

Robert Brownfield

6. IV. ROBERT BROWNFIELD was born on 18th March 1823 at Ballast Quay and christened on April 14, 1823 at St. Alphege's Church.¹ Robert was bound as an apprentice to his grandfather William on June 14, 1838 and freed on August 14, 1845.² (William had died in March 1845).

Robert married ELIZA FULLER in 1849 at Gravesend.³ In 1851, Robert was living at 29 Wellington Street Gravesend, with his wife Eliza who was aged 29, from Canterbury, and their son Robert aged 11 months. Charles Brownfield, Robert's 21-year-old cousin (son of the late Thomas Brownfield and Sarah Munyard), a ship agent, was also at the house on the night of the census.⁴ Robert and Eliza had seven children, all born in Milton. All, except for the youngest boy Harry, who died in the spring of 1869 at the age of 5, lived to adulthood. From 29 Wellington Street the family moved to number 152 and were recorded living there in the 1861 census. The same record shows James Brownfield and his first wife Sarah James living at number 60 and James Thomas Fothergill and his wife Elizabeth Brownfield, the youngest daughter of Thomas, living at 120 Wellington Street. James Brownfield's parents were living nearby in Edwin Street and George and Ann Brownfield were around the corner in Parrock Street. Robert's occupation was also given as waterman, until 1860 when he was described as a Ship Agent, then from March 1861 as a River Postman.⁵ Robert died at the age of 55 in Gravesend and was buried at St George's Church on January 12, 1879.⁶ In 1881 Eliza was still living at 152 Wellington Street with her children Charles aged 27, a waterman, and Emma aged 18, a school teacher;⁷ but by 1926 Emma was living in Australia.⁸ Eliza died in 1882 at Gravesend.⁹

(i) ROBERT BROWNFIELD was the eldest son of Robert Brownfield and Eliza Fuller. He was born in Milton in 1850 and married there on Boxing Day 1870¹⁰. His wife Charlotte Mason was the daughter of a sailmaker¹¹. In 1881 Robert, Charlotte and their four children, Ada aged 8, Robert aged 7, Alexander aged 5 and Frederick aged 2 were recorded at 2 Peacock Street, Milton in Gravesend. Robert's occupation is given as "mariner".¹² However in another entry a Robert Brownfield of the same age was the Master of a tug the "Wellington" in New Shoreham, Sussex and AUGUSTUS BROWNFIELD was the mate.¹³ Robert has almost certainly been recorded twice. Augustus was Robert's brother. The ship also carried an able seaman, a boy, an engineer and two firemen.

In a series of articles called "Tugs of the Thames" by Frank G, Bowen serialised in the Gravesend Reporter during 1934 (Jo Newbury Collection) it says about a tug called the Wanderer: "*She was an Iron paddle tug built on the Tyne in 1865 for Mitchells with a gross tonnage of 101. A businesslike tug with straight stem and funnels abreast. In 1874, she was sold to George Butchard, the shipbuilder and engineer on the Canal Bank who was already running tugs on his own account. Under his flag, she ran alongside the 'Palmerston' and later the 'Wellington'. While she was on the river her employment was almost entirely outside in the Channel seeking for sailing ships or carrying out salvages in which she was exceptionally lucky. Captain Robert Brownfield had her some time in the 1970's. He was the son of the river postman of that day, and after doing well in the 'Wanderer' he left to take command of the 'Wellington'.The Wellington was an iron paddle tug built in 1876 by George Butchard on the canal bank at Gravesend. She was an up to date vessel of 151 tons with side lever engines.....Later Robert Brownfield left the river to captain the Dover Harbour Tug 'Lady Vita' and eventually attained a very considerable position in Dover*"



Dover Harbour tug “Lady Vita” (David Dixon collection)

The 1891 census shows that the family were at 91 Prince of Wales Terrace, Ashton Upon Ribble, Preston, Lancashire.¹⁴ Ada and Robert their eldest children were not at home but Alexander was a shoemaker (boots) and Frederick, Edward, Charles and Charlotte were scholars. In the 1901 census, he is referred to as the Deputy Harbour Master in Dover and was living at 28 Granville Street, Dover¹⁵. Robert died aged 76 at 202 London Road, Dover on 30th September 1926. In his obituary, it reports that he had held the position of deputy harbour master at Dover for 14 years until his retirement in 1914 due to ill health.¹⁶

The report of his death in the Dover Express on the 1st October 1926 states: *”He suffered for some years from ‘Locomotor Ataxia’ and had been attending the well known specialist Dr. Risier Russell. On September 3rd he collapsed suddenly and fell. He was put to bed but became worse and eventually became unconscious. He was unconscious for over a week and on Thursday passed peacefully away without having recovered consciousness.”*¹⁷

Ada Brownfield was the first child of Robert Brownfield and Charlotte Mason, she was born in 1872 in Milton next Gravesend, Kent.¹⁸ In 1901 Ada was living at Summer Lane, High Street, Royston, Yorkshire, with her husband Charles Bull, son Charles (7) born in Ireland and daughter Sarah (4). Maybe Charles and Ada were married in Ireland, as a record of their marriage has not been found to date.

Sarah Agnes Bull, the daughter of Charles Bull and Ada Brownfield, was born in 1897 in Royston, Yorkshire.¹⁹ Sarah featured in the will of her great uncle Augustus. She married his son Augustus at Dartford in 1953²⁰ after the death of his first wife Maud, née Francis, in 1951.²¹

Robert Brownfield was the second child of Robert Brownfield and Charlotte Mason. He was born in 1873 at Milton next Gravesend, Kent.²² was in Penarth Docks, Glamorgan, Wales as a passenger aboard the ‘Columbia’ tug of London when the census was taken in 1901. A Robert Brownfield age 65 (i.e. born about 1875) died on Monday 9 September 1940. He was a boatswain of the Merchant Navy ship “SS Mardinian” from Liverpool. His name is commemorated on the Tower Hill Memorial in London (Panel 68) for men of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleet who died in both world wars and who have no known grave.²³ The “SS Mardinian was torpedoed and sunk by U28 in the Atlantic.”²⁴

Alexander Brownfield, the third child of Robert Brownfield and Charlotte Mason, was born in 1875 in Milton next Gravesend, Kent.²⁵ In 1891 Alexander aged 16 was living with the family at 91 Prince of Wales Terrace, Ashton Upon Ribble, Preston, Lancashire, and was a shoemaker (boots) by trade,²⁶ although he later appears to have followed his father and gone to sea in the Thames’ tugs. He died in 1918 at Dartford, Kent.²⁷

Alexander Brownfield, master of the tug 'Aid' received a silver medal from the King of

Denmark in recognition of his service in rescuing the crew of the Danish Schooner Danmark, of Thoro, which was wrecked on the Goodwin Sands on 31 January 1911. The sum of 500 kroner was also received for distribution among the crews of the tug and the lifeboat Charles and Susanna Stephens of Ramsgate. The coxswain of the lifeboat also received a silver medal.²⁸

Frederick Brownfield, the fourth child of Robert Brownfield and Charlotte Mason, was born in 1879 at Milton next Gravesend, Kent.²⁹ In the 1901 census he was staying at Royston, Yorkshire, with his sister Ada (Bull) and her family. He was a mechanical engineer. Frederick died on 21 June 1902 at Harbour House, Dover.³⁰

Edward Ernest Brownfield, the fifth child of Robert Brownfield and Charlotte Mason, was born in 1881 at Gravesend, Kent.³¹ In the 1901 census he was living at 28 Granville Street, Dover, and was an apprentice blacksmith.

Charles Brownfield, the sixth child of Robert Brownfield and Charlotte Mason, was born on 11 May 1883 at Gravesend, Kent.³² In the 1901 census he was living at 28 Granville Street, Dover, and was a clothier shop assistant. He immigrated to Australia and was married in Ballina, NSW in 1933 to Lynda Clark.³³ Lynda had been born in 1900 at Maclean, NSW.³⁴

Charles was living in Bonalbo, NSW on the 5 December 1942 when he enlisted into the Australian Army, at Lismore, NSW. Private Charles Brownfield (N471409) was discharged on 30 September 1945 to part time duty in the Volunteer Defence Corps.³⁵

Lynda died on 19 October 1992 in Perth, Western Australian and was cremated at Karrakatta Crematorium, Perth, Western Australia.³⁶

Charlotte Brownfield, known as 'Tots' was Robert and Charlotte's last child, born in the 3rd quarter of 1885.³⁷ At Roberts funeral there were flowers from daughter "Tots" (Mrs H. Camburn). A Miss Sarah Agnes Bull (Granddaughter) was also among the mourners in the report of Robert's funeral in The Dover Express October 8th 1926.

Sarah Agnes Bull featured in the will of her Great Uncle Augustus and married his son, her second cousin, Augustus Brownfield after the death of his first wife, Mary Ann and her husband Eric Bull (she had the same maiden and married name).

(iv) AUGUSTUS BROWNFIELD, the fourth child of Robert and Eliza Brownfield, was born on 23 July 1858 at 152 Wellington Street, Gravesend, Kent.³⁸ and was baptised on 15 August 1858 at Holy Trinity Church, Milton by Gravesend, Kent.³⁹ The 1881 census states he was a mate onboard the "Wellington" at New Shoreham, Sussex, with his brother Robert, who was the master.

In 1883 at St Peter and St Paul Church, Milton, Gravesend,⁴⁰ Augustus married Mary Ann Brown. Mary had been born in about 1857. Between 1884 and 1900 they had nine children. The 1891 and 1901 census shows they were living at 153 Wellington Street, Milton, Gravesend. Augustus's occupation was shown as a waterman (barge).

Augustus died on 24 April 1952 in the Southern Hospital, Darenth, Kent and was buried in Gravesend Cemetery. An obituary in the Gravesend Reporter on 10 May 1952 read

Mr A Brownfield

The funeral took place on Wednesday last week of a Mr Augustus Brownfield who was in his 94th year. He was born at 152 Wellington Street on July 23rd 1858. He was a Freeman of the River Thames, he was appointed boatman in the Thames Conservancy in 1886 and was promoted to Inspector in 1904, in the River Dept. He transferred to Erith. He retired on reaching the age limit in 1923. He had been a member of the Anglo-Saxons Friendly Society since 1876. He was also a prominent Freemason having been a member of the Lodge of Sympathy No 483 since 1908. He was W.M. in 1919-20 and attained Provincial rank in 1929.⁴¹

Mary Ann died on 13 June 1921 and was buried in Gravesend Cemetery.

Lily Brownfield, the eldest child of Augustus and Mary Ann Brown, was born on 11 June 1884 in Gravesend, Kent.⁴² In 1901 Lily was still living with her parents at 153 Wellington Street, Milton, Gravesend and was a dressmaker. She married Leonard Bailey Burslem in 1908 at Dartford, Kent.⁴³ They had a son Lenny.

Augustus Brownfield, the second child of Augustus and Mary Ann Brown, was born on 30 December 1885 at Gravesend, Kent.⁴⁴ In 1901 Augustus was still living with his parents at 153 Wellington Street, Milton, Gravesend and was a telegraph messenger. He married Maud Francis West in 1911 in Dartford⁴⁵ and they had Stella born in 1917.⁴⁶ During the Second World War Augustus served in the merchant navy and was awarded the War Medal and the OBE.⁴⁷

Maud died on 30 June 1951⁴⁸ and by this time Augustus was a master mariner living at 19 Singlewell Road, Gravesend. After the death of his first wife Augustus married Sarah Agnes Bull, daughter of Charles Bull and **Ada Brownfield** in the autumn of 1953,⁴⁹. He died on December 10, 1956.

Mary Ann Brownfield, known as 'Pollie' was the third child of Augustus and Mary Ann Brown. She was born on 18 April 1888 at 153 Wellington Street, Gravesend, Kent,⁵⁰ and baptised at Holy Trinity Church, Milton by Gravesend on 1 July 1888. Pollie died on 5 February 1896 and was buried in Gravesend Cemetery.

Harry Brownfield, the fourth child of Augustus and Mary Ann Brown, was born on 7 February 1890 in Gravesend, Kent.⁵¹ In 1951 he was living at 56 Alexander Road, Erith and was a millwright.

Jessie Brownfield, the seventh child of Augustus and Mary Ann Brown, was born on 20 December 1894 at Gravesend, Kent.⁵² She died on 10 September 1895⁵³ and was buried at Gravesend Cemetery.

Hilda Brownfield, the ninth child of Augustus and Mary Ann Brown, was born on 26 January 1900 at Gravesend, Kent.⁵⁴ She died at the age of 20 on 24 September 1920⁵⁵ and was buried in Gravesend Cemetery.

(v). **MARY ANN BROWNFIELD**, the fifth child of Robert and Eliza Brownfield, was born on 30 August 1860 at 152 Wellington Street, Gravesend, Kent.⁵⁶ and baptised on 16 September 1860 at Christ Church, Milton by Gravesend. In 1880 she married Joseph Bardoe at St Peter and St Paul's Church, Milton, Gravesend.⁵⁷ He had been born in 1859 at Northfleet, Kent, the son of Job Bardoe,⁵⁸ a cooper. In 1881 they were living at 7 College Street, Northfleet, Kent with Joseph's parents Job and Agnes Bardoe and six of Joseph's siblings.

(vi). **HARRY BROWNFIELD**, the sixth child of Robert and Eliza Brownfield, was born on 29 March 1863 at 152 Wellington Street, Gravesend, Kent,⁵⁹ and was baptised on 26 April 1863 at Christ Church, Milton by Gravesend, Kent.⁶⁰ He died in 1869⁶¹ and was buried on 7 March 1869 at Christ Church, Milton by Gravesend.⁶²

(vii). **EMMA BROWNFIELD**, the seventh child of Robert and Eliza Brownfield, was born on 15 January 1865 at 152 Wellington Street, Gravesend, Kent.⁶³ She was baptised on 12 February 1865 at Christ Church, Milton by Gravesend.⁶⁴ In 1881 Emma was a school teacher and was still living in the house where she was born, with her mother Eliza.

It is believed Emma married William Letchford in 1884 at Gravesend⁶⁵ and emigrated to Australia.

Sources

Robert Brownfield

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