

# ARTHUR EMMANUEL DARVILL AND FRANK DRACOTT

## THE MEN WHO NEVER WERE

*Peter Maggs*

My wife's grandmother, Alice, was married twice, and should have had three surnames during her life. The fact that she had five, and no one in the family seemed to know why, engaged my curiosity. The resulting investigation, spanning more than 25 years, has unearthed some fascinating information, and confirmed the untrustworthiness of many official records.

In 1923, Alice Darvill married Thomas Payne at the parish church of St John in Southall, Middlesex, giving her father's name as Arthur Emmanuel Darvill, deceased. Years later, after Thomas had died, she married Kendrick Gregory, again giving her father's name as Emmanuel Darvill. But in her youth, Alice was known variously as Alice Allen and Alice Dracott, and she had a brother, Jack Dracott, as well as two other brothers, Frederick and James Allen.

Alice's date of birth, as she was proud of telling people, was 5 August 1900, one day after that of the Queen Mother, and her birth registration in Hammersmith was unambiguous and not difficult to find. But the certificate when it arrived was perplexing; the date of birth was given as 18 rather than 5 August, and her father's name was *William* Darvill, a slater. Her mother's name was Elizabeth Darvill, formerly Doe. Alice's mother's name was known to have been Elizabeth, but the fact that both the registered date of birth and the father's name were incorrect for our Alice caused me to falter, not sure what to do next.

Some months later, I was able to visit the wife, son and daughter-in-law of Jack Dracott, one of Alice's supposed brothers, and they provided a copy of Jack's birth certificate.<sup>1</sup> What it revealed was highly intriguing. 'Jack' Dracott, born 2 May 1898

in Shepherds Bush, had been registered Arthur Emmanuel Dracott; his mother's name was Emma Elizabeth Dracott, formerly Doe,<sup>2</sup> his father was Arthur Charles Dracott, Coal Carman (driver of a coal delivery wagon). Jack appeared to be Alice's half-brother since they had the same mother, Elizabeth, or Emma Elizabeth, née Doe. But why was Alice's date of birth incorrectly recorded? What had happened to Arthur Charles Dracott, ditto Arthur Emmanuel Darvill? And who was William Darvill?

What had happened to Arthur Charles Dracott was that he had succumbed to a cold snap that started on 9 December in London, and died of pneumonia on the shortest day, 21 December 1899, aged 24.

Alice's incorrect date of birth was also fairly easily explained; Elizabeth had been late registering the birth, and finally got round to it on 25 September 1900. But for a birth on 5 August, the latest registration date not incurring a financial penalty of £2 for late registration - a considerable sum for a working-class family - was 16 September (six weeks after the birth). Elizabeth built in a four-day safety margin, and declared Alice's birth date as 18 August (five weeks and three days before registration). Of course she knew that Alice had really been born on 5 August, and that was the date Alice grew up with as her birthday.

And since 5 August 1900 was less than 33 weeks after Arthur Dracott's death, he was almost certainly Alice's father. But who was William Darvill, and why did Alice think that her father's name was Arthur Emmanuel Darvill? There is no record of Elizabeth/Emma Dracott marrying anyone called Darvill, although on 17 March 1906, Elizabeth Emma Dracott, widow, aged 27, married Frank Allan,<sup>3</sup> bachelor, labourer, aged 24, in

St James, Ealing. Here then, was the father of Alice's 'Allen' brothers, and the source of one of her extra surnames.

It was essential to identify William Darvill, Alice's 'father' on her birth registration and the census return for 1901 finally allowed this to be done. See fig. 1.

James Darvill was subsequently identified as James *William* Darvill; Arthur Dracott was

declared as 'wife's son' whereas Alice Darvill was entered as James' daughter as she had been for her birth registration.

It seems that Elizabeth must have taken up with James William Darvill after the death of Arthur Dracott. When Alice arrived, Elizabeth might either have genuinely thought that James was the father, or she knew he wasn't but as she was living with him as her husband, she registered him as Alice's father.

Extracted from the 1901 census, 113 Brackenbury Road, Hammersmith					
Name	Relation to head	Condition	Age	Occupation	Where born
James Darvill	Head	M(arried)	28	Slater & Tiler	London, Hammersmith
Elizabeth do.	Wife	M(arried)	24	Laundress	London, Old Ford
Arthur Dracott	Wife's son	S(ingle)	2		London, Hammersmith
Alice Darvill	Daur	S(ingle)	7 mths		London, Hammersmith

Fig 1.

Extracted from the 1911 census, 126 Hammond Road, Norwood (exactly as written)									
Name	Relationship to head	Age	Status	Children born alive to present marriage			Occupation	Birthplace	Nationality
				Years of marriage	Total children	Children still living			
Frank Allen	Head	27	Married				Golf green keeper	Wallington, Surrey	English
Elizabeth Emma Allen	Married	31 <sup>4</sup>	Married	5	2	2	-	Limerick, Ireland <sup>5</sup>	Irish
Arthur Emmanuel Dracott	Step son	13	-				-	Shepherds Bush	English
Alice Dracott	Step daughter	11	-				-	Hammersmith	English
Fdrick Allen Dracott	Step son	6	-				-	Ealing	English
James Joseph Allen	Son	4	-				-	Ealing	English
George Frank Allen	Son	Under 1 yr	-				-	Southall	English
Ellen Elizabeth Pearce	Visitor	23	Single				-	Merton	English
Kate Canderton	Visitor	21	Single					Ealing	English

Fig 2.



Fig. 3 - Elizabeth and Alice with Fred and James (Nobby) Allen, circa 1918.

Further investigation showed that James William Darvill subsequently married Emily Bainbridge in Rochford (near Southend) in the summer of 1906. Their first daughter, Emily, was born in early 1907, and intriguingly, the next two daughters were named Alice and Elizabeth... And since Elizabeth Dracott married Frank 'Allan' in March 1906, the relationship with William Darvill must have ended some months previously.

The 1911 census return for Frank and Elizabeth Allen provides some clarification of Elizabeth's relationships, while raising further questions. See fig. 2.

Arthur Emmanuel Dracott is listed as registered at birth. Alice, whose birth was registered Alice Darvill, now has her natural father's name, Dracott, suggesting that Elizabeth knew that Arthur was her father, and James and George were the natural children of Frank and Elizabeth, having been born in 1907 and 1910 respectively. The record for Frederick Allen Dracott is interesting and deserves investigation. He was born in the summer of 1905 which means that he was conceived in the autumn of 1904. Since he is noted as a stepson, his father might have been thought to have been James Darvill. Not a bit of it. The father's name on the birth certificate is Frank Dracott, deceased, shoe maker.

But who on earth was Frank Dracott? Elizabeth's first husband had been *Arthur Charles Dracott*, coalman, but he had died in 1899, and there were no brothers or cousins called Frank of marriageable age. And it was Arthur's father, Emmanuel Dracott, who had been a shoemaker. There is no record of Elizabeth marrying anyone else following the death of Arthur Dracott until she married Frank Allen, and there is no record of the death of a Frank Dracott in the preceding year. We are forced to conclude, therefore, that Elizabeth invented Frank Dracott for her own reasons.

When Elizabeth registered Frederick's birth, she presumably had some idea of who the father was. An unmarried woman registering the birth of her child, would only have a father's name accepted if he was physically present, and acknowledged paternity to the registrar.<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth had represented herself as 'Mrs Darvill' when she registered Alice's birth five years previously as 'Alice Darvill, father William Darvill', and the registrar then accepted her word as a married woman and duly noted her 'husband', William Darvill, as the father. It might have been the whitest of white lies; Elizabeth and William may have had every intention of getting married as soon as things had calmed down after the baby was born. Somehow they never got round to it and the relationship soured. Elizabeth found

herself to be pregnant and gave birth after she had broken up with William Darvill. But the birth had to be registered, and the options open to her were:

1. Leave the father 'unknown' - making her new baby illegitimate.
2. Persuade William Darvill to acknowledge paternity and maintain the sham that they were married.
3. Ask Frank Allen to acknowledge paternity.
4. Invent a fictional husband.

The fact that over five weeks had elapsed between birth and registration suggests that, as with Alice, Elizabeth left it until the last moment to record the birth, quite probably because she was undecided as to what to do.

Option 1 Elizabeth rejected; she didn't want Frederick registered as a bastard. Option 2 she also rejected, either because William Darvill refused to accept paternity or because the breakup had not been happy, and Elizabeth just didn't want him as part of the family (even though he had been registered as Alice's father). Option 3 was the obvious choice. Less than a year later, she was to marry Frank Allen, and the fact that she gave 'Allen' as Frederick's

second name suggests that Elizabeth and Frank must have been close friends at least at the time of Frederick's birth. The least unlikely explanation why Frank Allen was not given as the father seems to be that either their relationship had not been consummated at the time, or that it had been, but Elizabeth and/or Frank did not want it acknowledged. Elizabeth was left, therefore, with option 4. The fact that she was 'Elizabeth Dracott, widow', was, at least, true, even though Mr Dracott had been dead for five years, and she may have had an official letter addressed to her to show the registrar as proof of her name and status. She may also have been by now completely confused as to who was who and who had sired who, and made it up as she went along. In any event, 'Frank Dracott' was the Man who Never Was.<sup>7</sup>

The probable truth is that James Darvill was the father; the relationship had ended after the child was conceived and Elizabeth decided that 'Darvill' should not appear in her baby's name. She had taken up with Frank Allen shortly afterwards, and did not wish to shame him as the father of an illegitimate child. If Frank had been the father, shame or not, Elizabeth would have surely named him as such in the birth registration and Frank

MIDDLESEX EDUCATION COMMITTEE.	
Clifton Road Girls' Council School, SOUTHALL.	
REPORT on <u>Alice Allen</u> Class IV for Term ending <u>March 31<sup>st</sup> 1914</u>	
Position in Class	<u>10<sup>th</sup></u>
Scripture	<u>Good</u>
Reading	<u>Very good</u>
Recitation	<u>Excellent</u>
Writing	<u>Very good</u>
Spelling	<u>Very good</u>
Composition	<u>Good</u>
Arithmetic	<u>Very fair</u>
Drawing	<u>Fairly good</u>
Geography	<u>Very fair</u>
History	<u>Fair</u>
Observation Lessons	<u>Good</u>
Physical Exercises	<u>Good</u>
General Conduct	<u>Good at times.</u>
Cleanliness and Tidiness	<u>Fairly good</u>
No. of Times Absent	<u>22</u>
No. of Times Late	<u>3</u>
General Remarks	<u>M. A. Baker</u> <small>Class Mistress.</small> <small>E. E. I. M. WILSON, Head Mistress.</small>
Parent's Signature	

MIDDLESEX EDUCATION COMMITTEE.	
Featherstone Road Council School, SOUTHALL.	
POSITION IN CLASS 16 <sup>th</sup> OUT OF 5 MIDDLESEX EDUCATION COMMITTEE.	
REPORT on <u>Alice Darvill</u> Standard IV for Term ending <u>Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 1914</u>	
Scripture	<u>V.G.</u>
Reading	<u>G.</u>
Recitation	<u>G.</u>
Writing (including Spelling)	<u>V.G.</u>
Composition	<u>G.</u>
Arithmetic	<u>G.</u>
Drawing	<u>G.</u>
English Grammar	<u>G.</u>
Geography	<u>G.</u>
History	<u>G.</u>
Observation Lessons	<u>G.</u>
Physical Exercises	<u>G.</u>
General Conduct	<u>B.G.</u>
Cleanliness and Tidiness	<u>G.</u>
No. of times Absent	<u>14</u>
No. of times Late	<u>2</u>
General Remarks	<u>J. E. Jubb</u> <small>Class Teacher.</small> <small>G. S. WEST, Head Master</small>

MIDDLESEX EDUCATION COMMITTEE.	
Clifton Road Boys' Council School, SOUTHALL.	
REPORT on <u>Fred Allen</u> Standard II for Term ending <u>July 1914</u>	
Position in Class	<u>32</u>
Scripture	<u>Good</u>
Reading	<u>Weak</u>
Recitation	<u>Fair</u>
Writing	<u>Good</u>
Spelling	<u>Fair</u>
Composition	<u>F. Good</u>
Arithmetic	<u>F. Good</u>
Drawing	<u>Fair</u>
Geography	<u>Fair</u>
History	<u>Very Good</u>
Observation Lessons	<u>Good</u>
Physical Exercises	<u>Good</u>
General Conduct	<u>Very Good</u>
Cleanliness and Tidiness	<u>Very Good</u>
No. of Times Absent	<u>12</u>
No. of Times Late	<u>8</u>
General Remarks	<u>Backward in most subjects</u> <small>W. H. Matthews, Class Master.</small> <small>R. R. Ellis, Head Master.</small>
Parent's Signature	

Fig 4 - School reports for Alice and her brothers which helped sort out who was who. Class Master Mr Matthews' spelling was in need of improvement...

would have acknowledged it. Whoever the real father was, Elizabeth did at least give Frank Allen's Christian name to the person she invented.

Some school reports are able to throw further light on Alice and her brothers. A report for 'Arthur Darvill', class IV, Featherstone Road Council School, Southall, midsummer 1910, had to have been for Arthur Emmanuel (Jack) Dracott, having for some reason adopted the 'Darvill' name (even though by then his mother had been married to Frank Allen for four years).

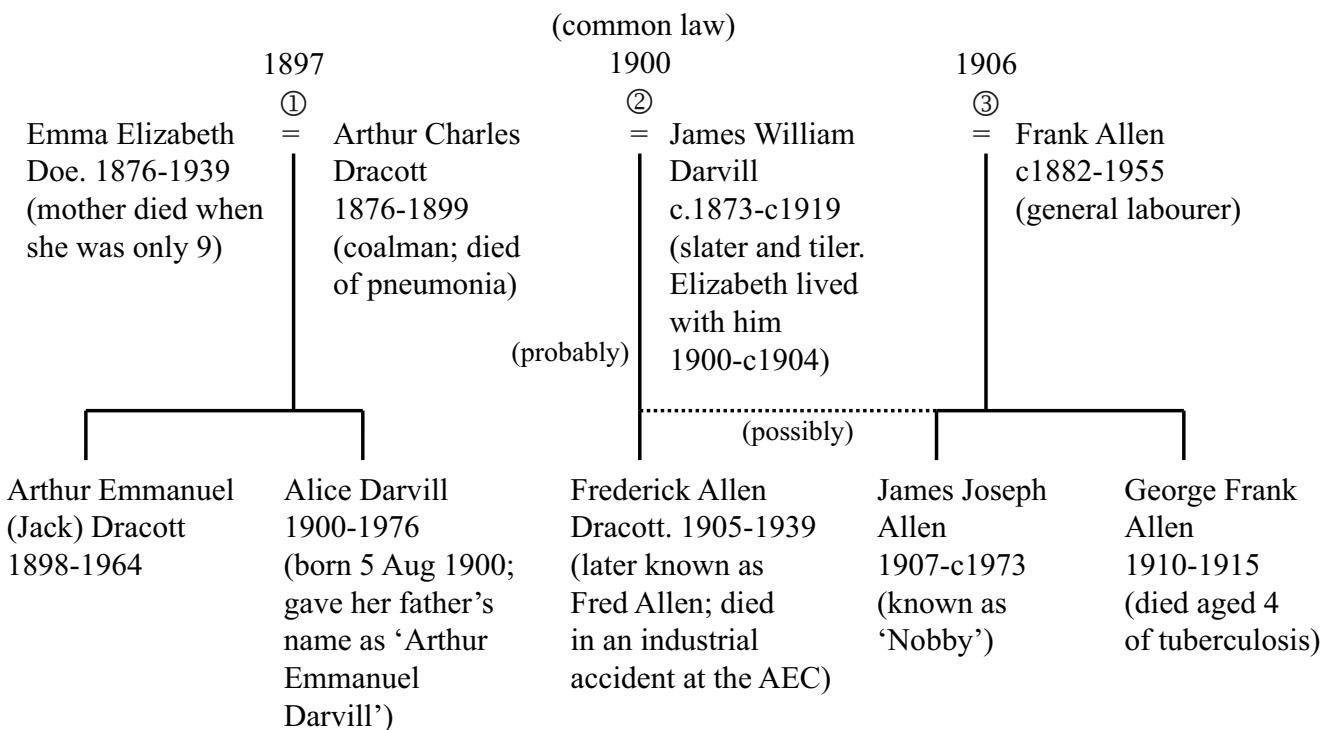
Fred's report from the Clifton Road School, Southall, 1914, records him now just as 'Fred Allen' having dropped the Dracott surname. The class master, Mr W H Matthews, had marked him 32nd in class and 'Backward in most subjects', although one has to question Mr Matthews' competence to judge, since he also noted that Fred's reading ability was 'weak'.

The report for Alice Allen, Clifton Road Girls' Council School, Southall, class IV, March 1914, shows that Alice was now using her stepfather's surname. She was perhaps less than a model pupil; in a twelve-week term she was absent for 22 days and her general conduct was 'Good at times'.

Alice's convoluted family history now seems to have been resolved. She was recorded as 'Alice Darvill' at birth, 'Alice Dracott' in the 1911 census, and 'Alice Allen' at school. Her natural father was Arthur Charles Dracott who died many months before she was born. She had one natural brother, Arthur Emmanuel (Jack) Dracott,<sup>8</sup> and three half-brothers, one probably fathered by James Darvill and two definitely fathered by Frank Allen.

But who then was Arthur Emmanuel Darvill, the man Alice thought was her father? Clearly, he was another Man who Never Was. Alice could have been forgiven for becoming confused by what her mother told her of her various relationships, and who was who naturally and legally; she attached the Christian names of her brother to the surname of her legal father and unintentionally, perhaps, she too invented a non-existent person.

Alice's mother Elizabeth - as she preferred to be known - had a hard life. When she was only nine years old her mother died; her father had spent years away from home serving in the Royal Navy, and what eventually became of him is unknown.<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth had five children by three different fathers; her first husband died probably even before she realized that Alice was on the way, and she



*Fig. 5 - Alice Darvill's Family Tree.*

entered the new century with a two-year-old child, pregnant, and with no bread-winner.

Her youngest son George died tragically young, and during World War I, she had to endure both her husband and eldest son going off to the trenches. In 1939 when Elizabeth was very ill with cancer, Fred Allen had a horrific accident at the AEC in Southall. He was struck by a 32-pound lid which had become detached from a rapidly rotating oil separator.<sup>10</sup> He died an hour later in hospital, and news of his death was kept from Elizabeth who died a few months later.

### Notes

1. I am most grateful to Rose Dracott for generously providing the referenced material relating to Alice and her brothers.
2. Although Alice's mother's name was initially 'Emma Elizabeth', she preferred the name 'Elizabeth'; when she was married in 1906, she was 'Elizabeth Emma' Dracott. Subsequently she dropped the 'Emma' completely and became just Elizabeth.
3. He was Frank Allan when he married Elizabeth Dracott; in the 1911 census he was Frank Allen. Henceforth, the family name was Allen.
4. Elizabeth was as confused about her age as she was about the names of the fathers of her children (and her place of birth - see note 5). Almost certainly, she was born on 4 December 1876, at 257 Waterloo Road, Southwark. When she married Arthur Charles Dracott on 18 April 1897, she gave her age as 21; actually, she was 20. It may be that she inflated her age to 21 to avoid issues of consent; her mother was dead and her father's whereabouts were probably unknown. Her age in the 1901 census is correct, but when she married Frank 'Allan' in March 1906, she declared her age to be 27; actually, she was 29. When the 1911 census was taken on 2 April, her actual age was 34 not 31.
5. This entry is most perplexing, and is almost certainly incorrect. Elizabeth's place of birth as stated in the 1901 census was 'Old Ford, London', although that too is not correct since her birth certificate says she was born in Southwark. Extensive research on her forbears convinces me that the certificate is the right one, see reference 9. However, family tradition has it that Elizabeth was Irish, and had a fiery temper. One Sunday lunchtime when Frank had stayed too long drinking with his pals, it is said that she took his dinner to the pub and threw it at him... There was a well-known Irish community in Southwark, and this suggests a plausible explanation for Elizabeth thinking that she had been born in Ireland. Her mother died when Elizabeth was only 9, and it seems possible that the local community took her in and looked after her; she came to believe that she really was Irish (although she gave her birthplace as London in the 1901 census). When she married for the first time, the witnesses to the wedding were Joseph Newell and Annie Mahoney, both Irish names.
6. Michael Gandy, private communication.
7. It is interesting to note that Elizabeth's mother, Emma Papal, on her marriage certificate, declared her own father to have been David Papal (or Paples), who had been her mother's husband, but who had been dead for five years when Emma was born.
8. Subsequent to the initial draft of this account, I learned that Alice had confided to my wife's sister that only one of her siblings was a full brother.
9. An account of Elizabeth's antecedents is given in *Geography as Genealogy*, Wiltshire Family History Society Journal, July 2012; a downloadable copy can be found here: [www.mirlibooks.com/geography-as-genealogy.html](http://www.mirlibooks.com/geography-as-genealogy.html)
10. *The Middlesex County Times*, Saturday 6 May 1939, p.13.

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**LONDON ARCHIVES, LONDON FAMILIES**  
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