

FINDING A FAMILY FROM KENT

I started searching for my Bittle ancestors in the 1960's. Unfortunately they had not been great communicators and my father could not tell me anything about his ancestry. My grandfather died before my interest in family history emerged; therefore I missed the opportunity to speak with him about his family. With no one to ask I did the best I could. Believe it or not – there were no computers – no internet, so I did the best I could with New Zealand records, microfiche and microfilms at the local family history centre.

Around 1985 I met my birth mother and discovered enough information about her family to get started on my biological line. This took over my genealogical interest. The next several years this was the line I pursued. Bittles were put on the shelf and ignored.

When the desire to follow my biological line was diminishing, the desire to find out more about my Bittle family was increasing. Oh! what a difference computers, internet and the Family History Library make!

Here is what I discovered and some of the **LESSONS** learnt.

I started in April with the following information about my 2nd great grandfather's family: Parents and 4 children with the most information being about my g-grandfather James.

Family Group Record			
Husband William BITTLE			
Born	1808	Place	Worlingham, Surrey, Engl
Married		Place	
Husband's father		Place	
Husband's mother		Place	
Wife Isabella DENNIS			
Born	1820	Place	Chipstead, Surrey, Engl
Chr	13 Feb 1820	Place	Chipstead, Surrey, Engl
Wife's father	Thomas DENNIS		
Wife's mother	Jane		
Children List each child in order of birth.			
1	M James BITTLE		
	Born	1848	Place Kent, Engl
	Died	26 Feb 1913	Place Greytown, NZ
	Buried	27 Feb 1913	Place Greytown, NZ
	Spouse	Emily WEBSTER	
	Married	29 Nov 1873	Place Ightham, Kent, Engl
2	M Abraham BITTLE		
	Born	1855	Place Sundridge, Kent, Engl
3	M Joseph BITTLE		
	Born	1858	Place Sundridge, Kent, Engl
4	F Esther BITTLE		
	Born	1865	Place Sundridge, Kent, Engl

I joined a Kent message board and on 25th May received an email from a person who said she was only contacting me because she had never known another person with the same name as her – Lyn Bittle, and born in the same year too. Her great grandfather was Isaac Bittle and she didn't know what happened to him. At this time Lyn had the family of William and Isabella Bittle with 4 children in it – James, Abraham, Joseph and Ann, but no Isaac. She didn't know if these people were related to her. On the 9th May, just 2 weeks before, I looked at the 1851 census and added her g-grandfather Isaac to William and Isabella's family. We have the same 2nd g-grandfather! This makes us 3rd cousins. As I added to her knowledge base she added to mine by supplying me with information about Isaac and his family.

(LESSON - Join groups from your interest area)

I had tried searching for a marriage record for William and Isabella Bittle in the civil registration indexes on www.ancestry.co.uk and also www.freebmd.org. All I could find was a William Bittel marrying a Jane Dennis. I knew that was not the name of my 2nd g-grandmother. I thought it might be interesting to search the microfiche civil registration indexes. Found! The person who had transcribed the indexes had taken the name "Jane" from the following line when they should have recorded "Isabella".

After I determined the correct marriage for William and Isabella Lyn ordered the certificate and emailed me a copy.

(LESSON - Don't trust transcriptions – look at originals. Also applies to indexes)

After I found the marriage date I started looking for christenings from the following year. I had a feeling that I should commence with the year they were married – even though they were married in June. That was when I found their first child, George who was christened in December.

(LESSON - Follow up on those feelings)

While searching for this family, I found their records with the name BITTLE spelt with these variations; BEADLE, BEDAL, BITTEL, BEDDELL, BITTELL. Isabella also showed up as Eliza and Elizabeth.

(LESSON – Do not get stuck on insisting a name must be spelt one way)

The records I searched included the following:

England Census on FHL microfilms for 1841, 1851 ,and at www.ancestry.co.uk for 1861, 1871, 1891, 1901

England and Wales, Civil Registration Index on microfiche at the FHL

England and Wales, Civil Registration Index at www.ancestry.co.uk

England and Wales, Civil Registration Index at www.freebmd.org

New Zealand cemetery records on microfiche at the FHL

England Church records on FHL microfilm - Computer Printouts, Parish Registers, Bishops transcripts

Passenger lists from British Isles to New Zealand on FHL microfilms

Family Group Record			
Husband William BITTLE			
Born	30 Jun 1807	Place	Warlingham, Surrey, England
Chr.	26 Jul 1807	Place	Warlingham Surrey, England
Died	1883	Place	Malling, Kent, England
Married	9 Jun 1839	Place	Saint Mary Cray, Kent, England
Husband's father	George BEADLE		
Husband's mother	Elizabeth		
Wife Isabella DENNIS			
Born		Place	Chipstead, Surrey, England
Chr.	13 Feb 1820	Place	Chipstead, Surrey, England
Died	1882	Place	Malling, Kent, England
Wife's father	Thomas DENNIS		
Wife's mother	Jane		
Children List each child in order of birth.			
1	M George BITTLE		
	Chr.	22 Dec 1839	Place Bromley, Kent, England
	Died	1840	Place Bromley, Kent, England
2	M Edwin BITTLE		
	Born		Place Bromley, Kent, England
	Chr.	9 May 1841	Place Bromley, Kent, England
	Died	Aft 1871	Place
3	M Isaac BITTLE		
	Born	1844	Place Bromley, Kent, England
	Spouse	Elizabeth Clara POTTER	
	Married	21 Jun 1866	Place Hastings, Sussex, England
4	M Samuel BITTLE		
	Born	1846	Place Sevenoaks, Kent, England
	Chr.	22 Feb 1846	Place Westerham, Kent, England
	Died	1846	Place Sevenoaks, Kent, England
5	F Eliza BITTLE		
	Born	1847	Place Sevenoaks, Kent, England
	Chr.	10 Mar 1847	Place Westerham, Kent, England
	Died	1847	Place Sevenoaks, Kent, England
	Buried	19 Mar 1847	Place Westerham, Kent, England
6	M James BITTLE		
	Born	1848	Place Sevenoaks, Kent, England
	Died	26 Feb 1913	Place Greytown, Wairarapa, New Zealand
	Buried	27 Feb 1913	Place Greytown, Wairarapa, New Zealand
	Spouse	Emily WEBSTER	
	Married	29 Nov 1873	Place Ightham, Kent, England
7	F Annie BITTLE		
	Born	1851	Place Sevenoaks, Kent, England
	Chr.	31 Aug 1851	Place Westerham, Kent, England
	Died	Aft 1901	Place
	Spouse	John EVES	
	Married	1879	Place Malling, Kent, England
8	M Abraham BITTLE		
	Born	1855	Place Sevenoaks, Kent, England
	Died	Aft 1871	Place
9	M Joseph BITTLE		
	Born		Place Sevenoaks, Kent, England
	Died	Aft 1871	Place
10	F Esther BITTLE		
	Born	1864	Place Sevenoaks, Kent, England
	Died	Aft 1891	Place

FHL = Family History Library

After about 38 films, 54 forays into www.ancestry.co.uk and www.freebmd.org, many, many visits to www.familysearch.org and two months of time, William and Isabella's family has grown to the following:

(LESSON – It doesn't happen overnight – but it does happen)

Now what do I know about this family?

William worked as a Shepherd and an Agricultural labourer and his sons mostly followed that example. The exception was Isaac, who was a bricklayer at the time of his marriage, at age 23 years. George, Isaac, James, Annie and Esther all spent

some time as servants. Even though they shifted house several times, William and Isabella lived all their lives within 20 kms of their birthplaces. It must have been a very hard life for them. According to the 1881 census when William was 74 years old he was working as a farm labourer.

Three of their children, George, Samuel and Eliza died as babies. I am yet to find if another four of their children married and had families - Edwin, Abraham, Joseph and Esther.

Isaac moved to Hastings in Sussex where he was married in 1866 and had 2 children. His wife Elizabeth POTTER had a child to John BRITT in 1870, just a couple of years after the last child to Isaac. She married John seven years later. So far I cannot find any record of him after his two children were born. Did they divorce and she had to wait seven years to remarry? Did he disappear and was presumed dead? Need to do some deep searching for him.

James married Emily WEBSTER in 1873 and left for New Zealand in 1875 when his first child Albert was one year old. They had another son Joseph Jacob in Wellington in 1876. Albert was my grandfather.

Annie had a child four years before she married John EVES in 1879 and then had another six children with John and they stayed in Kent at least until after both her parents died.

(LESSON – You do not have to have personal family knowledge to find your ancestors.)

My grandfather Albert BITTLE had three sons. Only one of these, my Dad, Edward Raymond had a son, my brother Ronald Edward, who did not have any sons. So that is the end of that line. Granddad's brother, Joseph Jacob had some male descendants so hopefully there will still be some Bittles in New Zealand in the future.