

William Boswall and family

William Boswall, the first name on the memorial headstone on plot Q38 in St. Matthew's churchyard, Lightcliffe, was probably born in the East End of London. His daughter Lily Amelia Wood nee Boswall certainly was, in Hackney. How did these two individuals end up in the West Riding of Yorkshire? It is a long and complicated but hopefully interesting story which follows on from the article about Alfred Wood who married Lily Amelai Boswall. Read

Alfred Wood, M.M.

When the soldier William Boswall married Alfred Wood's sister, Sarah Ellen, on 15th October 1910 he gave his father's name as John Boswall and you can just see that his occupation was "Tripe" something. .

1910 18 . Marriage solemnized at <i>St. Matthew's Church</i> in the <i>Parish of Lightcliffe</i> in the County of <i>York</i>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession.
372	15 th October	William Boswall	41	Widower	Soldier	Aldershot	John Boswall P. (Solicitor)	P. Tripe
	1910	Sarah Ellen Wood	40	Spinster	—	Hackthorn Lane Lightcliffe	William Wood	Gentl
Married in the <i>Parish Church</i> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <i>Established Church</i> , after having by me,								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		<i>William Boswall</i>			in the Presence of us,	<i>William Wood John Wood</i> <i>Jessie Elizabeth Wood, Sister Parker</i>		
		<i>Sarah Ellen Wood</i>			<i>R. Peas. Lethbridge</i>			

Two further marriage records have been found for William Boswall, the son of John (Francis) Boswall, a 'Tripe Dresser'. This is where the story begins.

John Francis Boswall – obviously the surname gets misspelt as Boswell and there are many mis transcriptions on parish records and census forms – was apparently baptised in Maidstone, Kent on 1st March 1818. His parents were Thomas Boswall and Ann Bonner who had married in Spitalfields in 1814.

On 14th May 1843 'Tripe Dresser' John Francis Boswall the son of 'Tripe Dresser' Thomas Boswall married Matilda Elizabeth Wilkes at St. Giles without Cripplegate in the City of London. Before the 1851 census they had five children although the two eldest daughters had already died in infancy. And then in the next decade they lost their son John Boswall but had three more children as can be seen on the census forms

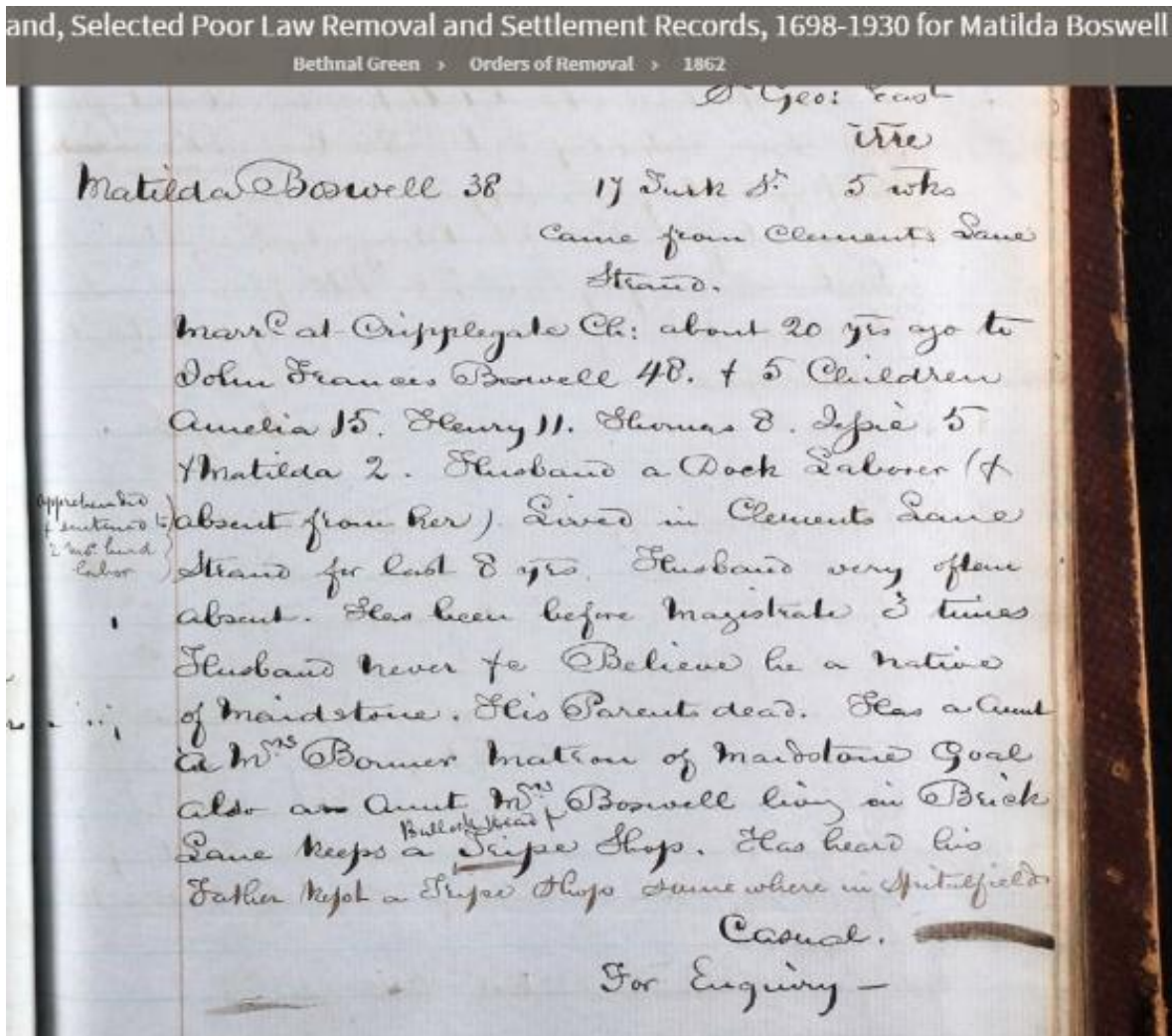
1851 census

John Boswell Head 37 Tripe Dresser
 Matilda Boswell Wife 27
 Amelia Boswell Dau 4
 John Boswell Son 2
 Henry M Boswell Son 1 Mo
 Address Gt Crown Court, London

1861 census

John F Boswell Head 43 Tripe Dresser
 Matilda Boswell Wife 37
 Amelia Boswell Dau 13
 Henry Boswell Son 10
 Thomas Boswell Son 7
 Jessie Boswell Dau 3
 Matilda Boswell Dau 1
 Address 19 Harriet St., Lambeth

This 1862 Poor Law Removal and Settlement Record for 1862 explains more about the family's circumstances. But this was just the beginning of the family's woes.



William Boswall does not appear in the list of Matilda's children in 1862. But working backwards from the information on his headstone the 76-year-old who died in 1938 was born about 1862. Was Matilda Boswall pregnant with him at the time of the above record? That assumes that she was his mother, but later information does indicate that this was the case. No baptism record has been found anywhere in the country for a William Boswall – or similar - and neither has a birth registration.

In the next decade much would happen to this family. In 1863 three-year-old Matilda Boswall of Turk St., Bethnal Green died there. A year later her big sister Amelia Boswall got married. Teenage 'Shoemaker' Thomas Boswall had two court appearances for assault and stealing but on both of these occasions, he was found 'Not Guilty'. Just where the family lived and whether they were together can only be guessed at before further information comes from the 1871 census.

Mother Matilda Elizabeth Boswall has not been found on in the 1871 census and neither have her sons Henry and William. Fourteen-year-old Jessie was recorded as being an 'Orphan' and a 'Scholar' at the Royal Albert Orphan Asylum, Collingwood Court, Frimley, Surrey. Young William Boswall may have been placed in the same or a similar institution.

Back in Bethnal Green the 'Tripe Dresser' John F Boswell was living with his son Thomas.

1871 census

John F Boswell 53 Head Tripe Dresser
 Thos Boswell 17 Son Labourer
 Address Bethnal Green

From 1873 onwards there are numerous London Workhouse records for a Matilda Boswell being in either Holborn or Hackney Workhouse. Sometimes she was there for just a few days, on other occasions it was for months. Her occupation was recorded variously as being a 'Child Shoemaker', a 'Shoe binder' and a 'Bootmaker' and she was 'Married'. In 1875 her daughter Jessie Boswell married James Alexander Rushman, a 'Boot finisher'.

There are also prison records from 1875 indicating that twenty-two-year-old 'Pressmaker' Thomas Boswell served 6 months in prison for 'Breaking and Entering'. In 1878 his father spent a week in the Hackney Workhouse because of 'Destitution' and another week at the beginning of March 1879 after being discharged there from the infirmary. By 1881 John Francis Boswell, his son Thomas and family were again living in Bethnal Green. Thomas was apparently married to Caroline although no marriage record has been found. They baptised three children at St. Leonard's Church, Shoreditch. And then on census night, 3rd April 1881, a W. Boswell of roughly the right age also makes an appearance in Clerkenwell. His mother Matilda Boswell was in Bethnal Green Workhouse.

1881 census

Thomas Boswell Head 27 Press maker printer
 Caroline Boswell Wife 30
 Mary Ann Boswell Dau 6
 Louisa Boswell Dau 4
 Thomas Boswell Son 2
 John Boswell Father 65 Tripe dresser
 Address 16 Boundary St., Bethnal Green, London

1881 census

W. Boswell Head 21 Shopman
 Margaret Boswell Wife 21 Box Maker
 Address 42 Sutton St., Clerkenwell, London

Interestingly this was the address that both William Boswell and Margaret Rushman, sister of James Alexander Rushman, said they resided at when they married a couple of weeks later on 18th April 1881.

London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1932 for Annie Eaton
 Tower Hamlets > St Thomas, Bethnal Green > 1880-1881

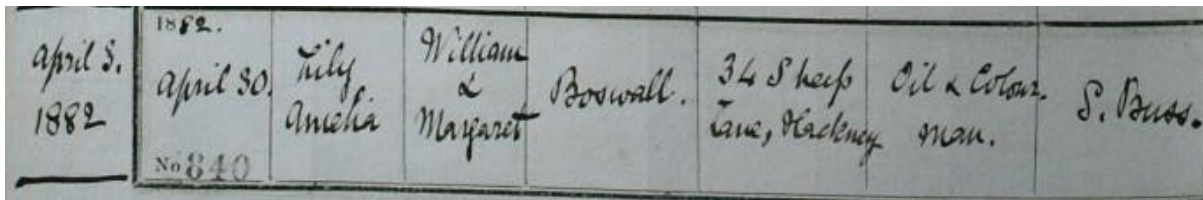
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
300	April 18 th	William Boswell	19	Bachelor	Oil of Glass Man	42 St. Sutton St. Goswold Road	John Francis Boswell	Tripe Dresser
	18 th	Margaret Rushman	21	Spinster		42 St. Sutton St. Goswold Road	James Rushman	Shoe Maker

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by William Boswell or after Banns by William Boswell

This Marriage was solemnized between us: William Boswell } In the Presence of us: William Rushman } Caroline Boswell } Margaret Rushman

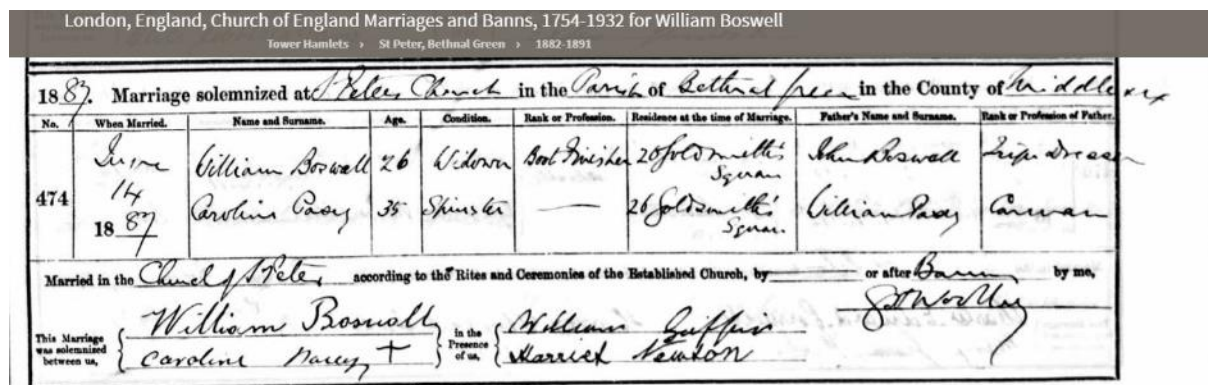
Notice that the tripe dresser John Francis Boswell was named as William's father and that Caroline Boswell has made her mark as a witness. It would appear that William Boswell's 1881 census age was wrong, but his marriage age of 19 years is consistent with him being born in 1862.

On 29th May 1881 Thomas and Caroline Boswall of 16, Boundary Street baptised another son Joseph Frederick Boswall. Then a year after William and Margaret married their daughter Lily Amelia Boswall was born at 34 Sheep Lane, Hackney. She would later marry career soldier Alfred Wood in Lightcliffe and eventually live in Hove Edge. On the 1939 register whilst living with her husband in Spout House Lane her date of birth was recorded as 4th April 1882 just one day out from that on this parish baptism record, but it is surely her. No baptisms have been found for any other children born to William and Margaret Boswall.



Meanwhile Matilda Boswall continued to have spells in the Hackney Workhouse. And then in 1884 the 'destitute' John Boswall – a married man – was also there for a few days before being transferred to the infirmary. He may well be the John Boswald [sic] whose death was registered in the last quarter of 1884 in Shoreditch. No further records have been found for him.

The next document is telling, the record of a marriage on 14th June 1887.



The bride and groom were Caroline Pacey and William Boswall, son of – yes you have guessed – ‘Tripe Dresser’ John Boswall. Wait a minute is this the Caroline who was ‘married’ to Thomas Boswall? It could be. It certainly seems to be the same William Boswall – look at the two signatures. But what happened to their 1881 census ‘other halves’. William Boswall was recorded as a ‘Widower’ when he remarried which he could have been. There is an 1886 registered death for a twenty-six-year-old Margaret Boswall in Leicester. The age fits but why was Margaret in Leicestershire?

Caroline claimed to be a ‘Spinster’ which indeed she might have been as no marriage record for her marriage to William’s brother Thomas Boswall has been found. So, what could have happened to Thomas Boswall? After their son Joseph’s 1881 baptism nothing more has been found about Thomas Boswall. Did he go to jail again? After the possible disappearance of Thomas Boswall and the death of his father did the widower William Boswall marry his brother’s partner. It certainly looks as if he did. And subsequent information bears this out.

William and Caroline Boswall, of 26 Goldsmith's Square, baptised a daughter, Ada Boswall born on 23rd December 1887, at St Leonard's Shoreditch on 22nd January 1888. William was a 'Boot Finisher'. No baptism record has been found for a son William who appears on the 1891 census born around 1889.

On another one of her spells in Hackney Workhouse in March 1890 the next of kin of Matilda Boswall was a 'Shoemaker' son, William Boswall, suggesting that she was his mother. And then it appears that Caroline and the two children, Ada and William, spent a week in the same Workhouse in May 1890 probably just before the birth of another daughter Matilda Daisy Boswall. Caroline's next of kin was a brother James Peasey [sic]. Where was her husband William Boswall, with the other children? The 'Boot Finisher' William Boswall was recorded as the father of Matilda when she was baptised in Hackney on 31st August 1890. William and Caroline's address on the baptism record was 1 Fairy St., Hackney which was where most of the family were on 5th April 1891.

1891 census

Caroline Browell	Head 38	Married Charwoman
Louisa C Browell	Dau 14	
Thomas Browell	Son 12	
Joseph Browell	Son 7	[should be 9]
Ada Browell	Dau 3	
William Browell	Son 2	
Matilda D Browell	Dau 8 Months	
Thomas Pusey	Lodger 34	Widower Boot finisher
Thomas Pusey Junior	Lodger 6	Scholar

Address 1 Fairy St., Hackney

Allowing for the mis spelling of Boswall and Pacey this does seem to be Caroline, her children, a widower brother and a nephew. Caroline was married but where was her husband, William Boswall and his brother Thomas Boswall? Neither have been found in the 1891 census nor has William's daughter Lily Amelia Boswall. Where was Grandmother Matilda Boswall nee Wilkes? In Hackney Workhouse again, of course; her stays there were getting longer, over three months on this occasion.

Caroline's last child daughter Alice Boswall was baptised at Hackney on 25th April 1895. Alice Boswall's parents were listed as 'Frank & Caroline' of 16 Laurence Buildings. His occupation was 'Boot Laster'. The next two censuses may shed some light as to who he was, if not his age!

1901 census

Mrs Boswell	Head 49	Charwoman
Ada Boswell	Dau 13	
Alice Boswell	Dau 6	
Francis Todd	Lodger 38	Boot Finisher

Address 40 Barrett's Grove, Stoke Newington, London

1911 census

Caroline Boswell	Head 58	Laundry Hand
Alice Boswell	Dau 16	Confectioner Hand
Sue Saward	Niece 15	Murse Girl
Frank Todd	Lodger 36	Hand Laster

Address No. 2 Flat, 40 Barrett's Grove, Stoke Newington, London

40 Barrett's Grove was also son Thomas Boswall's family home in 1911 presumably in another flat. When he married in 1904 his father was recorded as 'Thomas Boswall (deceased) Carpenter' with his mother Caroline making her mark as a witness. By 1911 Thomas and his wife Sarah Ann had had six children and lost one.

On her 1911 census form it was recorded that Caroline Boswall was married and had been for 39 years. This would appear to agree with an unconfirmed 1872 'marriage' to Thomas Boswall and not the 1887 documented marriage with William Boswall. The form also stated that she had had fifteen children but ten had died. It is interesting to note that apart from the already mentioned Thomas the other surviving children including Alice the daughter of 'Frank & Caroline' gave their father as 'William Boswall (deceased) Bootmaker' when they married or so it says on their parish marriage records.

But William Boswall was very much alive when he married Sarah Ellen Wood in 1910. Where had he been all these years? And why did the family say or think he was dead? The answer lies in the military records for a William West (service No. 6593) who enlisted at Great Yarmouth with the Royal Field Artillery on 27th October 1894. He was a 24-year-old 'Bootmaker' who gave his place of birth as Norwich, Norfolk. Read this section of William West's military record very carefully.

UK, British Army World War I Pension Records 1914-1920
B > Bo > Bos

refunded .. (2) On _____ £ s. d.
(Cited to the public in the Accounts of _____ to _____)

12. Name and Address of next of kin
Mother Matilda West London and wife with husband 9 Stirling St Ipswich

13. Particulars as to Marriage
(a) Christian and Surname of Woman to whom married and whether spinster or widow, (b) place and date of marriage, (c) name of officiating Minister or Registrar, and (d) names of two witnesses

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	Date of being placed on Married Roll	Initials of Officer
<i>Sarah Ellen Wood (spinster)</i>	<i>Lightcliffe 15-10-10</i>	<i>R. Piers Whittington</i>	<i>William Wood Anni E Wood</i>		<i>W.M. ann.</i>
<i>Married in name of William Boswall</i>					

Children

Christian Names	Date and Place of Birth	Date and Place of Baptism, and Name of officiating Minister

Notice that his next of kin was initially his 'Mother Matilda West' of London. Presumably if he signed up as William West, then giving his mother's name as Matilda West made more sense. Matilda Boswall was probably the 82-year-old who died in the Poplar district of the East End of London in 1903. Was this when her name was crossed out?

Later his next of kin was his 'wife with husband' of '9 Stirling St., Ipswich'. This was none other than Sarah Ellen Wood who he 'Married in name of William Boswall' at Lightcliffe. The military record even states that Richard Piers Whittington was the officiating officer. He was a son in law of one of the George Watkinsons and a curate at St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe. So, this was definitely the soldier who married the older sister of R.F.A soldier Alfred Wood. But for some reason he signed on as William West of Norwich, an alias as this next form confirms.

I, Saddler Corporal William West, do solemnly and sincerely declare that I was enlisted on the 24th October 1894, under the name of William West, which name I now declare to be incorrect. The name of *William Boswell*, contained in the accompanying birth certificate, I now declare to be ~~my~~ true name, and I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true, and by ~~ix~~ virtue of the provisions of an Act made and passed in the sixth year of the reign of King William the Fourth, chap. 62, entitled 'The Statutory Declaration Act, 1835'.

William Boswell

"Declared before me at Glasgow, this second day of March 1908.

James Hunter, Magistrate
City of Glasgow

2870 of 5221

William seems to have been able to produce a birth certificate in 1908. It would be interesting to read what it said in terms of his date of birth and who exactly his parents were! By 1908 his mother was almost certainly not alive, but his wife Caroline Boswall was. She was probably the Caroline Boswall who died in 1922 in the Hackney district.

William's change of surname came a year before his daughter Lily Amelia Boswall married Alfred Wood. Did this trigger the change of name? There are so many unanswered questions.

Why did he use an alias in the first place? And why choose the name William West – the changing of his age is more obvious? Clearly William Boswall's life in the East End of London was getting more and more complicated with so many children, and then his parents and second wife spending time in the Workhouse. Not to dwell too much on what his brother Thomas Boswall might or might have been up to. A new life as a younger Norwich born William West must have seemed attractive. He may well have moved to Norwich and worked as a bootmaker long before signing up in 1894.

His initial service period with the Royal Field Artillery was extended to 12 years in 1901 and then to 21 years in 1906 as he moved up the ranks from Gunner to Saddle Sergeant. From 1895 to 1906 he was in India and then when he returned home, he was stationed at the Maryhills Barracks in Glasgow before finally completing his military career at the Lille Barracks, Aldershot with the 118th Battery, R.F.A

As Alfred Wood also served with the Royal Field Artillery in India and then at Glasgow it seems likely that the two soldiers knew one another which is presumably how Alfred ended up marrying William's daughter. Once the families were connected it is more obvious to see how the 41-year-old 'Widower' met and married the 40-year-old spinster Sarah Ellen Wood.

But how did Lily Amelia Boswall become reunited with her father? The nine-year-old has not been found in the 1891 census when she may have already lost her mother. Was she somewhere with her father even though he had remarried? Were they using another surname? By 1901 her father was in India and she was a servant in a London household. When her father returned home to Glasgow did she, somehow, join him there? Is this how she met Alfred Wood? Again, who knows!

On census night 1911 40-year-old Sarah Ellen Boswall, who had been married for less than a year, was on her own at 5 Heene Terrace, Gravel Road, Lynchford, South Farnborough, Hants. Her husband, Saddler Corporal William Boswall, was at Lille Barracks, Married Quarters, Royal Engineer's Yard, Marlborough Lines, Farnborough, Hants with the 118th Battery of the R.F.A. His place and year of birth were given as Norwich, Norfolk in 1871.

William Boswall was still a serving soldier when WW1 started but he does not appear to have been deployed overseas. But his nephew Thomas Boswall was, killed in action on the Somme on 15th July 1916. A few months later on 26th October 1916 William Boswall who signed up as William West completed 22 years military service. His discharge papers give his address as 9 Stirling St., Ipswich. He was awarded the Long Service Good Conduct medal and his character was recorded as being 'Exemplary'.

Just where William and Sarah Ellen Boswall lived for the next twenty years is unclear, Ipswich and Lightcliffe are obviously possibilities; the 1921 census may help. Did he go back to his trade of bootmaker or even saddler? Again, this is an unanswerable question to go with the many others that there still are about this interesting individual's life.

William Boswall's probate record indicates that latterly he and Sarah Ellen lived in Lightcliffe at 3 Hesketh Place which was where Sarah Ellen Boswall was when the 1939 register was taken. Many Wood and other relatives – hers was a very large family - occupied other properties in Hesketh Place and close by in Wakefield Road.

BOSWALL William of 3 Hesketh-place Lightcliffe Yorkshire died 28 July 1938 at 97 Wakefield-road Lightcliffe Probate Wakefield 31 August to Sarah Ellen Boswall widow and John Wood carpet weaver. Effects £975 17s.

Hesketh Place is referred to as Wood's Buildings in the 1881 census probably because Sarah Ellen's grandfather, stonemason Thomas Wood, built these houses which stand to this day. It was the given address for both the bride and groom in 1909 when Alfred Wood married Lily Amelia Boswall most probably because at the time it was Alfred's – and Sarah Ellen's – father's home. William Wood died in 1922. Did William and Sarah Ellen Boswall then move in? Another unanswerable question!

William Boswall had come a long way from the East End of London via Norfolk, India, Glasgow, Aldershot and Ipswich before getting to Lightcliffe in the West Riding of Yorkshire. The bootmaker turned military saddler was laid to rest in St. Matthew's churchyard on 1st August 1938 in plot Q38 which would eventually hold his daughter, his wife and his son in law, Alfred Wood, who was also his brother-in-law.



William Boswall was one of many, many Wood relatives interred in Lightcliffe churchyard. Their stories can be read at

Alfred Wood, M.M.

William Wood and family

John Wood and family

Thomas Wood and family

D.M.Barker

February 2021