little uncertainty - because I can't prove everything 100%, but I'm reasonably happy with all this - most of it seems to cross check."

Starting in 1871:

"George, aged 20, was living with his

parents, John and Ellen Brown.

John was 40, Ellen 38.

They lived in a cottage at the top of Egremont Street, where it joins onto Hunts Hill (roughly where George was in 1901). This is quite close to The Angel, and hasn't changed vastly since then, on the surface. This is one amazing family. George was the oldest of 10 children.

In order, the rest were:

John (18),

Jane (16),

Eliza (14),

James (12),

Henry (8),

Mahala (6),

Elizabeth (4),

Willie (2)

and Ellen (3 months).

John (the father) was a Cocoa Mat Weaver,

Ellen the mother was a Straw Plaiter.

George was, as later, also a Cocoa Mat Weaver.

John (the father) was born in Ovington in Essex, and Ellen in Belchamp St Paul in Essex.

All the children were born in Glemsford.

In the last quarter of 1873, George married Susannah Smith.

I can't be more precise than that because I don't have access to the certificate, only the register entry."

"Nor can I find anything earlier about Susannah. There are several candidates in the 1871 census, but not enough to be anything like certain."

So, that was the starting point for this search. While I had other work to do - apart from becoming obsessed with the Savages - Tracey and Sandra concentrated on tracking

the Browns.

<p>This is what they found <i>about</i> <u><i>Brown Family History</i></u></p>	<p>Follow the search for the <u>SAVAGE FAMILY</u> of Cavendish, with several twists and turns or go <u>straight to the start of our findings.</u></p>	<p>Go straight to <u>Letters from and to the Browns</u></p>
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In Search of a Glemsford Family

Tracking the Browns.



George Brown (we think!)

During Steve's absence for marking exam papers, Tracey, who was now in contact with Sandra, had a very busy few months and between them and the names Steve had already given them managed to trace a considerable number of Browns.

George and Susanna were married 25th December, 1873.

Araminta was born 15th March, 1874, (this is Sandra's Great Grandmother and in fact is the Minnie to whom the Savage, Martha and letters from Susanna are written) and died 1948, Bradford.

Florillo William born 18th January, 1877

Alvah born 25th March 1878 (emigrated to Ontario, Canada 1909, and joined the Canadian Army in the Great War in 1915). The website of the [Canadian National Archive](#) shows that he reached the rank of Sergeant.

His son Ron was in the Canadian Army in the Second World War, and also visited Yorkshire in search of his family roots:



Alvah's son Ron

Martha Aseneth 17th May 1888

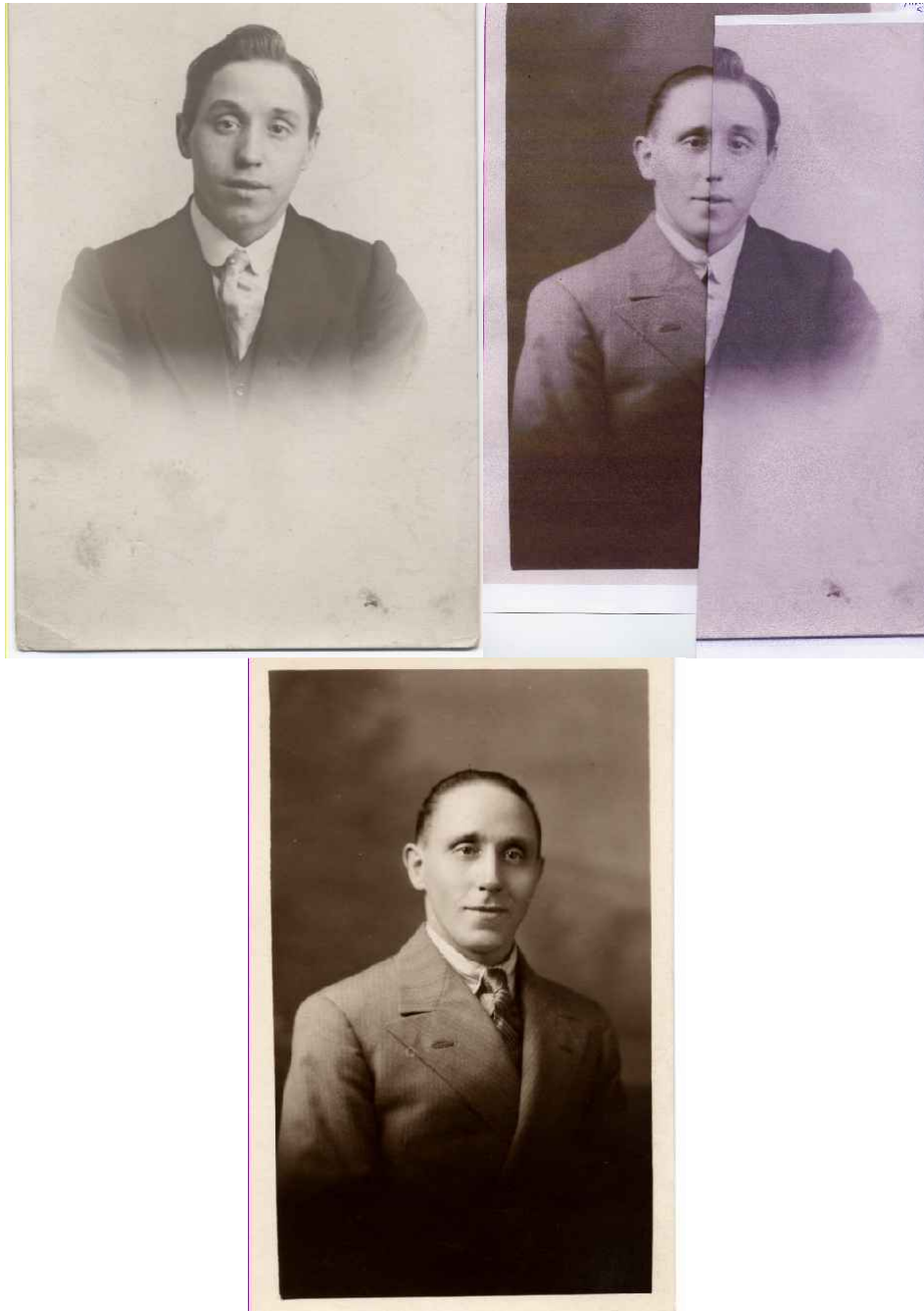
Mercy born 1st February 1883 died in infancy

Gershom Dan born 14th May 1884

Alice Maud Mary 5th September 1886 died in infancy 1887

Willie Esau 15th January 1888 (with twin Jacob Smith - Tracy's Great Grandfather,

(actual birth certificate shows time of birth for Jacob 10.15 p.m.) died 7th March 1959, Keighley.)



Esau and Jacob Brown, and a fascinating montage which shows the twins shared features.

We now know that Jacob married Alice Sarah Webber in Newcastle, in December 1915.

Ethel Anna born 1890

Olive May born 1893

Herbert 1894 died in infancy 1894.

With the help of such unusual first names this did make Tracy and Sandra's job much easier .

With the help of the Savage letters, to which Steve devoted many hours of time, even missing his important cricket, so involved did he become - Thank you Steve - a small time in history was opened up to them, in particular the two letters from their Great Great Grandmother Susannah who died at the age of 43 years, and the very interesting and moving letters from Martha, probably a very homesick child (she would have been 14 years old and already in service in London).

[The Savage story](#) brought a different dimension into the already growing story, that was unfolding.

Further research enabled Tracy and Sandra to go back in time even further.

The names include, John Brown and Ellen Dowsett, (married 12th October 1850 - George's Parents) and Charles Smith and Sarah Ambrose(Susannah's parents).

Joseph Brown married Keziah Plum 26th July 1825 (John's parents); John Plum and Sarah Twitchet (Keziah Plum's parents)

Joseph Brown's they have been unable to trace at this moment in time, but work continues.

Other research, and the 1861 Census took us further forward.

This is [what we found](#).

or

you can read about where they ended up in the [20th Century](#)

Follow the search for the **[SAVAGE FAMILY](#)**

of Cavendish, with several twists and turns or go [straight to the start of our findings](#).

Go straight to [Letters from and to the Browns](#)

[In Search of a Glemsford Family](#)

The Smith and Brown Families and the 1861 Census

The 1861 Census has allowed us to add even more detail to the story of George Brown, his parents and siblings, as well as giving us some

[John and Ellen Brown](#) (then aged 31 and 30) were living on Hunts Hill (unfortunately the Census enumerator was not very precise in identifying the exact whereabouts for us). [With them were 6 children: George \(10\),](#)

hints about Susannah. John (8),
Jane (6),
Eliza (4),
James (2),
and William (6 months).
John is recorded as a “Carpet Weaver Cocoa Nut”, Ellen a “Straw Plaiter”.
The two oldest boys are recorded as “Carpet Winders” – this was before education became compulsory.

In 1861, only one Susannah Smith is listed in Glemsford, aged 8, the daughter of Charles and Sarah, living on Brook Street with 6 brothers and sisters:

Henry, 22,
Walter 16,
Eliza 13,
John 11,
Susannah 8,
Jane 6,
David 4,

together with Charles Bean a 28 year old unmarried lodger, an Agricultural Labourer. Charles Smith was an Agricultural Labourer, and the oldest children were silk winders.

Forward (again) to 1871 *Charles was listed as a “woodman” and his wife a “woodman’s wife”.*
With all the usual “health warnings” (about leaping to conclusions), if this is the right Smith family, in 1871 they were living in a cottage on Angel Lane. *The children listed in 1871 are: Walter, Eliza, John, Susanna, Jane, and David, together with a lodger called Charles Bain.*
The health warning seemed unnecessary – this is the right Smith family - until I noticed that Charles Smith’s wife is recorded in 1871 as “Mary A”.
Typical.

Family trees have an unnerving habit of throwing out extra roots and false branches. I suspect this is one such. Without going

into a detailed examination of certificates and such-like, I was able to identify a Sudbury (District) marriage in 1868 between Charles Smith and Mary Ann Stiff. Well, it's possible. Several Sarah Smiths died in the Sudbury District at the relevant time – in particular one I would like to investigate further, recorded in the December quarter of 1864.

And Tracey confirms that that is what she found, too.

(By the way, I'm saying nothing, but watch out for that surname: "Stiff", later in the story.)

Meanwhile, we needed to look for <i>George and Susannah Brown after 1871</i>	Follow the search for the <u>SAVAGE FAMILY</u> of Cavendish, with several twists and turns or go <u>straight to the start of our findings.</u>	Go straight to <u>Letters from and to the Browns</u>
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In Search of a Glemsford Family

Migration in the late 19th Century

Tracey's original quest had been for the Brown family in Glemsford so, not wishing to get side-tracked too far, I decided the easiest task was to resume my search in the 1881 Census, to fill in the gaps between the 1871 Census, the marriage in 1873, and 1901.

A search of Glemsford in 1881 revealed no George or Susannah, nor any of their children, nor, come to that, any John or Ellen.

Careful, not to say frantic, use of **Ancestry.co.uk** led me out of Suffolk, out of Eastern England altogether, to Lancaster and the parish of Skerton, where the 1881 Census revealed :

"the new family living ... in East Street,

"The easiest task"?

As any Family Historian will tell you, what should be the easiest task, rarely is.

Skerton, which is between Morecambe and Lancaster in Lancashire.

George is listed as a "Mat Weaver" - all the details (particularly place of birth) make me certain this is the right family. George and Susannah had 4 children at this stage: Artementer, a daughter, aged 7 (that's the best reading I can come up with of a very odd looking name!), William (4), Alva - a son - (3) and Martha (10 months)."

A closer examination of Skerton in 1881 showed that:

"when George and Susannah were up north at Skerton, so were John and Ellen and the rest of their family! They were living on Derby Road and all those old enough were matting weavers,"

while a map of Lancaster and Skerton shows that

"Earl St and Derby Road run parallel with each other!"

And, in fact there were

"a whole load of Suffolk-born people in 1881, including some non-Browns from Glemsford"

This was a fascinating development which intrigued me. Simple questions like "Why?" and "How?" arose, so I sent an email to the local Family History Group in Lancaster and received [this very helpful reply](#):

<p>The continuing story: <i>The Browns in 1891</i></p>	<p>Follow the search for the SAVAGE FAMILY of Cavendish, with several twists and turns or go straight to the start of our findings.</p>	<p>Go straight to <i>Letters from and to the Browns</i></p>
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[In Search of a Glemsford Family](#)

What Lancaster Told Us

There used to be two matting factories in the Lancaster area in the 19th century. One was actually in the town, just across the bridge (over the River Lune) from Skerton, and it produced coconut matting into the 20th century. The factory was owned by William John Sly and was based at Albion Mills, Bulk, Lancaster.

It is only a short walk from the addresses in Skerton to the Albion Mills and it is likely to be there that the Suffolk people worked.

The other one was based in the Low Mill at Halton, about 2 miles up-river from Skerton, but on the same side of the river.

Your escapees from Suffolk could have worked at either establishment.

They may have travelled around the coast by ship as the coastal trade was very active and probably more comfortable than by road then. Lancaster was a port, albeit in decline, but ships were still active in the coastal trade.

Railways also were cheap and extensive (and probably more reliable.)

We are very grateful to the Lancaster and District Family History Society (www.lfhg.org), and to Pat Harrison in particular, for this information.

<p>BACK to The</p>	<p>Follow the search for the SAVAGE FAMILY</p>	<p>Go straight to</p>
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[Browns in 1881](#)

of Cavendish, with
several twists and turns
or go
[straight to the start of our
findings.](#)

[Letters from and
to the Browns](#)

[In Search of a Glemsford Family](#)

Back to Suffolk: the family grows and changes

So, George and Susannah's family had moved to Lancaster in search of work, along with several other Glemsford and Suffolk families.

Why they went we can only, at present, guess.

Richard Deeks's book "The Matmaker and the Magistrate" gives us, apart from a brief description of how the matting trade worked, a clear indication that the 1880s were hard times for the matting industry in Suffolk:

"Trade had been falling in the mat making industry and strong competition had been encountered from Germany and India. On top of this coconut mat making and mat weaving was being taught in the prisons, consequently the market became flooded with cheap mats. Some big manufacturers bought the prison made mats and resold them reducing the amount turned out in their own factories. To crown this some London firms hired prison labour to work in their own premises.

The outcome of this caused a surplus of skilled mat makers and weavers affecting in turn the warpers, sorters and trimmers and right down the chain to the women and many boys engaged in the industry. The employers answer to this was to reduce the wages of the employees."

The Log Books of Glemsford School in the 1880s also offer some clues:

"... as the half-time girls are without work they are not attending school..."
(Girls' School, 1885)

"Many of the poorer children are unable to bring pence for Copy Books as their fathers are out of work." (Infants' School, January 1886)

So, possibly, there was a reason for the move.

However, by the time of the 1891 Census, George and Susannah's family was back in Glemsford, living, again, on Hunts Hill, with George, again, described as a "Matting Weaver".

In 1891, the family consisted of:

George and Susannah ...

and then ...

the census had me worried, because the full family details read as follows:

Name and Surname	Relation to head of family	Condition as to marriage	AGE Male	AGE Female	Profession or Occupation	Where Born
George Brown	Head	M	40		Matting Weaver	Suffolk, Glemsford
Susannah Do	Wife	M		38		Do Do
Florillo Do	Son	S	14		Farm Laborer	Do Do
Alvah Do	Do	Do	13			Do Do
Gershom Do	Do	Do	6		Scholar	Do Do
Esau Do	Do	Do	3			Do Do
Jacob Do	Do	Do	3			Do Do
Ethel A Do	Dau	3		9 mths		Do Do

No "Artementer", no Martha, and no William? - doubts began to surface.

And who was Gershom, and this strange Florillo, the same age as William?

But surely, George, Susannah and Alvah, and their ages, make this the Skerton family of 1881.

And surely, George, Esau, Jacob and Ethel make this the Glemsford family of 1901?

Putting two and two together, and making 4 (and possibly a few more, for luck), if these three census entries represent the same family, then, apart from anything else the stay in Lancashire only lasted a few years.

Alvah was born in 1878, in Glemsford. Gersho/am was born in the September quarter of 1884, in Glemsford. In 1881, the family were in Skerton.

Oh, and the name: Gersha/om - it comes from the Hebrew, meaning "exiled".

But what of the rest?

Needless to say, at this time, emails were flying backwards and forwards between Tracey and me, and then she introduced me to Sandra, who was interested in the Brown family too.

And whereas Tracey's great grandfather was Jacob Brown, the son of George and Susannah, Sandra was tracking *her* great grandmother, called ...

Arraminta,

the daughter of George and Susannah Brown.

<p>The search <i>for the Browns continues</i> ...</p>	<p>Follow the search for the <u>SAVAGE FAMILY</u> of Cavendish, with several twists and turns or go <u>straight to the start of our findings.</u></p>	<p>Go straight to <i>Letters from and to the Browns</i></p>
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**Back in Suffolk: growing up and away?
Strange names?**

One of the benefits of working on this story in partnership has been that each of us has come with our own skill and prior knowledge. So it didn't take long for Tracey to confirm that William and Florillo were one and the same person. His birth registration (March quarter, 1877) actually records him as "Florillo William"; quite why there was

the variation in his census entry, which varies between William, Florillo, and Ferillo, we shall probably never know. Where they found the name Florillo, equally, I have no idea. I do not know what it means or from where it comes: **you, of course, may know better.**

In which case, please let us know!

What is certain is that the family knew him as "Rillo". Sandra's letters make that quite clear.

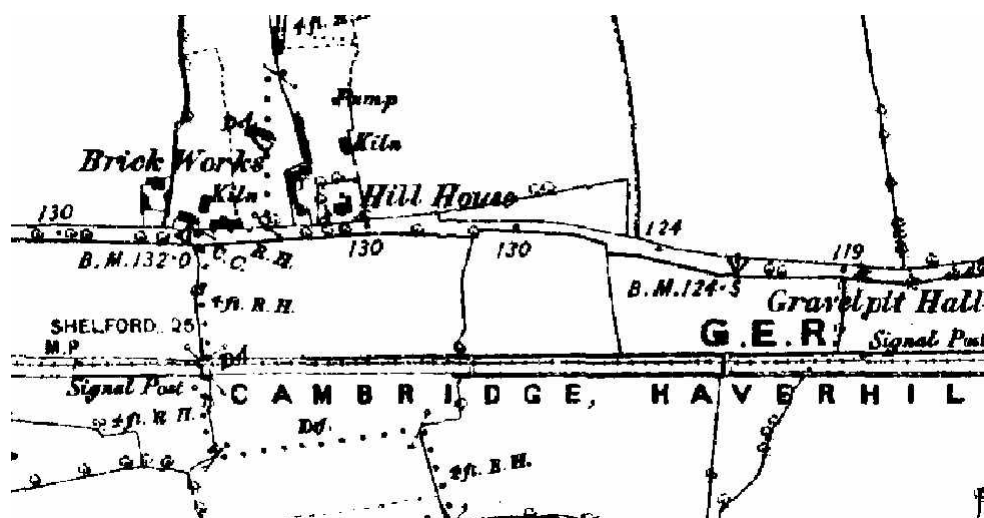
In passing, it is also worth noting that Esau (born 1888) was registered as "Willie Esau" (sic), and Gershom as "Gershom Dan".

But what of Arraminta, Araminta, Artementer?

She first appears in Skerton in 1881, aged 7, as Artementer. Tracey has a birth certificate for 15 March 1874, on which she is known as Arrmenter Brown.

She was not "at home" with her parents at the time of the 1891 Census, when she would have been 17, but it didn't take long to locate her, either.

At the time of the census, she was resident at "Brick Kiln House" on the Lower Road, just where the Parish of Glemsford meets the parish of Cavendish.



She is registered as a "Domestic Servant"; no-one else is registered as living there ...

other, of course, than her sister, Martha.

Martha is recorded, on this 1891 census, as being 13, which would have put her birth date around 1878.

A little strange then, that the Register has her born in the June quarter

of 1880, Tracey has a certificate giving her date of birth as 17 May 1880, and the 1881 census, taken in March, records her as "10 months".

Far be it from me to suggest a Victorian terminological inexactitude, but all the evidence points to her having been little over 11 when she was working at Brick Kiln.

Martha's letters of 1894 refer to her being "small".
Small wonder.

And Brick Kiln becomes central to the story of the Browns and their friends.

The key questions, really, are:

- *who owned Brick Kiln?*
- *what was the link with the Browns?*
- *what happened to Rillo, Gershom, Alvah, Minnie, Martha, and the rest of them?*

Sandra has compiled a digest of the progress of some of the Browns, which [helps answer some of these questions.](#)

<p>Since we've been talking about Martha, perhaps we should now look at the letters she wrote to Araminta, or: Minnie.</p>	<p>Follow the search for the SAVAGE FAMILY of Cavendish, with several twists and turns or go straight to the start of our findings.</p>	<p>Go straight to all the letters from and to the Browns</p>
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**THE CHILDREN ARE ABOUT
THE SAME AND THE TRADE IS
THE SAME - WHEN HE EARNS
IT I HAVE IT."**

(Susanna's Letter dated [March 5th 1896](#))



It was this sentence that stuck in my mind more than anything when I first started to read the whole batch of letters.

What TRADE, and what a HARD LIFE this must have been.

Little did I know that already Tracy had been in touch with Steve, and already they had discovered a complete migration of a whole family, and other people from Glemsford, to SKERTON in Lancashire, and later their return to Glemsford.

Over the next 6 months, we discovered a monumental amount of different addresses, and countries to which the people of GLEMSFORD travelled.

The men travelled far and wide to South Africa, for the BOER WAR and CHINA for the Boxer Rebellion, whilst the women travelled for work, just as a generation before them, a large group had travelled to Lancashire for work in the Cocoa Matting Industry.

ARAMINTA herself we can trace to London, Dover, the Isle of Wight, and lastly KEIGHLEY in West Yorkshire, to be married.

(She did, however, end her final days in Bradford).

KEIGHLEY in West Yorkshire: a small town in the Aire

Valley, predominately a Textile Town, with large mills.

We have a reference to the Mills in Mrs Savage's [last letter dated 1913](#), telling Araminta not to send Hilda (her daughter) into the mills, but to teach her the art of cooking.

This obviously fell on deaf ears, because that is where Hilda did end up, and most people did, working hard shifts, with the mill hooter sounding every morning, and woe betide anyone who was late.

As far as I know Araminta never worked in the mills, but remained at home whilst her husband John McGuire sought work wherever he could.

Araminta had five children of her own, and then brought up Olive and Ethel. They were sent up from Glemsford because, as you will recall, Susanna died shortly after the [March 5th 1896 letter](#).



*Araminta and John McGuire with their family, and
Araminta's sisters, Ethel and Olive*

Indeed she refers to herself as not being well, small wonder after producing so many children, and the living conditions that must have been the norm for the working class of late Victorian/Edwardian Period.

We have a small glimpse of diseases such as Typhoid, Smallpox, Quincy treated with homemade poultices, and the abscesses that [Martha endured](#) on her fingers, obviously through the constant work and scrubbing she must have done at the tender age of 14.

Araminta finally worked for the Lord Mayor of Keighley, and was married from his home on 2nd November, 1902.

She then went on to bring up seven children (two of them her siblings).

How many times must this have happened to the eldest daughter?

[Wilsden near Bradford is not far from Keighley, only the next Valley and this is where we find Araminta in 1912. She remained there until shortly before she died, \(she died in Bradford in 1948\) and her final wish was to see the Daffodils in bloom again.](#)

[I do hope she did.](#)

Jacob Smith Brown (Tracy's grandfather) moved up to Keighley.

We can only suppose that he followed his sister.

We don't know, but it was in Keighley in 1959 that he died.

Tracy has recently found out that Jacob married Alice Sarah Webber in Newcastle, in the last quarter of 1916.

So why did Araminta come to the North West?

I think the simple answer is work, and again I refer back to Susanna's words:

["When he earns it, I have it."](#)

[As a result of being able to trace a family, to the degree that we have, Tracy and myself finally met in person in August 2005, in KEIGHLEY.](#)

[This was 109 years after Susanna's letter to Araminta.](#)

I think we owe this in part to the unusual names that

George and Susanna gave to their children, but mostly to the letters that were saved for a century.

*Sandra Poole
September 2005*

Read about what we know about the [*Brown Family History*](#)

Follow the search for the [**SAVAGE FAMILY**](#) of Cavendish, with several twists and turns or go [**straight to the start of our findings.**](#)

A full list of Emma's [**letters to Minnie**](#)

A list of all the [*letters from and to the Browns*](#)