

THE FLOYDS OF PENZANCE

FAMILY HISTORY

1883 - 1934

19TH OCTOBER 2021

Revision History

Revision	Date	Author(s)	Description
1.0	22.03.21	PFW	Started to add lost references back in from 2013 paper copy
1.1	28.03.21	PFW	Pictures of William Thomas' grave
1.2	18.10.21	PFW	Added pictures of Dunster Army Camp
1.3	19.10.21	PFW	Added pictures Jon Wilkinson's medals

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My mother, Phyllis Floyd, over the years painted a picture of her father, William Floyd, in stories she told. There were a few key things that stuck in my mind: my grandfather was a crack shot; he was a wonderful dancer and was popular at the Winter Gardens; he went to shipwrecks with a Captain Derbyshire; the watercolour of the Mount that she gave me was painted by a relative and featured Minna and Arthur in the foreground. There were more but they are buried too deep for me to recall. This research is an attempt to flesh out and validate her stories, and much of what I have discovered bears out her picture. Where her picture is inaccurate it is usually only a matter of small details such as confusing her father with her grandfather.

William Thomas Floyd (1847- 1895)

William Thomas Floyd senior, my great grandfather was born, in 1847 possibly in Bodriggy, Hayle (near modern TR27 4NB), although Hayle itself does not seem to be referred to as such at that time: perhaps the constituent villages had not yet coalesced into a town.

The 1851 census shows William at Bodriggy as the third of four children of Thomas, a sawyer, and Ann By 1871 he was living in Wherrytown in Penzance, married to Margaret Floyd nee Rowe, with two children Richard(3) and Hepzibah(1) and describes himself as an Engineer Fitter. Wherrytown was a small industrial settlement between Penzance and Newlyn. At that time it supported a successful tin mine at the high water mark (later destroyed when a ship ran in to the head works!), a serpentine works and a flour mill. Perhaps his move to Wherrytown was due to his becoming apprenticed for 5 years as a shipbuilder in 1863 [6]. This would have run finished in 1868, the year his eldest was born. His son William describes in 1912 on the certificate of his marriage to Olive, his now deceased father as having been an engineer.

Quite a change in 1883 sees the Floyds living at 41 Market Jew Street with William listed as a beer retailer in Kelly's [7]. Number 41 is also called "Forrester's Arms" but no pub is listed under that name in the directory, although later the same address shows up as the Redruth Brewery Shop.

His death on 9 Aug 1895 at 47 while living at the One and All was announced in a brief three line piece in the Family Announcements column [3]. Family tradition is that he died young due to a heart condition brought on by shooting his rifle left handed. The Martini-Henry he would have used *could* have been fired left-handed, though left-handed weapons drill would not have been permitted [?].

Duke of Cornwall's Rifle Volunteers

William is shown on 1908 "List of all Volunteers since 1859" [?] as a sergeant, with a long service medal (the left hand medal, from the viewer's point of



Figure 1: William Floyd Snr in uniform of a sergeant in the Duke of Cornwall's Rifle Volunteers

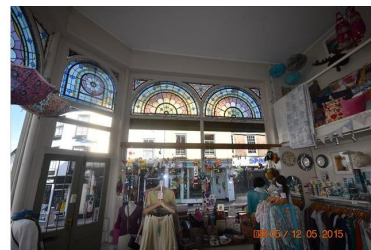


Figure 2: Modern 41 Market Jew Street-old Forrester's Arms

view, in the picture in fig 1)

In 1886 in the results[?] of the annual rifle match he is listed as corporal and by 1892 he was a sergeant. [2] The announcement of his death [3] says “ex-sergeant for many years of A (Penzance) Company, Rifle Volunteers”. William left £91, though intriguingly not to his wife, but to his in-laws Nicholas James Rowe and William James Rowe.[?] £91 would be worth about £8,000 in 2013 if indexed up by RPI or £34,000 by average earnings.

Richard W Floyd (1867 - 1939)

Richard W, was the eldest of William and Margaret’s children. He is Floyd that went to America. Phyllis and Minna would speak of the cousin in Ohio.

He packed a lot in to his life: worked for Western Marine Salvage on board the Greencastle during the first World War; for the Hain Steamship line; and for Penzance Borough Water, as well as running the Dolphin Hotel and the Fishermans’ arms, before emigrating to Akron, Ohio. He and Annie are shown on the manifest of *La France* traveling between Plymouth and New York. On the manifest he is described as a marine engineer. The ship was not the more famous Île de France that took the Blue Riband in the thirties but an older, but nonetheless top line ship from the same line. Travelling second class on a major ocean liner does not look like desperate economic migration. He joined an already well established Penzance diaspora in Akron. When he died, in the City Hospital in Akron July 1939, his funeral was well covered in the *Cornishman* [5]. In the first half of the twentieth century the *Cornishman* was very cosmopolitan, with regular detailed coverage from “the Gold Fields” and “Mining Camps” world-wide.

Richard’s son Richard James married Minne Hollow from Fowey at St Finbarius Church in Fowey 9th October 1919. The couple are shown on the passenger list of the *Olympic* in April 1923 sailing from Southampton to New York. They had two daughters in the USA, Edna Decie and Velda.

Richard’s family in Akron are presently in possession of the tankard in the centre of the table of trophies shown in the picture of William Floyd Snr, 1, above.

William Thomas Floyd (1883-1934)

William Thomas Floyd junior was my grandfather, and Phyllis’ father.

He was born in 1883, a date implied by age at later census. His father, also a William Thomas Floyd was listed by Kelly’s as a beer retailer living at 41 Market Jew Street in that year, so William may have been born there.

The next time he shows up is in the 1891 census aged eight living in the One and All inn at 1 East Terrace at the east end of Market Jew street, with the rest of the Floyd family: William (father); Margaret (mother);



Figure 3: Richard James Floyd and Minne nee Hollow



Figure 4: WT Floyd's shooting trophy, currently in Akron

Elizabeth Mathews (22) a married daughter; another Elizabeth (19) also described as a daughter; Margaret (15); Minna (11); Arthur (1 year); and Nellie Mathews, Elizabeth Mathews' daughter. A family of nine must have been a squeeze in the small One and All.

By the time of the 1901 census, ten years later William is 18 and still at the One and All and described as a solicitor's clerk. Thirty-two year old Hephzibah Floyd, not mentioned ten year's earlier was in the One and All in 1901. Elizabeth, now 29, is married with the surname Sawyer, as is Margaret, now called Maggie Roberton, Maggie has a seven month old infant daughter Milicent Roberton.

He seems to have left the One and All some time before the 1911 census and marries Olive Blight on Aug 6th 1912 in Falmouth parish church[1]. By 1914 when he is 31, he is shown in Kelly's as living at 11 Barwis Hill, high up behind Chyandour Cliff on the road east out of Penzance above the railway. His daughter Margaret (Peggy) had been born the year before. There is no newspaper announcement that I can find for Peggy's birth, nor for Phyllis' birth in 1915.

By 1916, when he 33 his son Frank was born, Kelly's shows him as having moved a few hundred metres to 21 Castle Road. If modern house prices are a guide this was a neutral or slightly upward move. Frank's birth is announced in the Cornishman. William seems to be coming up in the world.

Olive died at 21 Castle Road in October 1918. Family tradition is that she died of the flu pandemic of that year. The coverage of the funeral in the Cornishman mentions that William was on the staff of Vivian Thomas and was "connected with" the Western Marine Salvage Company. There were flowers from the crew of the Western's two ships, the Lady of Isles and the smaller Greencastle.

By the time of his death in 1934 at 51 the Cornishman described [?] him as a "Popular Penzance Resident" and having "an important position in connection with Western Marine Salvage Company", which involved travel to "various parts of the British Isles and the continent". He is described as living at Ashton (now number 14) Mennaye Road, a substantial upward move from Castle Road (again, based on current house price estimates).

Mennaye Road would have been convenient for the newly opened (1926) Winter Gardens, where he seems to have spent a good deal of time. The liquidation of Western Marine Salvage in 1926 would have left him with time and energy. Peggy Floyd presented flowers to the Mayor of Penzance at the opening [?], when William is described as Manager. In 1927 a newspaper article [?] also credits him as manager of the Winter Gardens while judging the Cornish Amateur Trials. Curiously, the article does not say exactly what is being trialled. He was congratulated for organizing the Hospital Dance at the Winter Gardens: "Rarely if ever has a dance gone with such a swing as was the case with the Hospital Dance at the Winter Gardens" 1930[?].

The date of this is interesting, since an earlier newspaper piece [?] in 1928 reports on him MCing the last dance before its sad closure.

He was a keen billiards player, with dozens of mentions in the local paper, too many to reference. He did not seem to be too choosy who he played for: Conservative club, YMCA, Riviera etc. Around 1922 and 1923 he attended a number of dog shows including the Royal Cornwall[?] showing in the whippet class.



Figure 5: William Thomas' grave

His funeral notice[?] says he left a widow and *four* children, presumably including baby Pat. The list of mourners and tributes was extensive and included one from Richard and Annie of Akron. He left Nora (or Norah) Agnes Floyd, his second wife £736 15s 6p [?]. Indexing this up to 2013 values, by RPI gives a value of about £40,000, or by average earnings about £120,000. He and Olive are buried in Penzance cemetery



Figure 6: Detail of William Thomas' grave



Figure 7: Olive's grave

The One and All

The street address of the “One and All” is sometimes shown as number 1 East Terrace and sometimes number 3. Perhaps the street was renumbered at some stage.

The picture in fig 8 was probably taken around 1925. Milly (centre back) looks a very fashion conscious young woman in her twenties (she was born 1900). Coco Chanel has made suntan fashionable in 1923[?]. Cloche hats were popular about then too. Peggy, the girl front left was born 1913 so would have been about 12. I recognise Minna, back right, but am less sure of the identity of the older woman in the center and of the man.

Unfortunately, in 1943 four years after brother Arthur's death, Minna had a court order served on her for recovery of £62 and costs for unpaid rates on the “One and All” [?]. This may in part explain her showing up on the electoral register at Beira Street living with Phyllis and John in 1946. Phyllis always said that although Minna had taken in many family members,



Figure 8: Some of the folks from One and All

except notably Phyllis herself, over the years at the “One and All” none of them would have her, except Phyllis, once she had to leave.

Phyllis Floyd and Jack Wilkinson

Although my father was actually named *Jack* I only knew him as John. I will call him Jack here, to distinguish him from his father, John.

Jack’s birth certificate has him born in June 1912 at Reading Road, Crookham Village, Fleet in Hampshire. For a while we all thought he was born in Hartley Witney but that mistake must have arisen because Crookham Village is in the registration district of Hartley Witney. Only a year before his mother, Kate Namoi and the rest of the family were living with her parents in Gillingham in Kent, although his father John was not there, at least not on census day.

There was a major army camp, the Haig Lines, in Reading Road by 1914 and the area around Fleet Pond had been used for exercises and some accommodation for some time previously. Perhaps this is where John was working when Jack was born. Jack and aunt Kate, his sister, told me stories about how he would be terrorized by the geese that lived around Fleet Pond, and how Kate had to rescue him from their attentions. Fleet Pond is actually a 51 acre lake, which still supports large numbers of geese. It became part

of the military estate at Aldershot in 1854 where it remained until 1974.

After Jack's death Kate spoke of his poor health as a child and how he would have been unfit for military service, although standards clearly changed since he did serve in World War II.

I have no further factual material about Jack until his marriage to Phyllis but she said he was working as a servant in a big house in Lamorna in what must have been the mid to late thirties. They met in Penzance somehow: it may have been an introduction by his father, who "visited Cornwall to inspect the guns" and drunk in the One and All. Phyllis moved to London and was working as a "mother's help" or nanny at 21 Marius Road SW17 on the Balham/Wandsworth boarder by 1938. In London they met again, whether by chance or arrangement I do not know. Researching the late thirties electoral roles for West Penwith at Cornwall Records Office for evidence of Jack is an outstanding task.

By the time of their marriage he was working for the GWR in London. Phyllis told of how he was desperate to enlist in the army around the time the war started, but she persuaded him to wait until he was called up, so his job would be kept open for him after the war.

Because Jack was a railwayman he and his family enjoyed concessionary rail fares, of which they took great advantage. As children we would go on day trips, sometimes to places a long way away. Day trips from south London to Littlehampton, Weymouth or even Minehead in Somerset were all possible with an early start, if the train trip was free. These trips were often to places with some past association, and Jack and Phyllis would point out places that were of some significance to them.

Littlehampton on the south coast was one such place. Reachable from Balham with a single change at Clapham Junction in under two hours, they spoke of visiting around the time they were married.

The picture at figure 9 was taken by a seaside "walkie" - a walking photographer.

Sunny Snaps operated in several south coast resorts and the year is probably reliable. From comparisons with Google StreetView [?] it looks as if it was taken in Littlehampton from the south end of Pier Road looking north. The very short shadows mean it must have been taken close to midday in late June or early July, a few months after their marriage in early spring of 1939. If it was their honeymoon, they must have held off a few months before taking it.

They also spoke of the Minehead/Watchet area on the Somerset coast. John was stationed in the area and Phyllis lived, or at least stayed, with the crossing keeper on Sea Lane, Dunster. Phyllis pointed this crossing out to me on holidays to the area, when we would camp near Watchet go out on cycling trips, often to Dunster and Minehead. She went there while John was stationed nearby. She would walk to the entrance of the camp where he was on guard duty to meet him.



Figure 9: Phyllis and John in Littlehampton 1939

John had four medals: the Defence Medal, 1939-1945 Star, France and Germany Star, and the War Medal.

There had been an army presence on North Hill Minehead since before the WW1, the Americans had a tented camp on Dunster Beach late on in the war as part of the preparations for the Normandy landings and there was a camp at Watchet.



Figure 10: Crossing at Sea Lane, Dunster



Figure 11: Army camp, Dunster Beach



Figure 12: War medal



Figure 13: France and Germany Star



Figure 14: Defence Medal



Figure 15: 1939-1945 Star

Stock images- all but John's Defence medal are lost

Phyllis, though not Jack who was presumably still away, is shown on the 1945 Electoral Roll for 8 Beira Street (as is Arthur Williams who is unknown to me). Milly and Charles Surman are shown at 8a. Jack is shown on the Service section of the 1946 Electoral Roll for Beira Street and by 1947 Phyllis and Jack are together in Beira Street, and Minna is shown as living there also.

Western Marine Salvage Co (1904 - 1927)

Western Marine Salvage Co was incorporated in 1904 [citation needed] and went into liquidation in 1926 [?]. The liquidation may have been the result in diminishing wreck business resulting from the downturn in shipping volumes in the mid-twenties. This, in turn, was a result of the industrialized

countries moving to a peacetime economy. It may also have been tactical: the marine salvage companies in West Cornwall were descendants of the wreckers of old. Some of the business practices were, by today's standards, questionable. It was not uncommon for a company to liquidate, then a new company to float with a similar name, the same assets and the same directors but without, presumably, the liabilities. [citation needed] Certainly Vivian Thomas, company secretary of Western Marine, seems to have accomplished the acrobatic feat of also being the solicitor for its liquidators. [citation needed]

Western's fleet comprised two ships: the Greencastle and the Lady of the Isles. Neither seems, on the face of it, to have been ideally suited for the job. The Greencastle was an unsuccessful East Coast steam drifter, and the Lady of the Isles was purchased as a wreck off the rocks at Lamorna after being holed on Little Heaver off Carn-du. She was salvaged and patched up with plates made by Holmans, and towed back into Penzance by the Greencastle. Neither was a tug although there are a number of pictures of the Lady of the Isles incongruously towing very much larger vessels, with the Greencastle fussing about nudging the tow sideways to provide steerage.

Lady of the Isles was built in 1875 by Harvey and co of Hayle and was under tow of a tug when she hit a mine off Falmouth and sunk on the 3rd October 1940 [?]

Richard W Floyd was a engineer aboard the Greencastle.

The actual process of salvage took fine commercial judgment, speed and physical bravery. Picture the scene. A cliff top, in darkness and filthy weather, perhaps surrounded by survivors who have lost everything, and may not speak English. No Goretex, no radio, oil lamps and perhaps worst of all, no helicopters. The "rocket brigade" will have thrown a light line on to the casualty using a rocket propelled mortar. Once the light line is aboard it is used to haul a heavy line across: heavy enough for a breeches buoy. Without going in the maths of catenaries, it is enough to say that, to avoid a dip in the middle of the line, which would drop the survivor in the sea, the line has to be *very* tight, and kept tight - tricky when the wreck is awash and moving.

While all this commotion is going on, and while the ship is breaking up in front of everyone, some high value negotiations and contracts have to be worked out possibly involving the frighteningly brief Lloyd's Open Form[?] with, in the heading "NO CURE, NO PAY" in block capitals across the top. It is very likely that William Floyd's job was to administer these contracts on site at the wreck.

The Lady of the Isles served as a replacement vessel for the Penzance - Isles of Scilly passenger service when the regular ship was not available. It is not clear how the ship was tidied up to receive passengers. One can assume that the tools of the trade: axes, gas cutting torches, dynamite and so on were put away, if only because they were expensive.

J C Uren (1845 - 1932) Painter of Penzance

There is a family tradition that says J.C.Uren's watercolour of St Michael's Mount (figure 16), given to me by Phyllis in the 1970s, features Arthur Floyd and Minna Floyd in the foreground.



Figure 16: St Michaels Mount by J.C.Uren

Uren lived just off the prom in Penzance but moved to Plymouth just before the end of the century. He exhibited at the opening of the Newlyn Art Gallery[?] when he was well represented with watercolours of Cornish coastal scenes.

Uren sometimes signed his pictures on the back "J.C. Uren, painter, carver and gilder". The roll of A Company of 1st Volunteer Rifles shows a JC Uren, gilder, joining 9th Feb 1866 [?]. He is also shown in the newspaper on a prize list for shooting alongside William Thomas sr[2]. Both were sergeants, and both were awarded long service medals. Their dates overlapped. It is not unreasonable to assume they knew each other and that the painting came into the family because of the acquaintance.

Connections to Folks in Pendeen

Andrew Frank Howard Coak of Pendeen and his brother of John, who runs the North Inn were sons of Earnest Howard Coak, born Penzance 1908

Bibliography

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- [2] Volunteer rifles. *Cornishman and Cornish Telegraph*, 1892. November 3.
- [3] Deaths. *Cornishman and Cornish Telegraph*, 1895. August 15 1895.
- [4] Volunteer rifles. *Cornishman and Cornish Telegraph*, 1896. September 23.
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- [6] Cornish Records Office. Indenture records, 1863. H/42/39.
- [7] A. L. Kelly. *Directory of Cornwall*. Kellys, 1883.

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Family Tree

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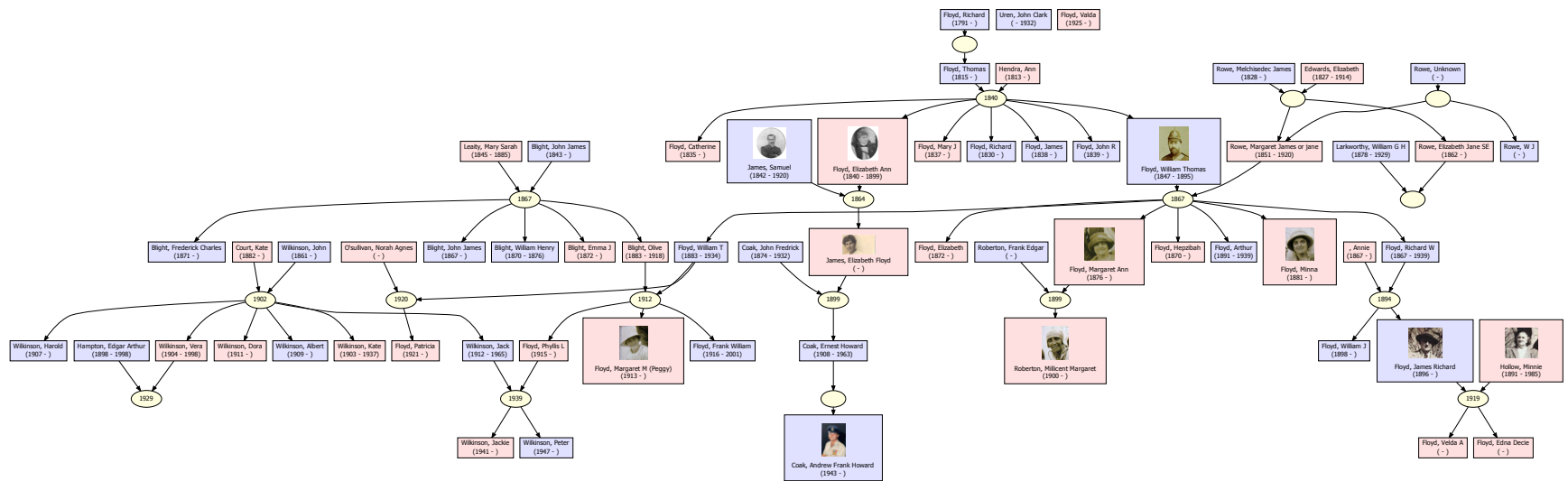


Figure 17: Family Tree

Locations

Mennaye Road



Figure 19: Ashton, Mennaye Road

The black car is parked outside Ashton, modern number 14.

Lady of the Isles Wrecksite



Figure 20: Lady of the Isles Wrecksite off Falmouth [?]

Not visible on the picture is the feint impression of the rubbed out pencil line of our sailing track in 2006 or 7. We sailed almost over the wreck on our way from Plymouth sound to Falmouth.

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