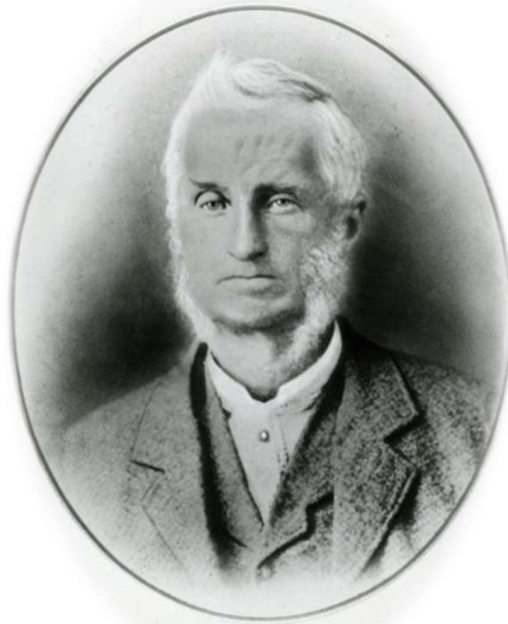


Joseph Davis, from Lidham Hill to Lydham Hall

by Janette Pelosi



An entry to the Bayside Council's Ron
Rathbone Local History Competition 2023.

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Joseph Davis (digital file name: davis_j_002). *Image courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection.*

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Lastly thanks to my husband Gus for his valued encouragement whilst I was researching and writing this local history.

Any errors in this work are entirely my own.

Janette Pelosi, July 2023.

Abbreviations

NSWBDM = NSW Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages

CSIL = Colonial Secretary's In Letter

HLRV = Historical Land Records Viewer

MHNSW StAC = Museums of History NSW, State Archives Collection,
<https://mhnsw.au/collections/state-archives-collection/>

NSW = New South Wales

NSW LRS = New South Wales Land Registry Services

A note on newspaper references

Australia is fortunate to have the National Library of Australia's *Trove Digitised Newspapers and More*, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/>. To reduce the size of newspaper and gazette citations I have chosen to use the number for the article in the footnotes. The full reference can be found by adding the text "http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article" to the number in the footnote, such as '239273811' to find the exact article, such as <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article239273811>. I acknowledge that many of the references cited are from newspapers digitised by the State Library of New South Wales.

Preface

The property now known as Lydham Hall is located at 18 Lydham Avenue, Rockdale NSW 2216. It is in the present Bayside Council area. The property is listed on the New South Wales State Heritage Register Listing 00477 (*NSW Government Gazette* No.136, 29 August 1986)¹, as Heritage Item ID 5045427; with the Bayside Council local listing as Heritage Item ID 2330219.

My intention in this Ron Rathbone Competition entry is to question what has been written before about Joseph Davis and his family, and where possible to provide source citations and to provide new evidence of the Davis family and their involvement in the history of the St George District in southern Sydney. Through doing so I intend to throw new light on the history of the family of Joseph Davis as well as on the history of the St George District.

Janette Pelosi

¹ 'HERITAGE ACT 1977', *Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales*, No. 136, 29 August 1986, p. 4237 (231300034).

Introduction

Joseph Davis's life began in Sussex and continued in New South Wales with most of it lived in the Sydney suburbs of Newtown, Bexley and Arncliffe. While the story of Joseph Davis has been told many times there is so much more to learn about the man, his family and his butchery business.

Chapter 1 will look at the story of Joseph Davis as told in the twentieth century. The story began with local historians Philip Geeves and was continued by Gifford Eardley and Ron Rathbone. Their stories have been told and retold many times and form the basis of what is known of Joseph Davis and his times.

Chapter 2 explores the Davis family from Sussex, of which Joseph Davis was a part. He came from a very large family, many of whom also migrated to New South Wales. The chapter also explains the origin of the name of the property today known as Lydham Hall.

Chapter 3 takes up the story of Joseph Davis's arrival and his work as a butcher at Newtown.

Chapter 4 explores the family of Joseph Davis and his wife Ellen Turner. It briefly provides some of Ellen's family background. It also documents the births, marriages and deaths and other events in the life of their family up to 1889 when Joseph Davis passed away.

Chapter 5 looks into some questions relating to Joseph Davis's land in the St George District. It covers his purchase of the land at Bexley, precisely locates the site of his slaughtering business and glimpses the beginning of the sale of the Lydham Hill Estate.

Chapter 6 focuses on the house at Bexley and investigates who were its builders, when it was likely to have been built, and looks at how a piece of music appears to be the key to when it was occupied by the Davis family.

Along the way it is hoped we may learn much more of the life of Joseph Davis, his family, his butchery business, his home Lydham Hall, and the history of the St George District of Sydney.

Chapter 1: The Story So Far

Joseph Davis was a significant figure in the early history of the St George District of Sydney, which comprises the former council areas of Rockdale, Kogarah, Bexley, and Hurstville. Joseph Davis is known today as the original owner of the historic villa Lydham Hall located in the Bayside Council area. This historic home was purchased by the then Rockdale Municipal Council in 1970 and opened to the public as a museum in 1971 with the ongoing support of the St George Historical Society.²

Most of what is known about Joseph and the Davis family was first recorded in the 1950s by prominent historian Philip Geeves. While Geeves was well-known as an historian with extensive research skills and his promotion of local and family history on radio prompted many to start exploring their own history, myself included, he wrote in an era when it was not usual to reveal sources to the general reader using extensive citations and bibliographies.³ His work was expanded on by local historians, principally Gifford Eardley in the 1970s and in the 1980s by Ron Rathbone, a mayor of both Bexley Council and of Rockdale Council and a local history enthusiast. Information from the works of these local historians has been relied upon and regularly repeated up to the twenty-first century. With the exception of the works of local history researcher Olga Sedneva, there have been few attempts since the 1980s to question or challenge what has been written before.

By using documented historical sources, it is possible to provide a more detailed and more accurate picture of Joseph Davis. Joseph Davis's wife and family cannot be understood without knowing the context of their wider families. As a committed genealogist, the value of studying the family of this prominent local man lies in providing context to his life and to the stories of his family and their descendants. By documenting not just the life of Joseph Davis but placing his life into that of his wider family I hope to provide fresh insights into the history of his home then known as Lidham Hill, and now known as Lydham Hall, and in so doing to provide fresh insights into the man Joseph Davis and greater understanding about the early history of the St George District.

² Olga Sedneva, *Lydham Hall. Beyond the Bricks and Mortar: From Colonial Times to 2000* / Olga Sedneva; editor Wesley Fairhall. Peakhurst, NSW: Olga Sedneva, 2021. Entry to the 2021 Ron Rathbone Local History Competition, pp. 17-18, 26.

³ Philip Geeves, *Local History in Australia: A Guide for Beginners*. 2nd (rev.) ed. Sydney, Royal Australian Historical Society, 1971 (1980 printing), p. 38.

Noted historian Philip Geeves introduced Joseph Davis to his readers as an early settler of Bexley:

The second settler was Joseph Davis, who has received passing mention in a previous chapter. When the greater part of Chandler's grant was bought in 1859 by William Wolfen, Joseph Davis owned 67 acres of the original land. On it he built his home "Lydham", a substantial colonial mansion complete with servants' quarters, coachhouse and numerous outbuildings. This fine old stone home is still standing in Lydham Avenue, *Bexley* [1954] Rockdale [1986], now shorn of its extensive estate, but still preserving its original name, its mellow serenity and its glorious vista of Botany Bay from one of the highest points on the ridge. Joseph Davis, a native of Brede, Sussex, emigrated to Sydney and became a prosperous butcher at King Street, Newtown. "Lydham" was built from stone quarried on the site and once stood in magnificent garden surrounds fronting Forest Road with a coach entrance from the highway. The doors, architraves and all the interior fittings of the house were originally of hand-polished cedar; the fireplaces were of imported Carrara marble.

Geeves goes on to say that,

Davis used part of his estate in connexion with his butchering business. Cattle, brought overland by drovers from Homebush via Kingsgrove were driven along the unfenced line of Stoney Creek Road thence by Forest Road to Davis' resting paddocks on the low ground in the rear of "Lydham", between the present Herbert Street and Clarence Road. In these paddocks the bullocks were fattened, ample water being available in large waterhole near what is now the corner of Herbert and Tyrrell Streets. From here the cattle were taken to Davis' Arncliffe slaughteryard, near the site then known as Earl Park.

And further,

Joseph Davis was renowned as a judge of beef. He became paralysed from lifting a side of beef and thereafter, whenever it was necessary for him to travel, he rode in a specially converted Victoria, which allowed him to recline. He died on 25th [sic] January 1889, aged 63 years. After his death his widow moved to Newtown and "Lydham", together with the Lydham Hill Estate - which had meanwhile been subdivided - passed out of the family. Frederick

and Herbert Streets are named for two of Davis' sons and *I am informed* [1954] that Clarence Road is another family relic.⁴

So began the telling of the story of Joseph Davis of Lydham Hall.

Philip Geeves in 1954 did not record a date for Lydham Hall, which was then still in private ownership.

The Davis story was now taken up by Gifford Eardley who contributed to the St George Historical Society's 1970 publication *Our Heritage in Stone*. Gifford Eardley wrote of Lydham Hall, Lydham Avenue, Bexley:

A fascinating stone cottage, of ornate design, was built about 1855 [sic] by Joseph Davis, a wholesale and retail butcher with business premises at King Street, Newtown, then the centre of a fashionable and popular residential suburb. The cottage, situated on Lydham Hill, was named "Lydham Hall" and confronted the winding highway known as Forest Road. It appears to have been built primarily as a homestead for an extensive cattle pasturage of 67 acres which extended eastwards from the alignment of the Forest Road to the vicinity of the present Illawarra Railway at Banksia, involving the greater part of the natural amphitheatre formed by the headwaters of Spring Creek. Cattle were driven overland to this rendezvous from the Homebush sale yards [sic, yards], travelling by devious routes to reach the Flat Rock Crossing of Wolli Creek. After resting and fattening the beasts made their final journey to Davis's slaughter yards at Arncliffe, located on the western side of the railway opposite to the intersection of Almond Street with Wollongong Road, the paddock later being incorporated in the sports ground known as Earl Park, and now an industrial area of no great merit. Here the cattle were killed and the meat distributed by cutting carts and other horse-drawn vehicles to all parts of Sydneytown.

⁴ Philip Geeves and James Jervis, *Rockdale, Its Beginning and Development*, The Municipal Council of Rockdale, 1954, pp. 60-61. Word in italics above only appear in the 1954 edition; Philip Geeves and James Jervis, *Rockdale, Its Beginning and Development*, Council of the Municipality of Rockdale, Revised 1986 by Alderman R. W. Rathbone, pp. 57-58. Rathbone in his Foreword, p. vii, informs us that James Jervis wrote the last 8 chapters of the 1954 edition so the first 23 chapters were written by Geeves himself. Joseph Davis died on 24 January 1889, not the 25th as will be seen. Geeves thanks many prominent locals, including those with surnames such as Beehag, Geeves, Napper, Richardson, Wennholm and Tidswell plus G.H. Eardley in his 1954 Foreword (p. vii).

“Lyndam Hall” [sic, Lydham Hall] was approached from Forest Road by a drive which terminated in front of the house in a circular fashion. The stone for its walls was quarried on the estate and the internal fittings were of polished cedar. Joseph Davis, who hailed from Sussex, eventually became partially paralysed and was forced to make his visiting rounds in a small four-wheeled carriage drawn by a very quiet horse. He died in January, 1889, at the age of sixty three. The “Lydham Hill” estate was subdivided into housing allotments about this period, and a new roadway, first called Joseph Street, but later Lydham Avenue, came into being, its alignment running within a few feet of the front verandah of the fine old cottage, which is still in an excellent state of preservation, although bereft of its former large estate.

Eardley’s sketch of “Lydham” (1855) Lydham Ave Bexley’ accompanied the text.⁵

In its report on the year ended 28 February 1973 the Lydham Hall Management Committee reported that:

During the year just concluded considerable research has been undertaken, both in England and Australia, into the life and family of Joseph Davis, the builder of Lydham Hall. The Committee would like to place on record its appreciation to Mrs. Victoria Hindmarsh, granddaughter of Joseph Davis, for her most willing co-operation and valuable help in this regard.⁶

This family research was not published in subsequent issues of the *St George Historical Society Bulletin*.

In the *St George Historical Society Bulletin* May 1980 Ron Rathbone reported for the Lydham Hall Local Committee on 24 March 1980 stating,

Lydham Hall stands on portion of the original Bexley land grant. It has always been assumed that information on the building supplied by the previous owners had been correctly researched. This is not the case. Lydham Hall could not possibly have been built in 1855 as an elaborate plaque on the front of the building proclaims as Joseph Davis did not buy the land until November 1859. It was not built (as previously claimed) by a Dutch stonemason named James Benson but by a Swedish stonemason named Sven Bengtson and his son

⁵ Gifford Eardley, *Our Heritage in Stone*, [n.p], St George Historical Society (Book No. 5), p.15. The Foreword by Alderman R.W. Rathbone is dated May, 1970.

⁶ *St George Historical Society Bulletin*, May 1973.

Solomon Peter Benson whose granddaughter is still living at Casula. Action is in hand to correct these facts.⁷

Thus Ron Rathbone clearly understood that as more information becomes available our knowledge of history may change.

Rathbone's *History of Bexley* then revised the date of Lydham Hall to 1860, in line with the purchase date being November 1859, with the story told principally based on information provided by Joseph Davis's granddaughter 'Mrs. V. Hindmarsh' who is acknowledged in the book. I have been able to identify her as Mrs Victoria Pitts Hindmarsh (1901-1981), daughter of Joseph Davis's son Joseph Davis.⁸

Rathbone wrote of Joseph Davis in his 1980 *History of Bexley*:

Joseph Davis was cast in a somewhat different mould. Born in the village of Brede near Hastings in the County of Sussex in 1827 [sic], Davis migrated to Australia with his brothers William Lovel and Thomas and in 1852 [sic] married a local girl, Ellen Turner.

He set up business in the fashionable suburb of Newtown first as a publican and then as a butcher.

The business flourished and soon Davis was buying, fattening and slaughtering his own stock. This led him to purchase the property at Bexley where he rested and fattened his cattle before slaughtering them at Arncliffe. He was a renowned judge of beef and other livestock.

There were four sons and three daughters of the marriage. The youngest, a cripple, died at the age of 15 and was buried in the graveyard of St. George's Church at Hurstville.

Davis, himself, also became incapacitated in later life when he slipped on the carcass of a newly-killed steer, the horns of which penetrated his side. Thereafter he always dragged his right foot and was forced to travel about in a reclining position in a specially converted "Victoria".

Davis was, by nature, a retiring man, dedicated to his children and devoted to his church. It was his wife who was the business brains of the family.

In 1860 Davis erected on his Bexley property a fine sandstone mansion with extensive outbuildings which he called "Lydham". It

⁷ *St George Historical Society Bulletin*, May 1980.

⁸ NSWBDM Birth Index 1901/5835 Victoria P Davis and Death Index 202051/1981 Victoria P Hindmarsh.

was built from materials selected on the site and still stands on the highest point of land between the Cooks and Georges rivers where it commands a magnificent view out over Botany Bay.

When the house was completed, a special piece of music – “The Lydham Hill Mazurka”, was composed for the occasion.⁹

Following his account of the sale of the “Ocean View” Estate on Saturday 25 October 1884 following quickly after the opening of the Illawarra Railway Line to Hurstville on 15 October 1884, Rathbone also writes about the sale of the “Lydham Hill” Estate on 1 November 1884:

The following Saturday it was Joseph Davis’s turn to test the market.

On 1st November, 1884, 45 acres containing 133 blocks on the “Lydham Hill” Estate were put to auction.

“Lydham Hill” was described as “on the elevated slope overlooking Rockdale Station commanding most lovely views both of land and water scapes”.

Again, there was free transport and free refreshments.

Again, hundreds streamed out to enjoy the beneficence of nature and the land development companies and again, very few bought.

In the process, however, Frederick Street, Herbert Street and Stanley Street, named after two of Davis’s sons and his grandson, made their appearance on the map, together with Bay Street, which was later renamed Watkin Street.¹⁰

Rathbone, especially, must be acknowledged for his efforts to document the history of the Bexley area, including the history of Joseph Davis and Lydham Hall. His legacy lives on in the Bayside Council’s Ron Rathbone Local History Competition.

These three writers, Geeves, Eardley and Rathbone, captured what was known of the Joseph Davis’s family and Lydham Hall between 1954 and 1980 and for this we should be thankful. What they wrote has since been repeated by many other writers and researchers.¹¹ We will now explore

⁹ Rathbone, R.W., *History of Bexley* (The Author, 1980, unpaginated), q.v. “JOSEPH DAVIS”.

¹⁰ Rathbone, R.W., *History of Bexley* (The Author, 1980, unpaginated), q.v. “JOSEPH DAVIS TRIES HIS LUCK”.

¹¹ For example, Joan Lawrence, *Pictorial Memories St George: Rockdale, Kogarah, Hurstville*. Crows Nest, N.S.W., Kingsclear Books, 1996, p. 28.

some of the documentary evidence available in the twenty-first century about Joseph Davis himself and his large family and see what new light this may shed on the life of Joseph Davis and his family, and the history of the St George District including Bexley, Arncliffe and, especially, Lydham Hall.

Chapter 2 The Davis family from Sussex to New South Wales

When Joseph Davis, Esq., died 'at his residence Lidham-hill, Bexley', on 24 January 1889, his death notice recorded that he was 'late of King-street, Newtown, and native of Brede, Sussex, England, in his 63rd year'.¹² So it is to Sussex we must go to seek the origins of the Davis family.

The county of Sussex, in the south of England, includes the major towns of Rye and Brighton and the historic site of the Battle of Hastings. In 1841 over 41% of the population were involved in agricultural work.¹³ It also includes the river Brede and the Brede valley in East Sussex, which includes the villages of Guestling, Hellingly and Brede, places we will encounter in the Davis family's story.¹⁴

Sussex with three generations of Joseph Davis

Joseph Davis was baptised on 11 May 1826 in the parish of Brede, Sussex. His parents were Joseph and Jane Davis (given in the baptismal record as 'Davies'). His father Joseph Davis's occupation was recorded as a victualler. On the same day Joseph's elder brother George Davis was also baptised.¹⁵

Joseph Davis of Bexley had a father called Joseph Davis (also recorded as Joseph John Davis) and also a grandfather called Joseph Davis. His grandfather died in 1851:

at Sedddlescomb, in the 90th year of his age, Mr Joseph Davis, who for many years was engaged as a considerable farmer and grazier at Lidham-hill farm, Guestling, near Hastings, Sussex.¹⁶

This Joseph Davis (grandfather of Joseph Davis of Bexley) was born on 7 August 1765 and he was the son of John Brewer Davis and Anne Davis

¹² *Sydney Morning Herald* (hereafter *SMH*), 25 January 1889, p.1 (death notice) (13711637).

¹³ Wikipedia, q.v. History of Sussex, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Sussex (accessed 11 July 2023).

¹⁴ Wikipedia, q.v. Brede, East Sussex, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brede,_East_Sussex (accessed 11 July 2023).

¹⁵ East Sussex Record Office, Brighton, England; Sussex Parish Registers, 1826, Reference Number: PAR 253/1/2/1. (via Ancestry Institution East Sussex, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1920).

¹⁶ *Sussex Advertiser* (Lewes, Sussex, England), 8 April 1851, p.7 (via Findmypast.com).

(nee Colbran).¹⁷ In the 1841 English Census he was shown as aged 79 and residing at Seddlescomb.¹⁸ This Joseph Davis was closely linked with a Sussex place called Lidham-hill farm. Perhaps that placename sounds familiar today.

This Joseph Davis (grandfather of Joseph of Bexley) married Dinah Lovell (1766-1849) at Westfield, Sussex, on 10 December 1786.¹⁹ Joseph Davis (1765-1851) and Dinah became the parents of Joseph Davis (father of Joseph Davis of Bexley). Dinah Davis died, aged 83, in Seddlescomb, Sussex, and was buried at Guestling, Sussex, on 22 February 1849.²⁰

Joseph Davis (father of Joseph Davis of Bexley), died in 1872 and his death was reported in the Sydney newspapers:

DEATHS. On the 13th May at his residence, Windmill-hill, Herstmonceux, Sussex, Joseph Davis, in the 79th year of his age, leaving a widow and ten in family eight of whom are in this colony) to mourn their loss.²¹

It must have been hard for his family in the colony of New South Wales to receive this sad news of their father's death and be so far from their family in Sussex.

Lidham Hill

Lidham Hill is located at North Lane, Guestling and is listed on the National Heritage List for England.²² Lidham Hill is described as:

L-shaped house. The south wing is C17, altered and refaced with stucco in the early C19. Stringcourse. The central window-bay

¹⁷ Joseph Davis (1765-1851) WikiTree FREE Family Tree, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Davis-83476> (accessed 22 June 2023) (Profile manager: Jackie Rowbotham).

¹⁸ 1841 English Census for Sussex, England, The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1841. 1841 England Census Class HO107, Registration District Battle, Sub-registration district Ewhurst, Piece 1109, Book 12, Folio 10, Page number 12 (via AncestryInstitution.com.au).

¹⁹ Dinah (Lovell) Davis (1766-1849) WikiTree FREE Family Tree, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Lovell-3386> (accessed 22 June 2023) (Profile manager Jackie Rowbotham).

²⁰ Dinah (Lovell) Davis (1766-1849) WikiTree FREE Family Tree, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Lovell-3386> (accessed 22 June 2023) (Profile manager Jackie Rowbotham).

²¹ *Evening News* (Sydney), 6 July 1872, p. 4 (114738835).

²² Historic England, Lidham Hill, North Lane (List Entry Number 1233974) <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1233974> (accessed 16 July 2023).

projects with a gable over having scalloped barge-boards. Similarly gabled porch below. Tiled roof. Casement windows. Two storeys. Three windows. C18 L-wing at the back, red brick, three windows, sash windows with glazing bars.²³

Another listed building is Lower Lidham Hill Farmhouse which is also located at North Lane, Guestling. It is described as:

C17 timber-framed building, refaced with red brick on ground floor and tile-hung above. Slate roof. Casement windows. Modern porch with hipped roof. Two parallel ranges. Two storeys. Three windows.²⁴

Both are in the district of Rother, county of East Sussex and Parish of Guestling and are not far from present-day Doleham Railway Station.

The property known as Great Lidham Hill House was occupied by a Mr John Davis in 1798.²⁵ This Mr John Davis may be related to John Brewer Davis, father of Joseph Davis (1765-1851), grandfather of Joseph Davis (1794-1872) of Sussex, and the great-grandfather of Joseph Davis of Bexley. What appears certain, once we know about Joseph Davis's family in Sussex, is that Joseph Davis of Bexley would have been well acquainted with the area of this Lidham Hill in Sussex.

Please refer to the following charts for the Sussex family of Joseph Davis.

²³ Historic England website, Lidham Hill Guestling Description, TQ 81 NW Guestling North Lane, <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101233974-lidham-hill-guestling> (accessed 19 July 2023).

²⁴ Historic England, Lower Lidham Hill Farmhouse, North Lane (List Entry Number 1234092), <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1234092> (accessed 16 July 2023).

²⁵ Sussex Record Society website, Online Resources, <https://www.sussexrecordsociety.org/dbs/jf/> Jon Farrant Picture Database, q.v. Places – Guestling: 'Guestling by anon. Buxted estate surveyor, Guestling Great Lidham Hill House, occ. Mr. Jn Davis, with plan 1798 (Reference ACC 3712, f.22 [C]). John Davis also occupied Little Maxfield House in 1798 (Reference ACC 3712, f.22 [D]). These pictures are held by the East Sussex Record Office, The Keep, Woollards Way, Brighton.

Joseph John Davis of Sussex's descent

Compiled by Janette Pelosi, 2023

John Brewer DAVIS
 b. 1738
 Unknown SSX ENG
 d. 1788
 Unknown SSX ENG

Anne COLBRAN
 b. Unknown
 Unknown SSX ENG
 m. Unknown
 Unknown SSX ENG
 d. Unknown
 Unknown SSX ENG

Key
 b. birth
 bur. buried
 d. death
 ENG England
 m. marriage
 SSX Sussex

Joseph DAVIS
 b. 7 Aug 1765
 Guestling SSX ENG
 d. Mar 1851
 Seddlescombe SSX ENG
 Late of Lidham Hill Guestling
 bur. 26 Mar 1851
 Guestling SSX ENG

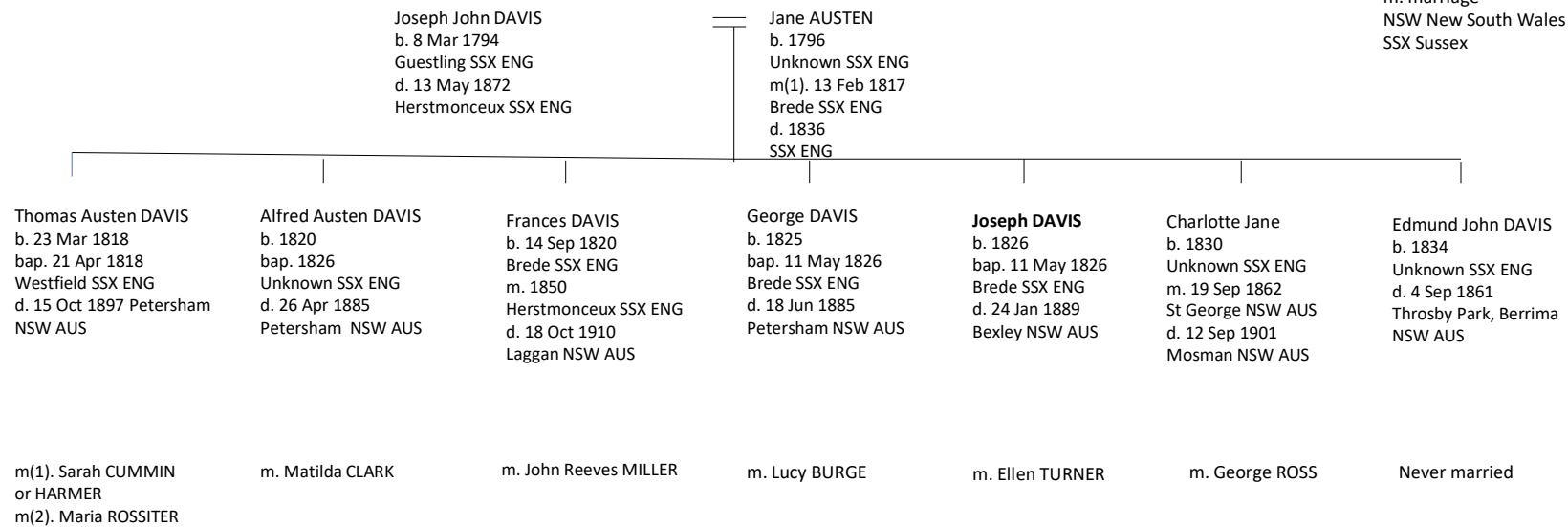
Dinah LOVELL
 b. Unknown
 Unknown SSX ENG
 m. 10 Dec 1786
 Westfield SSX ENG
 d. Unknown
 Unknown SSX ENG

Joseph John DAVIS
 b. 8 Mar 1794
 Guestling SSX ENG
 d. 13 May 1872
 Herstmonceux SSX ENG

Joseph Davis of Sussex's 1st family

Compiled by Janette Pelosi, 2023

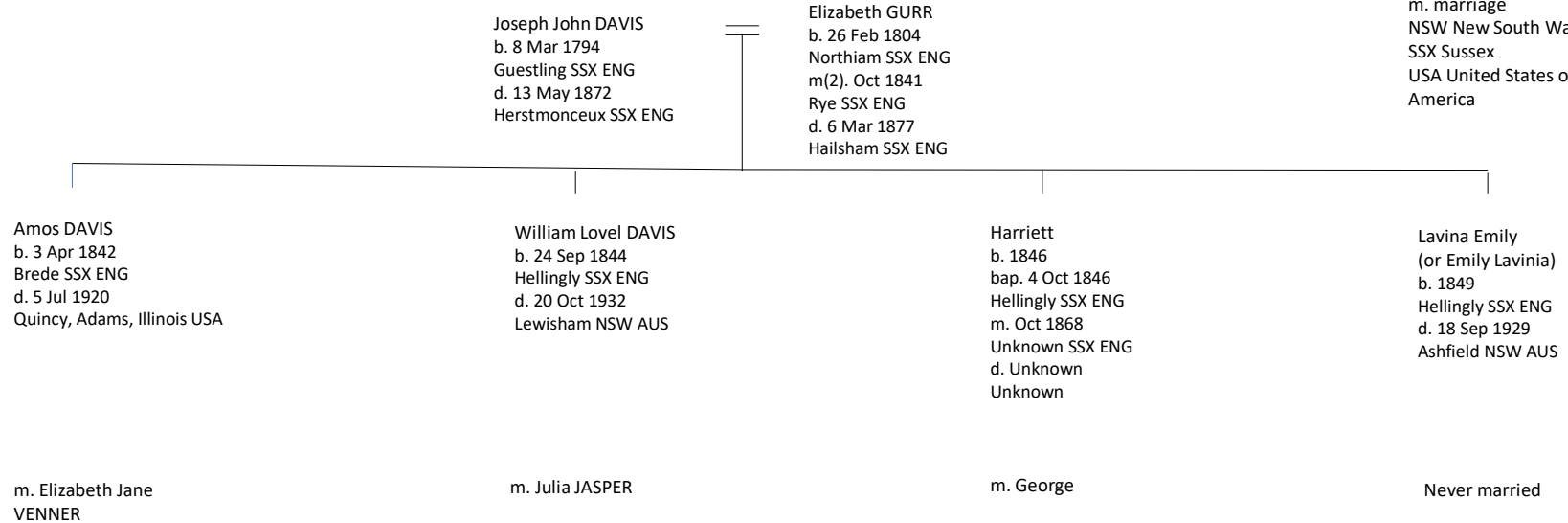
Key
 AUS Australia
 b. birth
 bap. Baptism
 d. Death
 ENG England
 m. marriage
 NSW New South Wales
 SSX Sussex



Joseph Davis of Sussex's 2nd family

Compiled by Janette Pelosi, 2023

Key
 AUS Australia
 b. birth
 bap. Baptism
 d. Death
 ENG England
 m. marriage
 NSW New South Wales
 SSX Sussex
 USA United States of
 America



Joseph Davis (1794-1872) and his families

Joseph Davis (father of Joseph Davis of Bexley) had a large family, principally due to having had two wives and hence two related Davis families. This Joseph Davis was born on 8 March 1794 at Guestling, Sussex.²⁶ His first wife was Jane Austen, daughter of John Austen, and she was born in 1796. Together they had five sons and two daughters.²⁷ After Jane Davis (nee Austen) died in 1836 Joseph Davis (father of Joseph Davis of Bexley) in October 1841 married a second time to widow Elizabeth Gurr, who was born on 26 February 1804 at Northiam Sussex and she died on 6 March 1877 at Hailsham Sussex.²⁸ From this marriage Joseph and Elizabeth had two sons and two daughters. Elizabeth Gurr (1804-1877) had previously been married to John Inman (1704-1839) and they had had two sons and four daughters.²⁹ Children from all three of these Davis and Inman marriages would emigrate to New South Wales and their names will be found on the records relating to the Davis family.

Joseph Davis (1794-1872) and his first wife Jane Austen (1796-1836), daughter of John Austen married on 13 February 1817 at Brede, Sussex.³⁰ Their firstborn child was Thomas Austen Davis who was born on 23 March 1818 in Sussex and baptised 21 April 1818 at Westfield, Sussex.³¹ Next

²⁶ Joseph Davis (1794-1872) WikiTree FREE Family Tree, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Davis-83475> (accessed 22 June 2023) (Profile manager Jackie Rowbotham).

²⁷ Information from several Ancestry trees on Ancestry Institution has been used relating to the Davis family of Sussex and Sydney.

²⁸ Ancestry Institution. Ancestry Trees: Una Pauline Bobby and Mark Raskin's Family Trees (q.v. Elizabeth Gurr). Note that the youngest son, Thomas Inman (1838-1907) died at his residence "Westfield", Rosedale Street, Petersham on 11 October 1907 (SMH, 12 Oct 1907, p. 12 (article 14872615) and NSWBDM Death Index 1907/12603 Thomas Inman). His son was Charles Thomas Inman (NSWBDM Death Index 1943/22210 Charles Thomas Inman).

²⁹ Ancestry Institution. Ancestry Trees: Una Pauline Bobby and Mark Raskin's Family Trees (q.v. Elizabeth Gurr). Note that the youngest son, Thomas Inman (1838-1907) died at his residence "Westfield", Rosedale Street, Petersham on 11 October 1907 (SMH, 12 Oct 1907, p. 12 (article 14872615) and NSWBDM Index 1907/12603). His son was Charles Thomas Inman (NSWBDM Death Index 1943/22210).

³⁰ East Sussex Record Office, Brighton, England; Sussex Parish Registers; Reference No. PAR 253/1/3/1 (Ancestry Institution Image PAR_253-1-3-1_011).

³¹ Ancestry.com. *East Sussex, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1920* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2022. Original Data: *Church of England Parish Registers*. Brighton, East Sussex, England: East Sussex and Brighton and Hove

was Alfred Davis (sometimes recorded as Alfred Austen Davis) who was probably born in 1820. Their third child and first daughter Frances Davis was born on 14 September 1820 at Brede, Sussex. Their fourth child, George Davis was also born at Brede, Sussex in 1825.³² Next was Joseph Davis, the main protagonist in this history who was born in 1826 in Brede, Sussex. His younger sister Charlotte Jane Davis was born in 1830 with his younger brother Edmund John Davis born in 1834. Every one of these brothers and sisters would eventually settle in Australia.

From at least 1835 to 1839 Joseph Davis (father of Joseph Davis of Bexley) was a publican or victualler living in Brede with his family from his first marriage. Each year the Trustees of the Turnpike Road from Vinehall to Rye would hold their meetings at the dwelling house 'of Joseph Davis, the sign of the Broad Oak in Brede'.³³

In the English 1841 census Joseph Davis (the son), now aged 14, was living in the parish of Brede at Canster Farm with John Austen, aged 45, a farmer and Frances Austen, aged 70. Also living there was his older sister Frances Davis, aged 20.³⁴

Joseph Davis (1794-1872) remarried in October 1841 to Elizabeth Gurr. From this marriage there were another four children. Their first son was Amos Davis born on 3 April 1842 in Sussex. Next was William Lovell (often spelled as Lovel) Davis who was born on 24 September 1844 in Hellingly, Sussex and baptised on 10 November 1844 at Hellingly. His father's occupation was given as the Governor of the Union Workhouse.³⁵ Their first daughter was Harriett Davis, born in 1846 at Hellingly and baptised there on 4 October 1846 with her father's occupation again shown as the Governor of the Union House.³⁶ She married in 1868 at

Record Office. East Sussex Record Office; Brighton, England; *Sussex Parish Registers*; Reference Number: PAR 504/1/2/1.

³² NSWBDM Death Transcription 1894/11224 George Davis (George died aged 69 in 1894 so was born in 1825.)

³³ *Sussex Advertiser* (Lewes, Sussex, England), *Sussex Advertiser* (Lewes, Sussex, England), 8 June 1835; *Sussex Advertiser* (Lewes, Sussex, England), 18 June 1838, p. 1; *Sussex Advertiser* (Lewes, Sussex, England), 4 February 1839, (unpaginated) (via Newspaper Collection on Findmypast.com.au).

³⁴ Census England and Wales, 1841 Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1841. 1841 England Census Class HO107, Piece 1106; Book: 7 Civil Parish Brede County Sussex Enumeration District 3 Folio 32 page 10 (via Ancestry Institution).

³⁵ East Sussex Record Office, Brighton, England; *Sussex Parish Registers*; Reference No. PAR 375/1/2/2 (via Ancestry Institution).

³⁶ East Sussex Record Office, Brighton, England; *Sussex Parish Registers*; Reference No. PAR 375/1/2/2 (via Ancestry Institution).

Hastings, Sussex to a man called George.³⁷ The final child born in 1849 at Brede, Sussex, was Emily Lavinia Davis (also recorded as Lavina Emily Davis).

In the 1851 Census Joseph Davis (1794-1872) was residing at Hellingly in the Hailsham registration district and was the head of the household. He was the Master of the Union Work House and his wife was the Madam of the Workhouse. Joseph, who had been born at Guestling in Sussex, was aged 57 and his second wife Elizabeth, who had been born at Northiam in Sussex, was aged 47. Their children were Amos (9), William L Davis (7), Harriett Davis (5) and Lavina L [sic] Davis (2). Amos had been born at Brede but the younger children were all born at Hellingly.³⁸

Of these children from the second marriage of Joseph Davis, Amos Davis married Elizabeth Jane Venner on 6 October 1862 at Herstmonceux, Sussex, before emigrating to Quincy, Adams, Illinois, in the United States of America. William Lovell Davis would emigrate to New South Wales and Emily Lavinia Davis would also emigrate to New South Wales. Perhaps it was Harriett Davis who stayed in Sussex to provide support to her parents as they aged. William Lovell Davis, especially, would play a prominent part in the life of his half-brother, Joseph Davis of Lidham-hill, Bexley.

Joseph Davis's Brothers and Sisters in New South Wales

So as not to detract too much from the story of Joseph Davis of Lydham Hall, some of their stories will be told here.

Alfred Davis arrived in the colony of New South Wales in 1842.³⁹ His father Joseph Davis's occupation was listed as a 'gentleman'. He had married, aged 22, to Matilda Clark, in London, England.⁴⁰ Alfred's death notice recorded:

DAVIS. —April 26, at his residence, Brook Lodge,⁴¹ Denison-road, Petersham, Alfred Davis, second eldest son of the late Joseph Davis,

³⁷ England & Wales Civil Registration Marriages Index 1837-1915. Oct-Nov-Dec Quarter Vol 2b page 66 (via Ancestry Institution). There are two Georges on the same page: George Foster Creed and George William Hide. It is not yet known which of these she married.

³⁸ Census England and Wales, 1851 Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1851. Home Office 107. Piece 1638 Folio 219 Page number 25. (via Ancestry Institution).

³⁹ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1885/3612 Alfred Davis.

⁴⁰ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1885/3612 Alfred Davis.

⁴¹ Matt Bell, Brook Lodge estate in Dulwich Hill set to break property records at auction (28 July 2021), Realestate.com.au, <https://www.realestate.com.au/news/brook-lodge-estate-in-dulwich-hill-tipped-to-break-property-records-at-auction/> (accessed 16 July 2023).

of Hurstmonceau [sic], Sussex, England, leaving a sorrowing wife, four daughters, and six sons to mourn his loss. Home papers please copy.⁴²

Note that notices from newspapers from the colonies were often copied by those back in England. At the time of his death on 26 April 1885 Alfred's children were Alfred, Edmund, Thomas, Joseph, Jane, Albert, Nora, Matilda, Lucy, Harry, with a further two males and one female deceased.⁴³

Joseph Davis's sister Frances Davis was born at Brede, Sussex, on 14 September 1829. She married John Reeves Miller, also born at Brede, Sussex, on 26 January 1826. By a quirk of fate John Reeves Miller had been baptised on 5 May 1826 at the same church at Brede as Joseph Davis and his baptism appears immediately above that of Joseph Davis. John Reeves Miller was recorded as 'natural son' of Mary Miller of Brede, whose occupation was given as 'miller'.⁴⁴ Frances and John Reeves Miller emigrated to New South Wales in 1854.⁴⁵ John Reeves Miller died on 11 August 1888, aged 56, at Crookwell, near Goulburn, New South Wales.⁴⁶ Francis Miller died, aged 90, on 18 October 1910, at Laggan, near Crookwell.⁴⁷ They had one son, Joseph John Miller, who was born at Throsby Park on 26 December 1861 and died on 5 November 1938 at Laggan.⁴⁸ Frances and John Miller were buried together at Crookwell Cemetery with their headstones recording their birthplaces and exact dates.⁴⁹

⁴² *Evening News* (Sydney), 29 April 1885, p. 4 (11118172); also *SMH*, 30 April 1885, p. 1 (28361470).

⁴³ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1885/3612 Alfred Davis.

⁴⁴ East Sussex Record Office, Brighton, England; Sussex Parish Registers, 1826, Reference Number: PAR 253/1/2/1. (via Ancestry Institution East Sussex, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1920).

⁴⁵ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1910/13174 Frances Miller.

⁴⁶ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1882/5538 John R. Miller.

⁴⁷ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1910/13174 Frances Miller.

⁴⁸ *SMH*, 10 November 1938, p. 10 (17536025); Family tree for Mabel Marion Andrew (of Prince Edward Island, Canada), created 31 Jan 2014 by Claudia Boorman, q.v. John Joseph (Reeves?) Miller and Frances Davis, http://www.boormanfamily.ca/trees/andrewMabelM_tree/wc09/wc09_239.htm, and Joseph John Miller, http://www.boormanfamily.ca/trees/andrewMabelM_tree/wc09/wc09_323.htm.

⁴⁹ Australian Cemeteries Index, John Miller (Inscription 15710410), <https://austcemindex.com/inscription?id=15710410> and Frances Miller (Inscription 15710412), <https://austcemindex.com/inscription?id=15710412>.

Edmund John Davis was born in 1834 in Sussex. He arrived in the colony of New South Wales in 1854. He died at Throsby Park, in New South Wales, on 4 September 1861. His death certificate gave the informant as 'John Miller, the employer of the deceased'.⁵⁰ His death notice states:

DAVIS.—On the 4th September, at the residence of Mr. John Miller, Throsby Park, near Berrima, Edmund John Davis, fifth son of Mr. Joseph Davis, of Herstmonceux, Sussex, England, aged 27 years, of consumption.⁵¹

The John Miller of Throsby Park was, of course, Edmund's brother-in-law.

Throsby Park was a comfortable colonial homestead and farming estate near Moss Vale, about 140 km south of Sydney. It was originally the home of Dr Charles Throsby (1771-1828) but by the time Frances and John Miller and Edmund John Davis appear to be living there it was the home of his grandson, also Charles Throsby who died in 1859, and another grandson James Throsby who died in 1860. The property was leased in 1866 and this may be when the Millers moved down to the Crookwell area.⁵²

Charlotte Jane Davis arrived in the colony of New South Wales in 1853.⁵³ She married George Ross at St Peters NSW when she was 34 years of age.⁵⁴ The marriage notice in the *Sydney Morning Herald* recorded:

On the 19th September, at St. Peter's Church, Cook's River, by the Rev. A.H. Bull, M.A., George, third son of the late William Ross, Esq., of Lairwell [sic], Perthshire, Scotland, to Charlotte Jane, third daughter of Joseph Davis, Esq., of Hurstmonceux [sic], Sussex, England.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1861/2237 Edmund John Davis.

⁵¹ *Empire* (Sydney), 13 September 1861, p. 1 (60485645). Also *SMH*, 12 September 1861, p. 1 (13061093).

⁵² Gary Crockett (former curator), Throsby Park: a comfortable residence, Museums of History NSW website, <https://mhnsw.au/stories/general/throsby-park-comfortable-residence/> (accessed 9 July 2023). See death transcription references cited above of the Millers for their residence in the Crookwell area.

⁵³ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1901/10162 Charlotte Jane Ross.

⁵⁴ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1901/10162 Charlotte Jane Ross.

⁵⁵ *SMH*, 22 September 1862, p. 1 (13234496); *Empire* (Sydney), 23 September 1862, p. 1 (60516707).

At the time of her death on 12 September 1901, at 'Lairdwell',⁵⁶ Prince Albert Street, Mosman, aged 74, her children were George H. Ross, Alfred J. Ross, and Harold Ross, with four males deceased. She was buried at the Church of England Cemetery at Camperdown.⁵⁷

George Davis, elder brother of Joseph Davis, arrived in the colony of New South Wales in 1854.⁵⁸ George Davis married at the age of 32 to Lucy Burge.⁵⁹ Their marriage notice again showed the family had come from Sussex:

On the 8th instant, at Parramatta, by the Rev. Mr Rabone, George, third son of Mr Joseph Davis, of Sussex, England to Lucy, eldest daughter of Mr Samuel Burge, Parramatta.⁶⁰

George was 69, and a retired gentleman, when he died on 18 June 1894 at 27 West Street, Petersham. He had a large family and was survived by his children Lovel Gladwick Davis, Herman Austin Davis, Alfred Harry Davis, Amy Grace, William Arthur Davis, Annie Lucy, Elsie, Laila, and Edna. Two males and two female children were already deceased.⁶¹

We know that Joseph Davis's elder brother Thomas Austen Davis arrived in Sydney on the ship *Electra* on 30 June 1857 because he travelled with his first wife Sarah and six children.⁶² The children's names on the passenger list were Frances, Clara, [Francis] Sydney, George, Kate, and Ellen. The family travelled as fee-paying passengers and were not assisted immigrants, which shows that Thomas Austen Davis was financially independent. The ship had left London on 16 March 1857 so took over three months to reach Sydney.⁶³

Joseph Davis's half-sister Emily Lavinia Davis arrived in the colony of New South Wales in about 1869. It is not yet known whether she came with her brother William Lovel Davis. She never married and died at Summer

⁵⁶ Lairdwell is located at 43 Prince Albert Street, Mosman, NSW 2088 (Real Estate.com website, <https://www.realestate.com.au/sold/property-house-nsw-mosman-108975036> (accessed 16 July 2023)).

⁵⁷ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1901/10162 Charlotte Jane Ross.

⁵⁸ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1894/11224 George Davis.

⁵⁹ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1894/11224 George Davis.

⁶⁰ *Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer*, 12 September 1857, p. 3 (59867304).

⁶¹ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1894/11224 George Davis.

⁶² Mariners and Ships in Australian Waters website, q.v. *Electra*, arrived 30 June 1857, <http://marinersandships.com.au/1857/06/061ele.htm>; MHNSW StAC: NRS-13278 [X95-96] Reel 404.

⁶³ *SMH*, 30 June 1857, p. 4 (28632128); *Empire* (Sydney), 30 June 1857, p. 4 (64984512); *Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, 6 July 1857, p. 158 (161169578).

Hill on 1 August 1929, aged 80. She was cremated at Rookwood Crematorium.⁶⁴ Her death notice recorded her as 'dearly beloved sister of W.L. Davis'.⁶⁵

Thomas Austen Davis became the Mayor of Canterbury in 1879. His portrait was included in the *Australian Town and Country Journal* in 1887.



Figure 1: Mr. T.A. Davis, Mayor of Canterbury, 1887.⁶⁶

The newspaper gave much information about his origins and life,

MR. THOMAS AUSTEN DAVIS, J.P., the present Mayor of Canterbury, was born in Westfield, Sussex (England), in 1818, and was educated in Beckley old school, in the same county. When he left school he became a traveller for a brewery in Hurstmonceaux, and while in this business had an opportunity of seeing a great deal of the South of England. Having heard much about Australia, he determined to seek his fortune there; and he accordingly came out to Sydney in 1857. He settled in Canterbury, where he carried on business as a butcher until 1881, when he retired. He was elected among the first

⁶⁴ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1929/12979 Emily Lavinia Davis.

⁶⁵ *SMH*, 2 August 1929, p. 10 (16572428); *SMH*, 2 August 1929, p. 9 (16572364); *SMH*, 3 August 1929, p. 13 (16572509).

⁶⁶ *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 1 October 1887, p. 19 (71089789).

batch of aldermen when the municipality was incorporated in 1879, and has remained in the council ever, since. He served one year as mayor; and when Alderman Slocombe (who was elected mayor for the current year) resigned, Mr. Davis was chosen to fill his place for the remainder of the municipal year. Mr. Davis has reared a large family since his arrival in the country, and is much respected by all who know him. His name appeared among those who were recently appointed on the commission of the peace.⁶⁷

Thomas Austen Davis died, age 79, on 15 October 1897 at New Canterbury Road, Petersham. He was formerly a butcher and of 'retired means'. His second wife, Maria Rossiter, whom he had married in 1866,⁶⁸ had pre-deceased him.⁶⁹ They were both buried at the Church of England Cemetery at Canterbury.⁷⁰



Figure 2: William Lovel Davis, M.L.A., 1887.

⁶⁷ *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 1 October 1887, p. 19 (71089789).

⁶⁸ NSWBDM Marriage Index 1866/148 Maria Rossiter to Thomas A Davis.

⁶⁹ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1897/13223 Thomas Austen Davis.

⁷⁰ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1897/13223 Thomas Austen Davis.

William Lovel Davis became the Member of the Legislative Assembly for the electorate of Canterbury from 2 February 1887 to 19 January 1889.⁷¹ His life story was also featured in the *Australian Town and Country Journal* in 1887:

Mr. William Lovel Davis, J.P., recently elected fourth member for the electorate of Canterbury, with 2264 votes, was born in Hellingly, a small village about twelve miles from Lewes, in Sussex, England, on September 24, 1844, and was educated in a private school in Hailsham. In 1857 his parents removed to the parish of Hurstmonceux [sic], where he assisted them in farming operations for a year or two, when he entered the service of a corn and seed merchant as salesman and manager, in Hastings, in 1860. With the hope of improving his prospects he left England for New South Wales, where many members of his family resided; and he arrived in Sydney on May 24, 1868, and soon afterward entered the establishment of Mr. W. C. Renwick, King-street, as accountant. He stayed in that capacity for eleven years, and since then has speculated largely in land and properties, in which he has been very successful. In 1883 he was elected an alderman of Petersham, and in 1885 was chosen Mayor, in which capacity he gave every satisfaction to the ratepayers. He was appointed a commissioner of the New South Wales Court of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition in 1886, and took advantage of the opportunity afforded by his visit to London to travel on the continent of Europe and across America, arriving in Sydney in December last. He only announced his intention to contest the election for Canterbury on the day of the nomination; and his return, therefore, may be considered as an indication of the esteem in which he is held in the district in which he has resided since his arrival in the colony. Mr. Davis is a keen sportsman, and is a member of racing, fishing, cricketing, and other sporting clubs. He is a freetrader and Ministerialist.⁷²

No doubt William Lovel Davis's prominent position as a member of New South Wales Parliament made him a widely known politician. At that time the Canterbury electorate took in the St George district too. He certainly

⁷¹ NSW Parliament, Former Members, Mr William Lovel Davis (1844-1932), <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/formermembers/Pages/former-member-details.aspx?pk=838> (accessed 16 July 2023).

⁷² *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 26 February 1887, p. 27 (71682211).

engaged with developments in the Rockdale area as he was one of the members of the Saywell's Tramway Bill Committee.⁷³

He also engaged with land speculation, as many politicians of that era did.⁷⁴ Over time he had many properties including one at Lovel Street, Katoomba, with nearby William Street and Lovel Street there named after him, which he had purchased from Frederick Clissold in 1889.⁷⁵ But land was just one of his many interests.

⁷³ NSW Parliament, Former Members, Mr William Lovel Davis (1844-1932), <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/formermembers/Pages/former-member-details.aspx?pk=838> (accessed 16 July 2023). Please note his father's name is incorrectly given as James from his death registration.

⁷⁴ Lesley Muir, *Shady Acres: Politicians, Developers and Sydney's Public Transport Scandals 1872-1895*, Lesley Muir, introduction by Elizabeth Farrelly. Halstead Press, 2007 (Copyright 2016, Royal Australian Historical Society.)

⁷⁵ The Deposited Plan is DP 2266. Bruce Dunstan, 'Origin of a Street Name: Lovel Street, Katoomba,' *Hobby's Outreach*, Blue Mountains Historical Society, No. 6 December 2019-January 2020, pp. 7-8, available from <http://bluemountainshistory.com/H09320/hobbys-outreach-vol31-no6-dec2019.pdf>.



Figure 3: Mr. W.L Davis, Chairman of the Club, 1889.⁷⁶

W.L. Davis's real passion was racing. He was one of the original founders of the Canterbury Park Race Club, along with Thomas Austen Davis and Michael Searle, its first secretary. W.L. Davis's biography, accompanied by his portrait taken by Kerry and Jones, Sydney, repeated much of the previous detail given in 1887:

MR. WILLIAM LOVEL DAVIS,

whose portrait we give. ... On his arrival in Sydney [in 1868] he accepted the position of bookkeeper in a large drapery establishment, which post he occupied for eleven years. Since then Mr. Davis has gone in for speculations, the majority of which have turned out in a very satisfactory manner. During his residence in Sydney Mr. Davis has taken an active part in public affairs. For several years he held the position of alderman in the municipal council of Petersham. He was unanimously elected Mayor during the third year of his office. He is also a Justice of the Peace. In 1887 Mr. Davis went in for parliamentary honors, and was elected one of the

⁷⁶ *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 19 October 1889, p. 32 (71124780).

members for Canterbury. Mr. Davis patronises all kinds of sport, and is always willing to lend a helping hand. With such an able man as chairman, it is not to be wondered at that the Canterbury Park Race Club has prospered.⁷⁷

W.L. Davis spent many years as the Secretary of the Canterbury Park Race Club⁷⁸ and his love of racing continued to the end of his life.

William Lovel Davis was a Mayor of Petersham. One of his former homes, built in 1874 and bought by him in 1878, is still located at 63A Victoria Street, Lewisham.⁷⁹ This home is very similar in appearance to Lydham Hall due to its stonework and verandah with cast iron posts.



Figure 4: One of the homes of William Lovel Davis. 63A Victoria Street, Lewisham, 2023. *Photo courtesy of Olga Sedneva.*

⁷⁷ *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 19 October 1889, p. 33 (71124780).

⁷⁸ F.A. Larcombe, *Change and Challenge: A History of Canterbury, NSW*. [Canterbury, NSW], Canterbury Municipal Council, 1979, p. 181.

⁷⁹ Owen Roberts, 'Home of former Petersham mayor up for sale', *News.com.au*, 28 May 2018, <https://www.news.com.au/finance/real-estate/sydney-nsw/home-of-former-petersham-mayor-up-for-sale/news-story/94ccb8644f911a15d67a4b5a92fe270e> (accessed 16 July 2023).

William Lovel Davis married Julia Jasper when he was 58 and they had no children. William Lovel Davis died on 20 October 1932, aged 88, at Lewisham Hospital, and was late of 21 Dunstaffnage Street, Hurlstone Park. The informant for his death was his nephew Charles Thomas Inman of Ashfield, the son of his half-brother Thomas Inman. W.L. Davis was cremated at Rookwood.⁸⁰



Figure 5: Photograph of 'W.L. Davis', 1932.⁸¹

His obituary in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, told of his many interests:

Mr. Davis was elected to the Legislative Assembly for Canterbury in 1877, having as one of his colleagues Sir Joseph Carruthers. He was probably more widely known, however, in the racing world. He was one of the original syndicate that conceived the idea of transforming a scrub into the Canterbury Park racecourse, and up to his death he retained an interest in the concern. ... Mr. Davis raced several horses, beginning with Canterbury and Acherty ... then came Bonnie Doone, and the mare, Lady Lovel ... and in later years Rahiri.⁸²

His funeral was well-attended by members of City Tattersall's Club, Moorfield Racing Club, Rosehill Racing Club, the Australian Jockey Club,

⁸⁰ NSWBDM Death Transcription, 1932/18567 William Lovel Davis; *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 21 October 1932, p. 10 (247317009); *SMH*, 21 Oct 1932, p.8 (16924193) *SMH*, 21 October 1932, p. 7 (16924215).

⁸¹ *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser* [hereafter *Sydney Mail*], 26 October 1932, p. 32 (166225829).

⁸² *SMH*, 21 October 1932, p. 13 (16924071).

Gosford Racing Club and, of course, Canterbury Racing Club.⁸³ William Lovel Davis's final home was called 'Hellingly', no doubt after his birthplace in Sussex.⁸⁴

We can see now that Joseph Davis came from a very large Sussex family with many members who emigrated to New South Wales. Family members were very much involved in municipal life in both the new municipal councils and the NSW Parliament. They were willing to undertake public roles and to work hard for the community as well as for themselves. These were the people that Joseph Davis knew well and to whom his close family could turn when needed. Their names will be found associated with Joseph Davis and his family. As we have seen the Davis family links to Sussex were strong, with newspaper notices often recording their relationships with family located there. They named their own residences after places of significance to them located in Sussex so their Sussex family were still prominent in their hearts and minds.

⁸³ *SMH*, 22 October 1932 p. 10 (16924491).

⁸⁴ For the property name Hellingly see *SMH*, 15 January 1913, p. 17 (15390490).

Chapter 3 From Sussex to Sydney and the Butchering Business

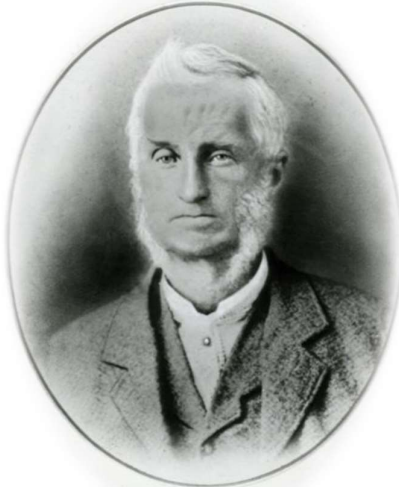


Figure 6: Joseph Davis (digital file name: davis_j_002).

Image courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection.

The ship on which Joseph Davis himself arrived in Sydney has not previously been identified, though we know he had been 41 years in New South Wales by his death in January 1889, so the year was most likely 1847 or 1848.⁸⁵ It appears that Joseph Davis may have travelled alone by ship from London to New South Wales. He could not have travelled with his half-brother William Lovel Davis, as Rathbone had suggested as W.L. Davis is known to have arrived twice in both 1868 and 1879, much too late. As Joseph Davis was a fee-paying passenger, rather than an assisted immigrant, the government kept much less detail and first names were not always recorded. The shipping lists may show the arrival of a Mr. Davis, or even a Mr. J. Davis.⁸⁶ A likely arrival of a Mr. J. Davis as a cabin

⁸⁵ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1889/3481 Joseph Davis.

⁸⁶ I have endeavoured to search passenger arrivals in newspapers and on the Mariners and Ships in Australian Waters website, <https://www.marinersandships.com.au/>. I have searched arrivals in Sydney from London for each year of possible arrival for each of the Davis family who came to Australia. The number of 'Mr. Davis' or 'Miss Davis' encountered for unassisted passengers means it is not always possible to be certain that the exact arrival has been located.

passenger was on the *Mount Stewart Elphinstone* on 28 April 1847.⁸⁷ This may have been Joseph Davis, though it is difficult to be certain.



Figure 7: Joseph Davis's butcher shop, King Street, Newtown, [circa 1880] (digital file name: shops_b_005). *Image courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection.* Note the Davis family members on the upper levels.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Mariners and Ships in Australian Waters website, q.v. *Mount Stewart Elphinstone*, arrived 28 April 1847
<https://marinersandships.com.au/1847/04/041mou.htm>.

⁸⁸ If the boy in the top level in the image is either Frederick James Davis (b. 1872) or Herbert Edward Davis (b. 1875) this image must have been taken in the late 1870s or early 1880s so I have dated it circa 1880.

Butcher's shop Newtown

Joseph Davis appears to have worked initially as a butcher with his older brother Alfred Davis before he became the owner of his own butchery business at Newtown.

Alfred Davis had advertised his business in the Sydney Commercial Directory in 1851 as 'Davis, Alfred, New Town' but his brother Joseph is not listed this early.⁸⁹

In August 1851 Joseph Davis appeared as a witness in an embezzlement case against Alfred Adams, an employee of Alfred Davis, butcher, at Newtown.

It appeared from the evidence of Mr. Joseph Davis, the brother of the prosecutor, that the prisoner, who had only been a fortnight in his service, obtained from a customer, Mr W.B. Allen, a cheque for [£18 17 5d] on the 19th June last, which he got cashed and then absconded. As the examination of this witness proceeded it appeared that he did not know from his own knowledge that the prisoner was his brother's collector, authorised to collect moneys on his account; neither did he know, except from his brother's statement, that the money in question had not been paid to him by the prisoner. His brother was not present.

His Honor, Justice Dickinson, though Adam's guilt in cashing the cheque was otherwise proven by other witnesses, 'directed the jury to acquit the prison, to whom he addressed an impressive caution'.⁹⁰ No doubt it was a caution to Joseph Davis to be sure of his facts in his future business dealings.

A notice dated 17 May 1855 in the *Empire* newspaper was addressed to the inhabitants of Newtown:

This is to certify that we, the undersigned butchers of O'Connell Town, have hereby agreed to discontinue all Sunday Traffic from this time forward, believing it to be both injurious and sinful.⁹¹

It was signed by George Davis, Joseph Davis, Charles Hudson, William Baldick and Christopher Chapman. This shows that these men, including

⁸⁹ *Sydney Commercial Directory, for the year 1851*. Sydney, W. & F. Ford, 1851 (Facsimile ed. North Sydney, NSW, Library of Australian History, 1978), p. 36.

⁹⁰ *SMH*, 27 August 1851 p. 2 (12929822).

⁹¹ *Empire* (Sydney), 4 June 1855, p. 1 (60178340). O'Connell Town was an early name for Newtown. Alan Sharpe, *Pictorial History Newtown: Alexandria, Camperdown, Darlington, Erskineville, Macdonaldtown, St Peters, Waterloo*. Alexandria, N.S.W., Kingsclear Books, 1999, p.5.

Joseph and his brother George, were religious men who did not always put profit above their faith.

The Inspector of Weights and Measures under Act 16 Vic. No.34 must have visited Newtown in 1861 as a number of Newtown businessmen were fined in September 1861. Joseph Davis, butcher, of Newtown, was fined for having three light weights. He was fined 15 shillings and 7 shillings 6 pence in costs for having an unstamped weight.⁹²

Joseph Davis, Newtown, regularly advertised for staff for his butchering business. As early as March 1855 Joseph Davis advertised for 'a Lad to make himself generally useful, about fourteen years of age.'⁹³ In August 1863 he required 'a MAN to make small goods'.⁹⁴ In May 1864 he advertised for 'a MAN, to make Spice Beef and Beef Hams'.⁹⁵ In December 1870 he wanted 'a BOY to deliver meat'.⁹⁶ In both June 1871 and October 1871 Davis sought 'a young MAN to collect orders and deliver meat, accustomed to the business'.⁹⁷ In October 1872 he wanted 'a young MAN, to collect orders and deliver meat'⁹⁸ with similar wording used in another issue for a 'Smart LAD'.⁹⁹ In 1873 he sought 'a BUTCHER, must be a Sober Man, for the Country; married preferred. Apply to Joseph Davis, Newtown'.¹⁰⁰ In February 1875 he advertised for 'a young man accustomed to the butchering business'¹⁰¹ and the same notice appeared again in March that year.¹⁰² In May 1875 he again sought to employ 'a LAD to collect orders and deliver meat'.¹⁰³ Again in May 1877 he wanted 'a SLAUGHTERMAN to kill and attend boiling down'.¹⁰⁴ And again in August 1879 he sought 'a Young MAN, to collect orders, and to deliver meet, must be accustomed to the business. Apply Joseph Davis, Newtown'.¹⁰⁵ There are other similar wanted notices over the years not mentioned here.

⁹² *Empire* (Sydney), 7 September 1861, (60484113).

⁹³ *SMH*, 17 March 1855, p. 1 (12966829).

⁹⁴ *SMH*, 25 August 1863, p. 8 (13083460).

⁹⁵ *SMH*, 27 May 1864, p. 1 (30939217).

⁹⁶ *SMH*, 28 December 1870, p. 8 (13219314).

⁹⁷ *SMH*, 29 June 1871, p. 8 (13240977); *SMH*, 29 June 1871, p. 8 (13240977).

⁹⁸ *SMH*, 24 October 1872, p. 8 (13265322).

⁹⁹ *SMH*, 23 October 1872, p. 10 (13265290).

¹⁰⁰ *Evening News* (Sydney), 12 April 1873, p. 3 (107170383).

¹⁰¹ *Evening News* (Sydney), 18 February 1875, p. 3 (130498365); *SMH*, 18 February 1875, p. 10 (13351948).

¹⁰² *SMH*, 25 March 1879, p. 10 (13431567).

¹⁰³ *SMH*, 22 May 1875, p. 14 (13355534).

¹⁰⁴ *SMH*, 8 May 1877, p. 10 (13396700).

¹⁰⁵ *SMH*, 5 August 1879, p. 10 (13443878).

Joseph Davis's generosity was displayed when the marriage of the Prince of Wales was commemorated at Newtown in June 1863. A committee of the local Newtown clergy resolved to commemorate the marriage by providing entertainment and a 'feast to be held on the high ground of South Kingston'. All the public day and Sunday schools in Newtown, St Peters, Cook's River, Marrickville, Petersham, and Camperdown were to be invited. There was to be fireworks and a bonfire. A number of butchers and bakers had promised to contribute to the festivities. It was reported that:

Two or three rounds of beef were promised severally by Messrs. G. Davis, Tye, and J. Davis. Mr. Alfred Davis will give a side of prime beef, or a roasting ox, and Messrs. Kidd and Kelly have offered as their donation a hundred-weight of cake.¹⁰⁶

Of course the butchers mentioned were Joseph Davis and his brothers George Davis and Alfred Davis. Surely the scholars must have had an enjoyable time!

Joseph Davis was listed in the *National Directory for 1867-68* as 'Davis, J. butcher, Newtown road, Newtown'.¹⁰⁷

The butchery shop owned by Joseph Davis was located at 257 King Street, Newtown. The building included 'a shop and dwelling containing 6 apartments'. Joseph Davis also owned the adjacent shop on the north side at 255 King Street, Newtown. This was a 'shop and dwelling [with] balconies in front containing 8 apartments, bathroom, kitchen, poultry room, washhouse part weatherboards, ice house of weatherboards – shed, six stall stable with loft over of wood and iron – 2 loose boxes, cart shed'. In 1906 both properties were estimated to be worth £5590.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *SMH*, 2 June 1863, p. 4 (13079421).

¹⁰⁷ *Walter Samson & Co.'s New South Wales National Directory for 1867-68*, Sydney, Walter Jameson Meyer, [1867], pp. 60, 257.

¹⁰⁸ MHNSW StAC: NRS-13660 Probate packets. NRS-13660-5-717-Series 4_36877 Ellen Davis – Date of Death 10/04/1906, Place of residence Newtown NSW (See Schedule 24th April 1906).



Figure 8: 257 King Street, Newtown, 2023. The site of Joseph Davis's butcher's shop is Elizabeth's Bookshop.¹⁰⁹ *Photograph by Janette Pelosi.*

In August 1872 Joseph Davis, of Newtown-Road, Newtown, did duty as a juror in the Supreme Court, in the case of *Bergin v. Dunn*.¹¹⁰

Joseph Davis was on the lookout for ways to promote his butchering business. In September 1872 Joseph Davis advertised for sale '60 Tierces of superior Salt BEEF'.¹¹¹ In March 1879 advertised 'TO CAPTAINS of PROVISIONISTS' that he had 'Two tons of well cured salt beef'.¹¹²

Joseph Davis must have had several commercial properties in Newtown in addition to his butcher's shop on King Street, Newtown. In June 1870 he advertised:

TO LET, a HOUSE, SHOP, and FIXTURES, at present occupied by Mr. George Porter, chemist. Apply to Joseph Davis, butcher, Newtown Road.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Compare this photograph with the earlier photographs of the shop held by Bayside Library. On the current site is a single story building so the site appears to have been redeveloped since it was the butcher's shop.

¹¹⁰ *SMH*, 29 August 1872, p. 2 (13262721).

¹¹¹ *SMH*, 25 September 1872, p. 2 (28413387).

¹¹² *SMH*, 7 March 1879, p. 6 (13430362).

¹¹³ *SMH*, 22 Jun 1870, p. 8 (13207192).

In March 1876 he advertised Albion House, Newtown, for let, with the advertisement suggesting it was 'suitable for Drapery, Shoe trade, or Grocers'.¹¹⁴ In February 1879 he advertised both a shop and bakehouse to let 'now occupied by Mr. Green, Newtown Road' which were 'all in thorough order'.¹¹⁵

In December 1880 a fire broke out at Newtown¹¹⁶:

Shortly after 12 o'clock this morning a fire broke out in a wooden building at the rear of the premises occupied by Mr. Joseph Davis, butcher, of King-street, Newtown; and before steps could be taken to prevent the spread of the flames, was totally destroyed, together with an adjoining brick building in the occupation of Messrs. Edwards and Farr, hay and corn merchants. Information was first conveyed to town by the Newtown police, who telegraphed to No. 1 station whence the news was sent to the central station, and then on to the Insurance Fire Brigade station. The alarm bell was immediately sounded, and an engine dispatched to the scene of the fire.¹¹⁷

The Insurance Fire Brigade had been established in 1851 but it was not until 1874 that the Newtown and Camperdown Volunteer Company had been formed.¹¹⁸

The account of the fire continued:

On arrival there, the Newtown Brigade, with their engine, were found in attendance, but could not get to work from the mains, owing to their hose not being long enough. The Insurance Brigade, however, soon had a good stream playing on the fire, which was now at its height, the flames illuminating the whole of the surrounding district. The other fire brigades were also promptly in attendance, but they also experienced some difficulty in getting water; and it was not till Mr. Newell's tank was availed of that a really useful jet was obtained. The adjoining premises were momentarily expected to catch fire from the numerous sparks which were falling, and it was due simply to the fact that there was but little or no wind, and that

¹¹⁴ *SMH*, 21 March 1876, p. 8 (13369784).

¹¹⁵ *SMH*, 6 February 1879, p. 10 (1348827); *SMH*, 24 February 1879, p. 10 (28391247).

¹¹⁶ *SMH*, 31 December 1880, p. 6 (28384387).

¹¹⁷ *SMH*, 31 December 1880, p. 6 (28384387).

¹¹⁸ MHNSW StAC (Collection Search): AGY-616, Fire Brigades Board, 18-03-1884 to 01-01-1910.

the neighbours and firemen strained every effort, that this was prevented, and the fire confined to the buildings mentioned.¹¹⁹

Joseph Davis and his neighbours were fortunate that the fire brigades attended and there was no loss of life.

The building in which the fire originated was two stories high, constructed of wood, and covered with galvanized iron, the lower part being used as stables and as the "small goods" shop, while the upper part was divided into a hay-loft, and two sleeping apartments for the men. There were five men and a boy asleep in the room at the time, and one of them was awakened by a strong smell of smoke. He immediately jumped up, and saw flames bursting out from the hay-loft. He had just time to raise the alarm when the flames spread with such rapidity that his companions had barely time to escape. One of them, indeed, was severely burned about the hands in attempting to save his box. If the Newtown Brigade could have got to work at this time there is good reason for believing that the fire might have been confined to the wooden building. But the flames went on for the time unchecked. The neighbours, however, worked most energetically in trying to save property, and succeeded in extricating fourteen horses from the stables, besides saving a quantity of hay, harness, &c., from Mr. Davis's shed, and also from Messrs. Edwards and Farr's store. ... Both premises are insured, but in what offices, or for what amounts, could not be ascertained. A large body of police, under superintendent Read, sub-inspectors Waters, Anderson, and McKay, was present, and rendered good service in keeping back the large crowd which had assembled, and in protecting some goods, furniture, &c., which had been removed from the premises fronting King-street. By half-past 1 o'clock all danger of the fire spreading was at an end.¹²⁰

By this account we have gained some knowledge of the scale of Joseph Davis's butchery business with his two-storey wooden building with an iron roof and his small-goods shop. We now know that he had large stables with fourteen horses and that his staff included five men and a boy also living on the premises.

¹¹⁹ *SMH*, 31 December 1880, p. 6 (28384387).

¹²⁰ *SMH*, 31 December 1880, p. 6 (28384387).



Figure 9: Staff of the Davis Butchering Company (undated). (digital file name: shops_b_007). *Image courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection.*

Following the fire Joseph Davis offered his thanks to all who had helped. He publicly wrote, 'I, THE UNDERSIGNED, most sincerely thank those that put out the fire at Newtown, when my property was in such a dangerous position. JOSEPH DAVIS.'¹²¹

Thomas Bouskill

One of Joseph Davis's most loyal employees was Thomas Bouskill. Thomas Bouskill had arrived in Sydney on 29 August 1853 on the ship *Repeater*, from the port of Glasgow as a cabin passenger.¹²² When Thomas died on 29 March 1888,¹²³ his death notice recorded that he was

¹²¹ *SMH*, 4 July 1868, p.1 (13168844).

¹²² Mariners and Ships in Australian Waters website, q.v. *Repeater*, 29 August 1853, <https://www.marinersandships.com.au/1853/08/076rep.htm>.

¹²³ NSW BDM Death Index 1888/4152 Bouskill Thomas. Buried Rookwood Church of England Cemetery Plot FF_Zone B/#/578 (from Rookwood Deceased Search, <https://www.rookwoodcemetery.com.au/deceased-search-engine>); FindAGrave.com, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/187453088/thomas-bouskill> gives the plot as Zone B Section FF Grave 578.

formerly of Arnsed, Westmoreland, England. He was buried at Rookwood Church of England Cemetery, with his headstone recording the same details. Thomas Bouskill had been employed by Joseph Davis in his Newtown butcher's shop for 34 years.

Bouskill's executors William Lovel Davis, of Petersham, and Charles Whately, coachbuilder of Brown Street, Newtown, applied for the probate of the will of Thomas Bouskill. His estate was worth under £4,426.¹²⁴ Bouskill's will shows that he was residing at 233 King Street Newtown. This was the address of his then employer Austen Davis, who stated that Bouskill had died at Prince Alfred Hospital, Newtown. No doubt in memory of his friend and employee a donation of £1 1 shilling was made in April 1888 to the Prince Alfred Hospital for 'Thomas Bouskill, per Mr. Austen Davis'.¹²⁵

Bouskill bequeathed all 'my boxes wearing apparel, two watches and personal property to my present employer Mr Austen Davis, of 233 King Street Newtown to be divided by him as he may think fit between my fellow servant and William Burnham employed at Lydham Hill Bexley.' His properties at 185 and 187 King Street Newtown, worth £2500, then occupied by William Henry Thompson and Charles James Lane were to be sold by auction with the proceeds to be distributed to Bouskill's living brothers and sisters. The witnesses to the will were George S. Brock (husband of Charlotte Ellen Davis) and E. Coleman.¹²⁶

Thus, we have learned the name of Joseph and Ellen Davis's servant at Lydham Hill, William Burnham. He would likely have lived in the Servants' quarters at Lydham Hill and may well have driven the coaches kept in the coachhouse. This William Burnham may be the William Burnham who died on 11 April 1923, aged 57, at 'Mahala', 3 Myra Road, Dulwich Hill.¹²⁷ If so, he was born about 1866 and so would have been aged 22 when Thomas Bouskill died. Another possibility is the William Burnham who died at Prince Henry Hospital on 26 December 1936, aged 68.¹²⁸ This William

¹²⁴ MHNSW StAC: NRS-13340, Deceased estate files. NRS-13340-6-10-[AF00058920] Thomas Bouskill – late of Newtown – duty paid date 14/07/1888.

¹²⁵ *SMH*, 3 April 1888 (13673334).

¹²⁶ MHNSW StAC: NRS-13660, Probate packets. NRS-13660-3-[17/2248]-Series 3_16637 Thomas Bouskill Date of Death 29 March 1888, Granted on 18 June 1888.

¹²⁷ *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 April 1923, p. 4 (245818062); *SMH*, 12 April 1923 (16059636); NSWBDM Death Index 1923/7275 William Burnham (son of John and Maria, Newtown registration district).

¹²⁸ *SMH*, 28 December 1936, p. 6 (27988488); NSWBDM Death Index 1936/20743 William Burnham (Father William, 68 yrs Prince Henry

Burnham was born about 1868 and would have been aged just 20 in 1888. There is no easy way of identifying which of these men was the servant who worked at Lydham Hill.



Figure 10: The stables and coach house of Lydham Hall, Lydham Avenue, Rockdale, 1951 (digital file name: roads_ly_014). *Image courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection*

Hosp[ital], Redfern registration district). These are the only two William Burnham possibilities in the Ryerson Index (<https://ryersonindex.org/search.php>) who died from 1888 to 1969 who were old enough to have worked in 1888.

Chapter 4: Joseph and Ellen Davis and their family

Ellen Turner and her family

Ellen Turner was the youngest child of Edward Turner (1784-1841) and his wife Ann (nee Corsen or Cawson) (1805-1843).¹²⁹ Her father Edward Turner had arrived as a convict on the ship *Isabella* in April 1818. From the 1828 Census of New South Wales Edward and Ann Turner's family comprised:

Turner, Edward, 44, ticket of leave, *Isabella*, 1818, life, Protestant, stonemason, Kent Street Sydney
Turner, Ann, 24, born in the colony
Turner, John, 6, born in the colony
Turner, Mary Ann, 4, born in the colony
Turner, James, 2, born in the colony
Turner, Elizabeth, 1, born in the colony¹³⁰

Ellen Turner was born on 23 November 1833 in Kent Street, Sydney, but she was not baptised until 3 October 1841 at the Church of St Lawrence, Sydney.¹³¹ Another son, Edmund Turner, was also born on 6 July 1836 and he was baptised on 14 July that same year.¹³²

Edward Turner was a publican of the Stonemasons' Arms at Parramatta Street, Sydney (today the area is known as Broadway). The history of the Stonemasons' Arms, situated on what was part of the Ultimo Estate,

¹²⁹ Australian Royalty: Genealogy of the colony of New South Wales, q.v. "Edward Turner, 1784-1841 (aged 57 years)"
<https://australianroyalty.net.au/tree/purnellmccord.ged/individual/I37082/Edward-Turner>.

¹³⁰ Australian Royalty: Genealogy of the colony of New South Wales website, q.v. "Edward Turner, 1784-1841 (aged 57 years)"
<https://australianroyalty.net.au/tree/purnellmccord.ged/individual/I37082/Edward-Turner>. Source citations are given on this website, including to the book *Census of New South Wales November 1828*, ed. by Malcolm Sainty and Keith A. Johnson, Sydney, Library of Australian History, 1985, p. 374. Much more could be written of Ellen Turner's family background but only a brief account will be given here.

¹³¹ NSW BDM Index 768/1833 V1833768 25A Ellen Turner; transcription available on Australian Royalty website,
<https://australianroyalty.net.au/tree/purnellmccord.ged/individual/I37088/Ellen-Turner>.

¹³² Australian Royalty website,
<https://australianroyalty.net.au/tree/purnellmccord.ged/individual/I37089/Edmund-Turner>.

makes a fascinating story which cannot be given in full here. Suffice to say that the building structure of the Stonemasons' Arms survived till the present day, hidden behind a modern facade.¹³³ It was in this public house that Ellen Turner spent part of her youth and it may be where she picked up some of her business acumen.

Edward Turner died on 3 September 1841 and was buried on 4 September 1841 at St Peter's Church of England, Cook's River (now St Peters).¹³⁴ Edward's wife Ann Turner took over running the Stonemasons' Arms after his death as well as caring for her young family.¹³⁵

Tragically then Ann too died on 31 January 1843, aged 40, leaving five children with no parental support. She was also buried at St Peter's, Cooks River.¹³⁶ Ann Turner had sought to become the executrix for Edward's estate as he had not named an executor in his will. This was granted but she became indebted by a bond for £1000 taken out after her husband's death along with Elizabeth Reynolds of York Street in Sydney and John Douglas of Parramatta Street, Gentleman.¹³⁷ Ann Turner was illiterate, having signed with her mark. One of the executors named in her own will, Charles Hughes, declined to act and the other executor named was her son James Turner who was not old enough in law to act. Fortunately the eldest child, John Turner of Blackwattle Swamp, was already working as a carpenter and joiner and he took upon himself to look after the interests of his younger brother James Turner and sisters Mary Ann, Elizabeth and Ellen Turner. By this time Ellen was just 10 years of age. John Turner had turned 21 years of age on 4 November 1843. One of the administrators appointed for her will was John Douglass who was declared insolvent and Launcelot Iredale, an ironmonger of George Street

¹³³ Mick Roberts (May 16, 2013), Hidden behind a modern façade is one of Sydney's oldest pubs: The Stonemasons' Arms/Victoria Inn, Ultimo – 1834-1867, Timegents.com: Australian Pub Project, <https://timegents.com/2013/05/16/the-stonemasons-armsvictoria-inn-ultimo-1834-1867/>.

¹³⁴ Laurel Horton, *Grave Reflections: St Peters Anglican Church Cooks River, A Victorian Graveyard (1839-1896)*. St Peters, St Peters Publications, 1996, p. 56.

¹³⁵ MHNSW StAC: NRS-13660 Probate packets. NRS-13660-1-[14/211]-Series 1_1530 Edward Turner Date of death 3 September 1841, Granted on 3 April 1844 [see Series 1_1307].

¹³⁶ Laurel Horton, *Grave Reflections: St Peters Anglican Church Cooks River, A Victorian Graveyard (1839-1896)*. St Peters, St Peters Publications, 1996, p. 56.

¹³⁷ MHNSW StAC: NRS-13660 Probate packets. NRS-13660-1-[14/3211]-Series 1_1307 Edward Turner Date of death 3 September 1840, Granted on 21 January 1842.

Sydney was appointed as Trustee. John Turner was successful in convincing Justice James Dowling that he should be appointed instead as administrator of the will of his mother Ann Turner.¹³⁸

Marriage of Joseph Davis and Ellen Turner

Joseph Davis married Ellen Turner on 28 October 1850 at Scots Church, Sydney by the Rev. James Fullerton according to the rites of the Presbyterian Church. Witnesses were Enos and Lucy Hudson, both of Sydney.¹³⁹ The *People's Advocate* noted the marriage:

MARRIAGES. By special license, 28th Oct. by the Rev. Dr. Fullerton, Mr Joseph Davis, of Newtown, to Ellen, youngest daughter of the late Mr. Edward Turner, of Parramatta-street.¹⁴⁰

This shows that Joseph Davis must have been reasonably well off as they married by special license rather than the more common marriage by banns.¹⁴¹

See the next page for a chart of Joseph Davis of Bexley's family.

¹³⁸ MHNSW StAC: NRS-13660 Probate packets. NRS-13660-1-[14/3219]-Series 1_1530 Edward Turner Date of death 3 September 1841, Granted on 3 April 1844 [see Series 1_1307] (There were two probate packets for his estate.).

¹³⁹ NSWBDM Marriage 1850 Joseph Davis to Ellen Turner Volume 79 No 279 [5/4122] Reel 5030; NSWBDM Birth Transcription 1856/2166 Joseph Davis (son) records Ellen Turner's place of birth as 'Kent Street, Sydney'.

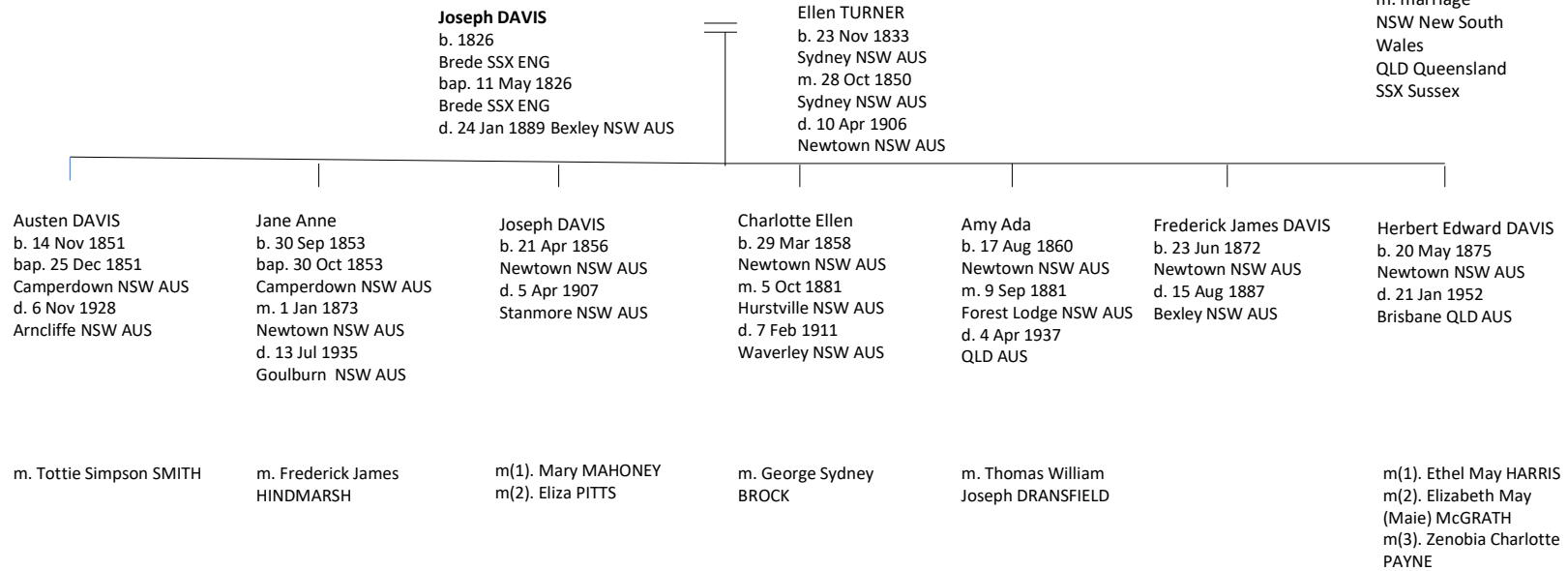
¹⁴⁰ *The People's Advocate and New South Wales Vindicator*, 2 November 1850, p.10 (251539935); also, *SMH*, 29 Oct 1850, p. 2 (12922125); *Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer*, 2 November 1850, p. 3 (59771432).

¹⁴¹ Births, Deaths and Marriages Guide, Museums of History NSW website, <https://mhnsw.au/guides/births-deaths-and-marriages-guide/> states: 'In the early colony, marriages were of two kinds, either by licence or by the publication of banns. As the fees were comparatively high, £4.4.0, only the more affluent members of the community married by licence.'

Joseph Davis of Bexley's family tree

Compiled by Janette Pelosi, 2023

Key
 AUS Australia
 b. birth
 bap. Baptism
 d. Death
 ENG England
 m. marriage
 NSW New South
 Wales
 QLD Queensland
 SSX Sussex



Their first-born son was **Austen Davis** who was born on 14 November 1851 and baptised in the parish of Camperdown on 25 December 1851 by the Rev. Charles E. Kemp.¹⁴² Next was the birth of daughter **Jane Ann Davis** who was born on 30 September 1853 and likewise baptised by the Rev. Charles E. Kemp on 30 October 1853 in the parish of Camperdown. On both baptismal records Joseph Davis's occupation is given as butcher. The family was living at Camperdown at that time.¹⁴³



Figure 11 (right): Mrs Ellen Davis (nee Turner) (digital file name: davis_3_002). *Image courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection.*¹⁴⁴

The next son born was **Joseph Davis** on 21 April 1856 at Newtown.¹⁴⁵ The next child was daughter **Charlotte Ellen Davis** born on 29 March 1858 at Newtown.¹⁴⁶

The third daughter welcomed was **Amy Ada Davis** who was born on 17 August 1860 at Newtown.¹⁴⁷ Two more sons followed with **Frederick James Davis** born on 23 June 1872 at Newtown¹⁴⁸ and the youngest son **Herbert Edward Davis** born on 20 May 1875 at Newtown.¹⁴⁹ All of the children's births were attended by the midwife Mrs Broadley, as well as by either Dr West or Dr Sedgwick, in the case of Frederick and Herbert. At

¹⁴² NSWBDM Baptism 1851 Austin [sic] Davis Volume 44A No 1821 NRS-12937 Registers of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1787-1856 [5/4169] Reel 5015 and Volume 37A No 1056 [5/4200] Reel 5012 (contemporary copy).

¹⁴³ NSWBDM Baptism 1853 Jane Ann Davis Volume 44A No 1897 [5/4169] Reel 5015.

¹⁴⁴ Mrs Ellen Davis (digital file name: davis_e_002). *Image courtesy of Bayside Library Services Local History Collection.*

¹⁴⁵ NSWBDM Birth Transcription Joseph Davis 1856/2166. (Please note that 1851 Volume 38A No 3258 is not the Joseph Davis from Newtown.)

¹⁴⁶ NSWBDM Birth Transcription 1858/2546 Charlotte Ellen Davis.

¹⁴⁷ NSWBDM Birth Transcription 1860/2854 Amy Ada Davis.

¹⁴⁸ NSWBDM Birth Transcription 1872/3747 Frederick James Davis.

¹⁴⁹ NSWBDM Birth Transcription 1875/4196 Herbert Edward Davis.

the time of Herbert's birth Joseph Davis was 49 years old and Ellen Davis was 42. There were no children deceased.

While Joseph and Ellen were expanding their family they were also involved with other family matters.

Turner and Davis Family Matters

Both Joseph Davis and Ellen Davis were among those named for the sale of a property called Tupo Terrace in April 1871. The property was to be sold on 15 May 1871 by auction, pursuant to an order of the Supreme Court in its Equity Jurisdiction. The plaintiffs were: John Turner, Nathaniel Wallis, and his wife Mary Ann, Joseph Davis and his wife Ellen, Thomas Ellis (an infant, by Nathaniel Wallis, his next friend), Hannah, Miller Turner, and James Ranger. The defendants were James Turner and William Henry Hughes. Tupo terrace comprised three substantial stone-built houses, Nos 66, 68 and 70 Brougham-street, overlooking Woolloomooloo Bay and the Domain.¹⁵⁰ From this we can be sure that Ellen Davis's Turner family were well-off and not afraid to take family-related matters to the courts.

In early August 1871 Ellen Davis learned of the death on 4 July 1871 of James Turner, 'the proprietor of the Criterion Hotel, Levuka, Fiji,' who was a 'brother to Mrs. Joseph Davis, of Newtown, also, to Mrs. N. Wallis, of Woolloomooloo'.¹⁵¹

The birth of Ellen and Joseph Davis's son Frederick James Davis, at the Newtown-road residence of Mrs Joseph Davis, on 3 June 1872 was announced.¹⁵²

On 1 January 1873, Jane Ann Davis 'eldest daughter of Joseph Davis, Esq., of Newtown, Sydney' married at the Congregational Church, Newtown, to Frederick James Hindmarsh, youngest son of the late Michael Hindmarsh, Esq., of Gerringong (Kiama).¹⁵³ They were married by the Rev. Robert Wilson at the Congregational Church, Newtown. Frederick was a farmer from Gerringong, on the NSW South Coast, while Jane's occupation was given simply as 'Lady'. Her usual residence at the time of

¹⁵⁰ *SMH*, 28 April 1871, p. 7 (13237814); *SMH*, 9 May 1871, p. 7 (13238424).

¹⁵¹ *Sydney Mail*, 5 August 1871, p. 733 (16437301); *SMH*, 9 August 1871, p. 8 (28415657).

¹⁵² *Evening News* (Sydney), 22 June 1872, p. 2 (11473129); *Sydney Mail*, 29 June 1872, p. 828 (162666020); *SMH*, 22 June 1872, p. 7 (13259565); *SMH*, 13 Jul 1872, p. 7 (13260488).

¹⁵³ *Sydney Mail*, 25 January 1873, p. 124 (162660029); *SMH*, 27 January 1873, p. 7 (13309871).

the marriage was Newtown. Witnesses were William Lovel Davis and Jane Elizabeth Wallis.¹⁵⁴

The birth of a son, Herbert Edward Davis, born on 20 May 1875 at Mrs Joseph Davis's residence at Newtown was announced in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.¹⁵⁵

In April 1878 Ellen Davis advertised for 'a COOK and LAUNDRESS. Apply Mrs. Joseph Davis, Newtown.'¹⁵⁶ In January 1879 the same advertisement again appeared from 'Mrs. Joseph Davis, Newtown.'¹⁵⁷ These notices may indicate that she and other family members were still resident in Newtown in both 1878 and early 1879.

In December 1879 Joseph Davis, Newtown, advertised for 'a sober MAN; one that understands gardening, &c. (single).'¹⁵⁸ One has to wonder by this time whether he needed a gardener to look after his new Bexley home, Lidham-hill.

1881 was a year of weddings for the Davis family with Austen, Joseph, Amy and Charlotte all taking their marriage vows. For some of them it would not turn into wedded bliss.

Austen Davis, Butcher of Newtown, married Tottie Simpson Smith, of Station Street, Newtown on 25 May 1881. They married at the house of Edward Dean, Station Street, Newtown by James Rickard who was a Congregational minister. The witnesses were William Crane and Jennie Dean.¹⁵⁹

Joseph Davis, the son of Joseph and Ellen Davis, also married in 1881. The *Sydney Morning Herald* marriage notice recorded:

DAVIS-MAHONEY.—June 8, at Forest Lodge, by the Rev. J.B. Waterhouse, Joseph, second eldest son of Mr. Joseph Davis of Lidham-hill, Cook's River, to Mary, eldest daughter of Daniel Mahoney, of Ipswich, Queensland.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ NSWBDM Marriage Transcription 1873/1339 Frederick James Hindmarsh to Jane Ann Davis.

¹⁵⁵ *SMH*, 8 Jun 1875, p. 1 (28404895); *Sydney Mail*, 12 June 1875, p. 759 (162492843).

¹⁵⁶ *SMH*, 25 April 1878, p. 12 (13415914).

¹⁵⁷ *SMH*, 11 January 1879, p. 16 (13427659).

¹⁵⁸ *Evening News* (Sydney), 4 December 1879, p. 3 (107158366).

¹⁵⁹ NSWBDM Marriage Transcription 1881/2249 Austen Davis to Tottie Simpson Smith (Parents names were not recorded).

¹⁶⁰ *SMH*, 6 October 1881, p. 1 (13496118).

This Joseph's marriage would end in a difficult divorce.¹⁶¹

Later the same year, on 9 September 1881, Amy Ada Davis married Thomas William Dransfield.¹⁶² They married at the Wesleyan Parsonage, Forest Lodge, in the district of Glebe by the Rev. Jabez B. Waterhouse. Thomas was a squatter from Wellington, New Zealand with his usual residence being Burwood. His parents were given as Charles Edward Dransfield and Maria Roberts. Amy Ada Davis's usual residence was Cooks River and she was 21 years of age. Witnesses were A. Dransfield, Joseph Davis, Angelo K. Tornaghi and Maria A. Waterhouse.¹⁶³

Charlotte Ellen Davis married George Sydney Brock on 5 October 1881 at St George's Church of England, Hurstville by the Rev. R. Hugh Kelly. George Sydney Brock was a bank clerk while Charlotte's occupation, like her sister, was given as 'Lady'. The witnesses were William Thurchly and Rachel Ellen Wallis.¹⁶⁴ George Sydney Brock was the son of Mary Anne Brock (nee Kettle) (d.1900) and Robert Brock (d. 1899) and a grandson of John Icke Kettle (d.1881) and Ann Kettle (nee May). Mary Anne Brock's sister was Georgina Thurchly (nee Kettle) (1829-1905). It is believed the iconic terraces at Hollis Park, Newtown, now Warren Ball Avenue and formerly Kettle Avenue, then L'Avenue, were built by George Sydney Brock, whose home at 1 Warren Ball Avenue was called 'Brockleigh.'¹⁶⁵

1884 Visit to Sussex

By 1884 Joseph Davis had retired and the butcher's shop at Newtown was being run by his son Austen Davis. Joseph and Ellen Davis were living at Lidham Hill, by now known as Lydham Hill due to arrangements for the subdivision of the land being well in train. Joseph Davis advertised in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, on 12 February 1884, as follows:

¹⁶¹ MHNSW StAC: NRS-13495 Divorce and matrimonial cause case papers, 1873-1987: NRS-13495-29-[13/12459]-1629 Divorce papers Joseph Davis – Mary Davis, 06-02-1895 to 11-10-1895; MHNSW StAC: NRS-13495-29-[13/12474]-2094 Divorce papers Joseph Davis - Mary Davis, John Allen, 24-02-1896 to 29-06-1896.

¹⁶² *SMH*, 10 September 1881, p. 1 (1349435).

¹⁶³ NSWBDM Marriage Transcription 1881/2156 Amy Ada Davis to Thomas William Joseph Dransfield.

¹⁶⁴ NSWBDM Marriage Transcription 1882/2321 Charlotte Ellen Davis to George Sydney Brock. (Note parents were not recorded and the registration year is 1882, not 1881.)

¹⁶⁵ Hollis Park History Project, <https://hollisparkhistory.com/> (accessed 16 July 2023); and see Historic Family Tree on this site, <https://hollisparkhistory.files.wordpress.com/2022/07/warren-ball-family-tree.pdf>.

THE undersigned, leaving early in March for Europe requests all Accounts to be sent in to 222, King-street, Newtown, which will be settled by Austin Davis. The undersigned will not be Responsible for any Debts contracted after 1st March 1884. JOSEPH DAVIS, Sydham [sic, Lydham] Hills, Bexley.¹⁶⁶

And so it was that 'Mr and Mrs J. Davis' boarded the ship by 12.30 p.m. and set sail at 1 p.m. from Circular Quay Wharf, West side, on 15 March 1884 on the Royal Mail Steamer *John Elder*.¹⁶⁷ The ship was headed for London, via Melbourne and Adelaide.¹⁶⁸ It was noted that the ship was 'quite full of passengers, indeed numbers have had to be refused'.¹⁶⁹ The departure of the ship with its large number of passengers was accompanied by 'several steamers, laden with their friends, [which] followed her to the Heads.'¹⁷⁰

Joseph and Ellen Davis after reaching London most likely headed south to Sussex to catch up with Joseph's family and to visit many of the places where he had lived and worked prior to his emigration from Sussex to Australia.

They travelled back to Sydney on RMS *Carthage*, leaving London on 12 September 1884 and passing via Malta on 20 September, Port Said on 24 September, Suez on 26 September, Aden on 30 September, Colombo on 8 October, Albany, Western Australia on 29 October, Adelaide on 24 October, Melbourne on 29 October and reaching Sydney 31 October.¹⁷¹ It is likely that Mr and Mrs Davis were warmly welcomed back by their children and their spouses.

Back to business

Further evidence that Joseph Davis retained active business interest is shown by a notice he placed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1885:

¹⁶⁶ *SMH*, 12 February 1884, p. 2 (1354999).

¹⁶⁷ *SMH*, 15 March 1884, p. 10 (13548994); *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 March 1884, p. 1 (239278934).

¹⁶⁸ *Evening News* (Sydney), 15 March 1884, p. 5 (109869306).

¹⁶⁹ *Evening News* (Sydney), 14 March 1884, p. 3 (109867747).

¹⁷⁰ *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 March 1884, p. 1 (239276085).

¹⁷¹ *SMH*, 1 November 1884, p.12 (13576849); *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 8 November 1884, p. 38 (71019690); Mariners and Ships in Australian Waters website, .q.v. *Carthage*, arrived 31 October 1884, <https://www.marinersandships.com.au/1884/10/166car.htm>.

POULTRY FARM to LET, on Illawarra line, 6 miles from Sydney, close to station. – 12 acres securely fenced and 2 W.B. cottages. Rent 12s per week. Apply to Mr. Joseph Davis, Bexley.¹⁷²

W.B. cottages, of course, refers to weatherboard cottages.

In September 1886 Joseph Davis and his son Austen Davis of Lydham Hill, Bexley, signed a petition for a Municipality at Hurstville.¹⁷³

Joseph Davis's accident

Geeves had written that Joseph Davis 'became paralysed from lifting a side of beef and thereafter, whenever it was necessary for him to travel, he rode in a specially converted Victoria, which allowed him to recline.'¹⁷⁴ Rathbone elaborated that 'Davis, himself, also became incapacitated in later life when he slipped on the carcass of a newly-killed steer, the horns of which penetrated his side. Thereafter he always dragged his right foot and was forced to travel about in a reclining position in a specially converted "Victoria".'¹⁷⁵

It must have been around 1885 or 1886 that Joseph Davis was incapacitated by this accident, as following his death on 24 January 1889 his certificate recorded that he had muscular atrophy and disease of the spinal cord for 3 years.¹⁷⁶ His medical treatment must have included electrotherapy for following his death his wife Ellen advertised as follows:

TO MEDICAL MEN.—For Sale 36-cell Galvanic BATTERY by McIntosh could be used for electric baths. Mrs J. Davis, Lydham Hill, Bexley near Rockdale.¹⁷⁷

Joseph Davis's accident had made his life much more difficult and he had been forced to travel in a carriage described as a "Victoria". A victoria is a type of carriage, named for Queen Victoria. It is a 'doorless four-wheeled open carriage, drawn by one or two horses, based on the phaeton with the addition of a coachman's seat at the front, and with a retractable roof

¹⁷² *SMH*, 17 January 1885, p. 24 (13577644).

¹⁷³ *SMH*, 27 September 1886, p. 9 (13615685).

¹⁷⁴ Philip Geeves and James Jervis, *Rockdale, Its Beginning and Development*, The Municipal Council of Rockdale, 1954, pp. 60-61; Philip Geeves and James Jervis, *Rockdale, Its Beginning and Development*, Council of the Municipality of Rockdale, Revised 1986 by Alderman R. W. Rathbone, p. 58.

¹⁷⁵ Rathbone, R.W., *History of Bexley* (The Author, 1980, unpaginated), q.v. "JOSEPH DAVIS".

¹⁷⁶ NSW BDM Death Transcription 1889/3481 Joseph Davis.

¹⁷⁷ *SMH*, 26 March 1889, p. 4 (13718693).

over the passenger bench.¹⁷⁸ Following her husband's death Ellen Davis advertised a Brougham carriage in first-class order¹⁷⁹, which was a light, four-wheeled horse-drawn carriage, named after the politician Lord Brougham.¹⁸⁰ It is fair to expect that this carriage would have been kept in the Coachhouse at Lydham Hall. Whether Ellen Davis retained the victoria carriage for her own use is not yet known.

Davis Family Tragedy

Perhaps it would have been expected, given his health following his accident, that Joseph Davis would pass away before any of his children but this was not to be the case. Tragedy struck the Davis family. It will be remembered from earlier authors that Joseph and Ellen Davis's youngest son had died young.¹⁸¹

Frederick James Davis died, aged 15, on 15 August 1887 at Bexley and his death was announced in the newspapers:

DAVIS. —August 15, at his father's residence, Lidham Hill, Bexley, Frederick James Davis, third son of Joseph Davis, aged 15.¹⁸²

His cause of death was chronic convulsions which had lasted a month. The informant for Frederick's death was George S. Brock, 'brother-in-law, L'avenue, Newtown' who gave Joseph Davis's occupation as 'gentleman'. Frederick James Davis was buried at Hurstville Cemetery. The undertaker was H. Kinsela of Sydney.¹⁸³

His funeral notice read:

THE FRIENDS of Mr. JOSEPH DAVIS are respectfully invited to attend the Funeral of his late beloved SON, Frederick Jaes; to move from his parents' residence Lidham Hill, Bexley, on WEDNESDAY

¹⁷⁸ Wikipedia, q.v. Victoria (carriage), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_\(carriage\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_(carriage)) (accessed 17 July 2023).

¹⁷⁹ *SMH*, 23 March 1889, p. 19 (13718520).

¹⁸⁰ Wikipedia, q.v. Brougham (carriage), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brougham_\(carriage\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brougham_(carriage)) (accessed 3 July 2023).

¹⁸¹ Rathbone, R.W., *History of Bexley* (The Author, 1980, unpaginated), q.v. "JOSEPH DAVIS".

¹⁸² *SMH*, 16 August 1887, p. 1 (28350459); *SMH*, 17 August 1887, p. 1 (13655199); *Evening News* (Sydney), 16 August 1887, p.4 (108008708); *Sydney Mail*, 20 August 1887, p. 419 (165226658).

¹⁸³ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1887/3016 Frederick James Davis.

AFTERNOON, 17th instant, at 3 o'clock, for St. George's Cemetery, Hurstville. H. KINSELA, Undertaker, 765, George-street.¹⁸⁴

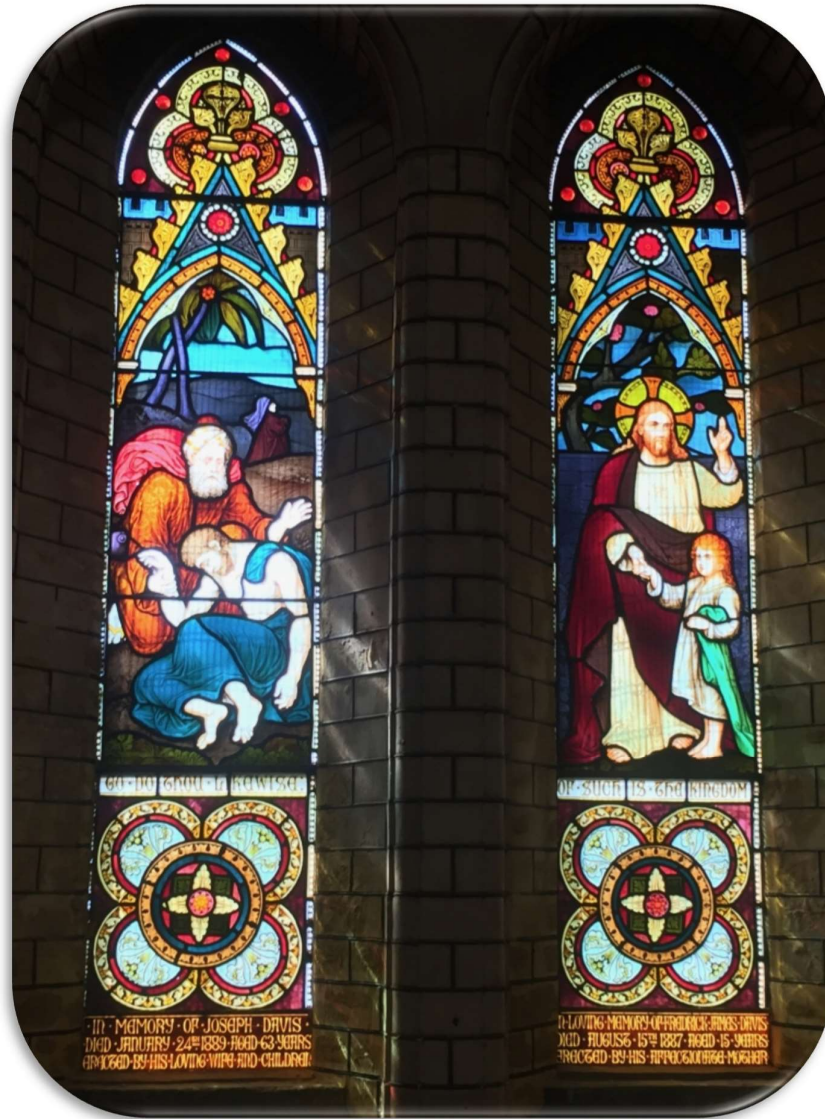


Figure 12: Windows at St George's Church of England, Hurstville. Left is to the memory of Joseph Davis and right is to the memory of Frederick James Davis. *Photograph courtesy of Olga Sedneva, 2023.*

After the new church at Hurstville was opened on 12 October 1889¹⁸⁵ the Davis family paid for the erection of beautiful stained-glass windows to

¹⁸⁴ *SMH*, 16 August 1887, p. 14 (28350500); *Evening News* (Sydney), 16 August 1887, p. 1 (108008714); *SMH*, 17 August 1887 p. 14 (13655218).

¹⁸⁵ Sydney 'Echo' October 23, 1890, reproduced in *The Propeller* (Hurstville, N.S.W.), 11 October 1934, p. 8 (235371511).

the memory of Frederick James Davis and Joseph Davis. The window on the left depicts the story of the Good Samaritan, with the words 'GO DO THOU LIKEWISE' (Luke 10:37). It reads:

IN MEMORY OF JOSEPH DAVIS / DIED JANUARY 24TH 1889 AGED 63 YEARS / ERECTED BY HIS LOVING WIFE AND CHILDREN

The window on the right depicts Christ with a child with the words "OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM" (Luke 18:16).

IN MEMORY OF FREDERICK JAMES DAVIS / DIED AUGUST 15TH 1887 AGED 15 YEARS / ERECTED BY HIS AFFECTIONATE MOTHER

While the Bible stories depicted in the windows will be familiar to those of a Christian religious background, few today will know the significance of the lives of Joseph Davis and Frederick James Davis to the history of the St George District.

Death of Joseph Davis

The *Sydney Morning Herald* announced the death of Joseph Davis as follows:

DAVIS.—January 24, 1889, at his residence, Lydham-hill, Bexley, Joseph Davis, Esq., late of King-street, Newtown, and native of Brede, Sussex, England, in his 63rd year.¹⁸⁶

Joseph Davis would have been mourned by his living brothers and sisters as well as by his wife and surviving children.

His funeral was announced in several newspapers,¹⁸⁷ with additional notices from his sons Austen and Joseph Davis:

THE FRIENDS of the late JOSEPH DAVIS, Esq., are kindly informed that his Funeral will leave his residence, Lydham-hill, Bexley, on SATURDAY AFTERNOON, at 2 o'clock, for Hurstville Cemetery. BOOTS and GOMMERSON, Undertakers, 168, King-street, Newtown.

THE FRIENDS of Messrs. AUSTEN and JOSEPH DAVIS are kindly informed that the Funeral of their beloved FATHER, Joseph Davis, Esq., will leave Lydham-hill, Bexley, on SATURDAY AFTERNOON, at 2 o'clock, for Hurstville Cemetery, BOOTS and GOMMERSON, Undertakers, 168, King-street, Newtown.

The burial was to take place in the burial ground surrounding St George's Church of England at Hurstville, also known as Hurstville Cemetery.

¹⁸⁶ *SMH*, 25 January 1889, p. 1 (13711637).

¹⁸⁷ *SMH*, 25 January 1889, p. 12 (13711663); *SMH*, 26 January 1889, p. 22 (13711899).



Figure 13 (left): Mrs Ellen Davis (digital file name: davis_e_001). *Image courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection.*

Following Joseph Davis's death his wife 'Mrs J. Davis, Lydham Hill. Bexley nr. Rockdale' advertised for sale a 'Broadwood Piano, Walnut, price £12' showing that there was a piano once at Lydham Hall.¹⁸⁸ Broadwood Pianos were of good quality, played by the likes of Haydn, Beethoven and Chopin, which were made and sold by John Broadwood and Sons.¹⁸⁹ Was this piano at Lydham Hill when the Lidham Hill Mazurka was first played?

Probably the earliest reference to Lydham Hill, with that spelling, appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 8 October 1884.¹⁹⁰ Perhaps the first ever use of the name Lydham Hall (rather than Hill) was in April 1890:

FOREST-ROAD, ROCKDALE.

A Splendid Position on the HEIGHTS of ARNCLIFFE, commanding lovely views of ocean, bay, and intervening Pretty Scenery. It is between the well-known Lydham Hall, of Mr. Davis, and Mansion of J. H. Clayton, Esq., opposite Junction of Forest-road with Illawarra-road, near to Mr. Milson's.

A GRAND CORNER, 198ft. Frontage to Forest-road, depth 150ft. along side street 66ft. wide.

RICHARDSON and WRENCH, Limited, will sell by public auction, at the Rooms, Pitt-street, on FRIDAY, 18th April, at 11 o'clock,

The above magnificent site. Torrens' title.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ *SMH*, 26 March 1889, p. 12 (13718783).

¹⁸⁹ Wikipedia, q.v. John Broadwood & Sons, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Broadwood_%26_Sons (accessed 4 July 2023).

¹⁹⁰ *SMH*, 8 October 1884, p. 15 (13573568).

Whether this how the property was now known or whether it was simply a mis-spelling by the adjacent property owner or agent or by the typesetter is not yet known.

The probate of Joseph Davis's will took some time to be finalised. The text of his will, dated 15 October 1887, read:

This is the last Will and Testament of me Joseph Davis of Lydham Hill Bexley near Sydney in the Colony of New South Wales by which I appoint William Lovel Davis of Petersham, George Brock of Brockleigh Newtown executors and my wife Ellen Davis executrix of this my Will.

I give and bequest all my household furniture, plate, linen, wearing apparel, jewelry, horses, carriages &c which I may have at the time of my decease to my wife. I direct that all my just debts, testamentary expenses &c shall be paid as soon as possible after my decease and that my property situate at Bexley and known as Lydham Hill and also that on which my slaughter house is situated at Arncliffe shall be sold without delay the whole of the proceeds from which together with any other monies I may have invested or otherwise shall be invested in such securities in the names of the said executors and executrix as they the said executors and executrix may think fit. The interest derivable therefrom together with the rents from my property consisting of the Butchers and Bakers shops at Newtown to be paid to my wife the said Ellen Davis for her own personal use and the maintenance and education of my son Herbert Edward until he shall attain the age of twenty one years. On his attaining the said age of twenty one years or immediately after his death should it take place prior to his attaining it I direct that the above mentioned properties at Newtown shall also be disposed of and the whole of the proceeds therefrom together with all other monies invested or otherwise shall be divided as follows, viz.—

One third to my wife the said Ellen Davis, and the remaining two-thirds equally between the whole of my sons and daughters, their heirs, administrators or assigns except in the case of my son Joseph whose share if dead shall be given to his issue only (if more than one in equal shares) on each of such issue attaining the age of twenty one years and if he should leave no issue the said share to revert back to his brothers and sisters, their heirs administrators and assigns in equal shares.

¹⁹¹ *SMH*, 9 April 1890, p. 12 (13766172).

In the event of my wife dying before my son Herbert Edward attaining the age of twenty one years the sum of Four pounds per week shall be allowed out of the estate for his education and maintenance until he attains that age when the whole of the estate shall be realized upon in the same manner as if my wife had lived and equally divided between the whole of my sons and daughters, their heirs, administrators or assigns as before mentioned the same proviso being upheld in the case of my son Joseph if dead.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of October one thousand eight hundred and eighty seven.

[signed] Joseph Davis

Signed by the said Joseph Davis of

Bexley in the presence of us,

present at the same time, who in his [signed] Alexander Milsop

presence and in the presence of each [signed] John Coleman

other, attest and subscribe our names

as witnesses hereunto.¹⁹²

Fortunately for both of his sons, Joseph Davis and Herbert Davis lived well past the age of 21 years.¹⁹³

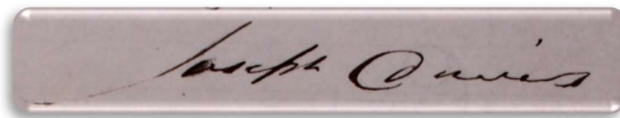


Figure 14: Signature of Joseph Davis from his will, 1887.

Joseph Davis's affairs took some time to be finalised, in part due to a depression in the 1890s which made selling his properties much more difficult. Notices from the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, later Probate Jurisdiction, of the Supreme Court relating to the probate in 'the will of Joseph Davis, late of Lydham Hill, Bexley near Sydney, in the colony of

¹⁹² MHNSW StAC: NRS-13660, Probate packets NRS-13660-3-[17/2286]-Series 3_17982 Joseph Davis Date of death 24 January 1889, Granted on 6 March 1889. (Transcribed by the Author.) Image of Joseph Davis's signature used with permission of Museums of History NSW.

¹⁹³ NSW BDM Death Transcription 1907/5538 Joseph Davis; Queensland Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages Death Index 1952/B/36267 Herbert Edward Davis.

New South Wales, gentleman, deceased' appeared in gazettes and newspapers in 1889, 1895 and 1898.¹⁹⁴ The story of the sale of his properties and what happened to his adult children must wait for another day.



Figure 15: Joseph Davis's butcher shop, King Street, Newtown (digital file name: shops_b_004) *Image courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection.*¹⁹⁵

So it is here we will end the story of Joseph Davis's family life from 1826 to 1889. The death of his wife Ellen 'relict of the late Joseph Davis, late of

¹⁹⁴ *NSW Government Gazette*, No.70, 1 October 1889, p. 901 (224313392); *NSW Government Gazette*, No.688, 15 October 1895, p. 6710 (224302589); *NSW Government Gazette*, No.530, 21 June 1898, p.4687 (222510399).

¹⁹⁵ This image shows the horses and carts standing outside the Davis Butchering Company shop at Newtown, apparently decorated for some special occasion. Note the windows above the sign appear to be the same as the earlier terraced shop [circa 1880]. The telephone number on the awning 119N. (for Newtown) shows that the image is much later. Plans for a telephone exchange at Newtown were being discussed in 1885, see *SMH*, 15 October 1887, p. 10 (13675146) but the image may date from the 1890s or even 1900s.

Lydham Hill, Bexley' occurred on 10 April 1906 at her then residence, Kensington House, in Wilson Street, Newtown.¹⁹⁶ Ellen Davis outlived him by seventeen years. Ellen Davis too was buried at St George's Church of England, Hurstville with the man who had shared her married life from 1850 to 1889.

¹⁹⁶ *SMH*, 11 April 1906, p. 8 (14764707).

Chapter 5: Joseph Davis's land in the St George District

There are three key questions about the land owned by Joseph Davis in the St George District. The first relates to the date when he purchased the land at Bexley upon which Lydham Hall was later built. Was it 1859 or 1860? The second question relates to where Joseph Davis's slaughter house was located in Arncliffe. The last question relates to the planned subdivision of Joseph Davis's land at Bexley during his lifetime. Some, though not all, of these questions may be answered below.

Joseph Davis's land at Bexley

Joseph Davis purchased land at Bexley with the indenture dated 1 November 1859. The land was purchased from Frederick Michael Stokes of Sydney and the chain of documents showing title to the land was held by William Alexander Wolfen of Sydney. Frederick Michael Stokes had purchased the land from Samuel Henry Terry on 4 December 1858. The auction attended by Joseph Davis had been held in the rooms of Messieurs Dean and Company and Davis bid for and became the purchaser of the Bexley land for the sum of £501. He paid £201 to Frederick Michael Stokes and the indenture recorded the receipt of this amount by Stokes and is thus not signed by Joseph Davis. The land was described as:

All that parcel of land part of twelve hundred acres granted to James Chandler and known as Bexley and being Lot six on the plan of Bexley produced at the said sale situate and being in the County of Cumberland Parish of Saint George in the Colony of New South Wales containing by admeasurement sixty seven Acres more or less bounded on the North West by the Illawarra Road commencing at its intersection with the North Eastern boundary of the Bexley Estate and bearing South Westerly to the North Eastern Corner of Spark's Land on the south west by that land being a line bearing East forty five degrees fifteen minutes South to a reserved road on the south east by that reserved road being North Easterly fourteen chains eighty links to the North East boundary of the said Bexley Estate and on the North East by that boundary being a line bearing North forty four degrees forty five minutes West forty seven chains to the point of commencement ...¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ MHNSW StAC: NRS-17513 Primary Application Packets, 1863-2015. NRS-17513-38-125-PA 5688 Primary Application - Joseph Davis 50 acres 24 1/4 perches in Bexley Estate Parish Saint George County Cumberland Volume 669 Folio 127, 01-01-1863 to 12-10-1883.

William Wolfen would have been able to produce the documents showing the chain of title. Upon payment of the remainder of the purchase price by the buyer (Davis) the deed document¹⁹⁸ was registered officially being recorded on the Register of Deeds as Book 68 Number 172 on 2 August 1860.¹⁹⁹ Thus it is correct to say that Joseph Davis purchased the land on 1 November 1859 but the deed was not registered until 2 August 1860.

What is more certain is how the land at Bexley was used. Geeves had written of the land at Bexley that,

Davis used part of his estate in connexion with his butchering business. Cattle, brought overland by drovers from Homebush via Kingsgrove were driven along the unfenced line of Stoney Creek Road thence by Forest Road to Davis' resting paddocks on the low ground in the rear of "Lydham", between the present Herbert Street and Clarence Road. In these paddocks the bullocks were fattened, ample water being available in large waterhole near what is now the corner of Herbert and Tyrrell Streets.²⁰⁰

The area south of the Cooks River gained better access when the dam was built at Tempe in 1839 and from 1843 Surveyor General Major Thomas Mitchell made plans for a road to the south along today's Wollongong Road Arncliffe and Forest Road to the site of the long-gone Lugarno Punt. As Ron Hill and Brian Madden have noted people in that era were prepared to walk long distances. They wrote:

We hear of northern Kingsgrove residents walking to Ashfield or even Newtown to catch a steam tram to Sydney after 1855, by which time they would have completed half the journey on foot.

¹⁹⁸ John P. Bryson QC, *The History of Property Law*. Tutorial on Old System Title, delivered on 13 June 2017 (HistPropertyLawOSTitleRev5 6 2017) (PDF available from the Supreme Court of News South Wales, at https://www.supremecourt.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/Publications/Speeches/2017%20Speeches/Bryson_20170613.pdf). Bryson states (23): 'What is registered in the Old System is the document; a deed conveying title has whatever effect it has and registration does not give effect to it.'

¹⁹⁹ The original indenture in Primary Application PA 5688 is annotated with the number from the Register of Deeds. The copy is include in LRS NSW HLRV, Old System Records, Old System Registers, Book 68 Number 172.

²⁰⁰ Philip Geeves and James Jervis, *Rockdale, Its Beginning and Development*, The Municipal Council of Rockdale, 1954, pp. 60-61; Philip Geeves and James Jervis, *Rockdale, Its Beginning and Development*, Council of the Municipality of Rockdale, Revised 1986 by Alderman R. W. Rathbone, pp. 57-58.

Others recalled to us during 1950 interviews how their parents told of walking to Cooks River dam at Tempe to catch the Sydney two-horse bus which passed through two toll gates along the journey. Some hid lanterns in bushes on this side of the river for use as they trudged back home to Kingsgrove in the dark.²⁰¹

Thus moving cattle over what appears today to be a long distance on foot from Newtown to Bexley via the Marrickville or Canterbury areas would thus have been seen as both normal and necessary for the Davis's butchery business.

It seems on occasion Davis's cattle must have strayed. In May 1880 Joseph Davis offered a reward:

ONE POUND REWARD.— LOST, 5 BULLOCKS from Cook's River.
Joseph Davis, Newtown.²⁰²

This was not the first time had dealt with the issue of lost stock. In April 1855 he had advertised regarding 'FIFTY SHEEP strayed with my flock. Whoever gives the description of the sheep and pays the expenses, shall have them by applying to JOSEPH DAVIS, Newtown.'²⁰³

Joseph Davis's family may also have played a part in the movement of his cattle. William Woolcott held a property on the south side of the Cooks River in 1859 which was an orchard. By March 1866 this area near Cooks River known as Richmond Grove, upstream of the Cooks River dam at Tempe towards Unwin's Bridge, was being used for woolwashing and other noxious trades. It is known that Joseph's brother Thomas Austen Davis had his stockyard on the southern half of Woolcott's original orchard site and Thomas's own slaughter yard was behind his shop in the main street of Canterbury.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Ron Hill and Brian Madden, *Kingsgrove: The First Two Hundred Years*, Canterbury and District Historical Society, 2004, pp. 51-52.

²⁰² *SMH*, 24 May 1880, p. 1 (13460618).

²⁰³ *SMH*, 17 March 1855, p. 1 (12967461).

²⁰⁴ Brian J. Madden and Lesley Muir, *Earlwood's Past: A History of Earlwood, Undercliffe and Clemton Park, NSW*. [Canterbury, NSW], Canterbury Municipal Council, 1989, pp. 19, 21

Joseph Davis's slaughter yard at Arncliffe

The location of Joseph Davis's slaughtering premises at Arncliffe has not previously been definitively located, though it was said by Geeves to be '*near the site* then known as Earl Park'.²⁰⁵ Valmai Long went a step further, stating that,

Joseph Davis was a butcher and drove his cattle overland from Homebush to the waterhole (now the corner of Herbert and Tyrrell Streets). After resting in the paddocks they were taken to his slaughter yards *at the Earl Park site* at Arncliffe.²⁰⁶

Sedneva showed a 1937 street map indicating that Earl Park was sited quite close to Arncliffe railway station, in the block just west of the railway underpass to the north of that station, bounded by Bonar Street, Monk Avenue, Martin Avenue, and Wollongong Road.²⁰⁷

Ron Rathbone was aware of the land sales in the Arncliffe area from newspaper accounts. He wrote:

In December 1856, a partial subdivision of the Tempe Estate took place when 123 suburban lots, ranging in area from half an acre to two acres, were put up for sale to "market gardeners, small capitalists and the industrial classes generally". There was little interest in the sale and it was withdrawn until April 1859, when it was re-subdivided and the whole estate offered for purchase.²⁰⁸

Rathbone goes on to show the attractiveness and advantages of the land, as described in the *Sydney Morning Herald* advertisements for the April 1859 sale:

A number of the lots consist of RICH FRESH WATER SWAMP LAND, well drained, much superior to the Botany, Double Bay, or any other land in the vicinity of Sydney for gardening purposes. This is the

²⁰⁵ Philip Geeves and James Jervis, *Rockdale, Its Beginning and Development*, The Municipal Council of Rockdale, 1954, pp.60-61. Word in italics above only appear in the 1954 edition; Philip Geeves and James Jervis, *Rockdale, Its Beginning and Development*, Council of the Municipality of Rockdale, Revised 1986 by Alderman R. W. Rathbone, pp. 57-58. (My italics.)

²⁰⁶ Valmai Long, 'Lydham Hall,' *St George Historical Society Bulletin*, September 1970, p. 60. No sources are provided. (My italics.)

²⁰⁷ Olga Sedneva, *Lydham Hall, bricks and mortar*, *The Golden Jubilee Edition*, comp. by Olga Sedneva, consultant Anne Field, Editor Wesley Fairhall. Published by the Author, 2021, p. 7.

²⁰⁸ R.W. Rathbone, *A Village called Arncliffe*, Arncliffe, The Author, 1997, p. 28.

only Soil of the above arable nature unoccupied near the metropolis, and the PRUDENT INDUSTRIOUS CLASSES are specially invited to inspect it, and secure a portion (which can be done on very liberal terms) on the day or sale. A few acres of this land, judiciously worked, is a COMPETENCY FOR ANY MAN.²⁰⁹

He did not identify the specific lots that Joseph Davis was to purchase.

We can now confirm that Joseph Davis purchased his land at Arncliffe from the Tempe Estate in 1859. That the land was on Wollongong Road (originally known as Illawarra Road) can now be confirmed from land records and Arncliffe subdivision maps held by the State Library of New South Wales. Following Joseph Davis's death the land at Arncliffe was eventually advertised for sale in 1896 comprising 'Allotments 22 and 23, sec. 2' of the Tempe Subdivision, 'having frontage to Illawarra-street.' It had become a 'well cultivated market garden', in area 2 acres 1 rood and 3 perches, and was 'close to [the] railway station.'²¹⁰

The 'rich swamp land, six miles from Sydney' near the Cook's River, formed part of the Tempe Estate, and was originally to be sold on 8 April 1859²¹¹, but the sale by the firm of R.P. Richardson was delayed until 12 April 1859.²¹² A selling point was that the estate was located 'within easy distance of the metropolitan market by a splendid road'.²¹³ By 1 April 1859 the area, including Tempe House and Grounds plus a number of small farms, containing from 1 to 20 acres of the richest alluvial soil in the colony' was advertised as 'about five miles from Sydney'.²¹⁴ Perhaps we should allow nineteenth century real estate agents a little leeway in their descriptions! Tempe House itself with eleven acres was sold for £2000. The *Herald* reported that the 'attendance was large and there was a good competition for most of the lots'.²¹⁵

²⁰⁹ *SMH*, 1 March 1859, p. 7 (13014980). The notice was repeated, last appearing in *SMH*, 12 April 1859, p. 7 (13023596).

²¹⁰ *SMH*, 23 May 1896, p. 15 (4050600).

²¹¹ *SMH*, 24 Mar 1859, p. 6 (13022763).

²¹² *SMH*, 8 April 1859, p. 7 (13023452).

²¹³ *SMH*, 24 Mar 1859, p. 6 (13022763).

²¹⁴ *SMH*, 1 April 1859, p. 7 (13023118).

²¹⁵ *SMH*, 13 April 1859, p. 12 (13023689).

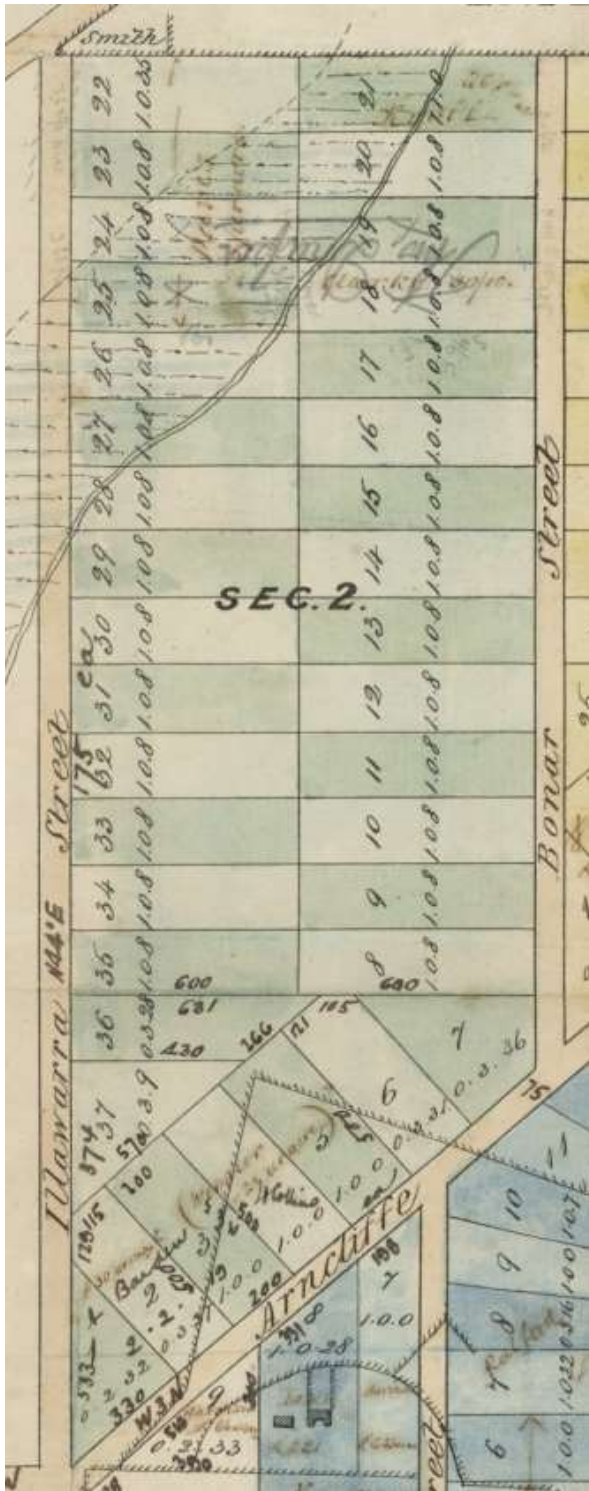


Figure 16 (left): “Plan of the Tempe Estate To be sold by Auction by Mr. R.P. Richardson at the Rooms, Bank Building, George Street. On Friday the 8th of April 1859” [detail]. *Image courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales.*²¹⁶

²¹⁶Arnccliffe subdivision plans. 130 - Z/SP/A5/124 - [Part plan Arnccliffe] – Rocky Point Rd, Arnccliffe Rd, Illawarra Rd, Ann St (State Library of New South Wales PID: IE10429711 File Number FL10429608).

The plan for the Tempe House Estate held by the State Library of New South Wales is annotated. On the plan written in red ink over lots 22 to 25 are the words 'Davis 25 per acre', indicating he paid 25 shillings per acres, a cheaper price than his neighbour who paid 30 shillings 10 pence per acre for lot 18. As noted above the sale took place on 12 April 1859. The land Joseph Davis bought appears to be the swampiest part of the area. The ebb and flow of water through the swamp to the Cooks River may well have been an advantage for a slaughtering yard. Davis's lots fronted Illawarra Road at Arncliffe, close to where that road today meets the railway line north of Arncliffe Station.

Primary Application Search Sketch 40055 shows that Lots 24 and 25 of section 2 passed to William Manners Clark, John Hayes and then Thomas Draper. Lots 22 and 23 passed to Josiah Gentle, Stanley Josiah Gentle and then Ann Earl.²¹⁷ So the site of Earl Park which was given by Geeves for the slaughtering yard does seem to be correct after all.

If there is any doubt left about the site of the slaughtering yard reference to the *Sands' Sydney Directory* may solve the issue. In the 1884 *Sands' Directory* finally included the Rockdale area, then still known as West Botany. In 'Illawarra street, Arncliffe', between 'Arncliffe street and Wollongong Road' Joseph Davis's boiling down establishment is located next to H.F. Lathan's boiling down establishment and in the alphabetical section will be found 'Davis, Jos., boiling down establishment, 56 Illawarra st., Bot. W.' [at Arncliffe in Rockdale, formerly West Botany].²¹⁸

²¹⁷ NSW Land Registry Services (LRS) Historical Land Records Viewer (HLRV), PASS (Primary Application Search Sketch) 40055.

²¹⁸ *Sands' Sydney Suburban Country and Commercial Directory*, 1884, pp. 167, 554 (available online at City of Sydney Archives, Unique ID: A-01136275, <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1898975>). (Note that Number 56 in 1884 is not the same as 56 in 2023.)



Figure 17: The Davis Butchering Company, King Street, Newtown (Digital file name: shops_b_006). *Image courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection.*²¹⁹

A slaughtering license was issued by the Central Police Court to Joseph Davis, 'at south side of Cook's River' in January 1863. At the same time a license was granted to his brother, T.A. Davis, 'at Canterbury'.²²⁰

In January 1872 a publican's license was issued to Frewin Sleath, Highbury Barn, Arncliffe, at the same time as slaughtering licenses were issued to Alfred Davis, George Davis and Thomas A. Davis, for Arncliffe, Cook's River.²²¹ Perhaps the brothers gathered on occasion at the Highbury Barn to quench their thirst. A further license was granted to 'Thomas A. Davis, Alfred Davis, and George Davis, Canterbury; and to Joseph Davis, Arncliff' [sic] in December 1872 by the Central Police Court.²²²

²¹⁹ Compare this image with the other Davis Butchering Company photograph. It has the telephone number TEL.119N. (partly obscured) and is likely to be of a similar date.

²²⁰ *Empire* (Sydney), 7 January 1863 (60521231).

²²¹ *SMH*, 10 January 1872, p. 2 (13250419).

²²² *SMH*, 25 December 1872, p. 5 (13317426).

In January 1882 the Newtown Police Court, located in Australia Street around the corner from Joseph Davis's King Street premises, issued Joseph Davis a slaughtering licence for his premises at Arncliffe.²²³

In November 1884 Joseph Davis's son Austen applied for a slaughter-house license. The Newtown Police Court was responsible for issuing such licenses.

The application of Mr. Austin [sic] Davis, butcher, of Newtown, in the Newtown Police Court on Tuesday, for a slaughter-house license was opposed by the West Botany Council on the ground that the slaughter-house and the boiling-down establishment are within 100 yards of the Arncliffe railway station, on the main road. The consideration of the matter was postponed for a week.²²⁴

Noxious trades were losing favour in the Council, even though some of the aldermen were in that kind of business.

Further we learn that Austen Davis was unable to renew the slaughter-house license and was forced to sell up. The advertisement shows something of the scale of the enterprise:

²²³ *SMH*, 2 January 1882, p. 7 (28383653).

²²⁴ *Evening News* (Sydney), 20 November 1884, p. 4 (107275295).

TO BUTCHERS AND OTHERS

ELLIS and CO. have received instructions from Austin Davis, Esq., to sell by auction, ON THE PREMISES, COOK'S RIVER, CLOSE TO ARNCLIFFE RAILWAY STATION, on WEDNESDAY, the 10th of December, at 2 o'clock sharp,

The whole plant of his slaughtering establishment, consisting of 12 new bullock ties huge cleavers, boathooks, spears
Windlass and chain

Also 1 heavy chain, will hold any weight, suitable for quarry or other heavy work

4 large boilers, bars, pump and piping complete 8 wooden and stone water troughs

20 large scalding tubs, &c.

1 stanch draught horse, dray and harness

2 new beef carts, stanch horses, and harness

Butcher body cart stanch horse, and harness

A lot of pigs, including 30 extra heavy, weighing up to 400lbs

1000 new bricks, fire bricks

10 tons billet wood

And a lot of sundries

The train leaves Sydney at 57 minutes past 12 o'clock on day of sale.

Instructions are to sell without reserve.

TERMS, CASH.²²⁵

This notice gives the reader a picture of some of the tasks and scale of the slaughter yard's work but in no way indicated how this noxious trade would have smelled at its peak!

We can see that Joseph Davis's land in the St George District related to his plans to extend his butchering business from Newtown south past the Cook's River. He needed fertile land to pasture his cattle, fattening them ready to be slaughtered at Arncliffe before they were sent back to Newtown to be sold in his shop. His land at Bexley then became a site for his home and he moved there from Newtown but was still within easy reach of his business in Newtown and his family members.

²²⁵ *SMH*, 9 December 1884, p. 13 (13586184); *Evening News* (Sydney), 9 December 1884, p. 8 (107275671).

Lydham Hill Estate

Prior to his departure for Sussex Joseph Davis had long been planning to take advantage of the land boom expected to follow the opening of the Illawarra Railway Line to Hurstville, prior to 1876 known as Gannon's Forest. The line was opened on 15 October 1884 but the route via Hurstville was only approved by Parliament on 23 March 1881. Earlier routes suggested including via Rocky Point at Sans Souci but the route via Hurstville and Never Fail Bay at Oatley prevailed. As Hatton and Muir wrote 'Estates had been offered for sale with little success while the railway was being built, but with little success, but with the opening of the line, circumstances were right for the latest wave of speculators to make a kill.'²²⁶

Joseph Davis had gone through the process of converting his land from Old System title, a system of land ownership inherited from Great Britain which was based on a succession of deeds and other document passing on ownership, to Torrens Title, a system of title registration for land devised by Robert Richard Torrens which was a much simpler way of documenting land dealings. Torrens Title was much more attractive for buyers.²²⁷

To prove his ownership of the land Davis had to produce both original documents, or copies, of the various deeds in a process known as a 'Primary Application'. Joseph Davis's primary application for the land at Bexley is PA5688. It is from this Primary Application that the documentary evidence for his ownership of the land at Bexley is found and this shows that he was preparing for the proposed subdivision of his part of the Bexley Estate.²²⁸

²²⁶ Joan Hatton and Lesley Muir, *The Triumph of the Speculators: The Illawarra Railway to Hurstville, opened 15 October, 1884*. [n.p.], Southern History Group, 1984, pp. 47, 51, 68.

²²⁷ *First Stop Guide to the Records of the Registrar General, Land and Property Information*, March 2013, pp. 16, 20 and *Old System Information and Search Guide*, Land and Property Information, March 2023, pp. 5-6, 42 (PDFs available from NSW Land Registry Services website, <https://www.nswlrs.com.au/Searching-Guides>).

²²⁸ MHNSW StAC: NRS-17513-38-125-PA 5688 Primary Application - Joseph Davis 50 acres 24 1/4 perches in Bexley Estate Parish Saint George County Cumberland Volume 669 Folio 127, 01-01-1863 to 12-10-1883.

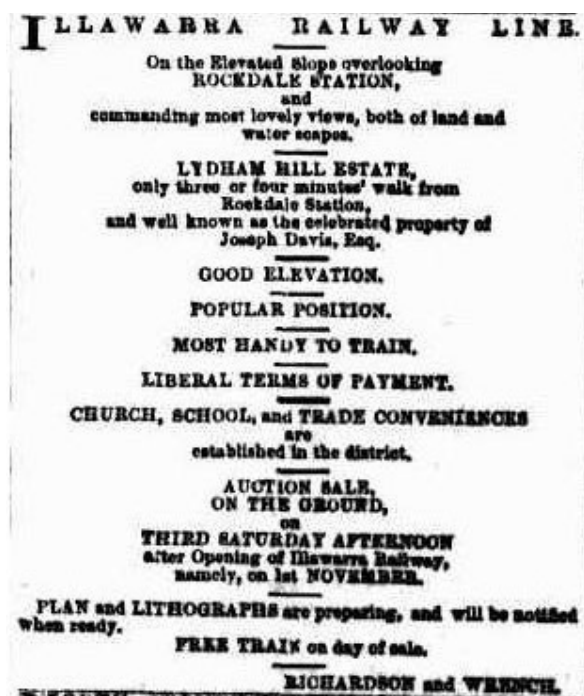


Figure 18: Advertisement for the Lydham Hill Estate, 1 November 1884.²²⁹

The sale of the Lydham Hill Estate was to take place on 1 November 1884, just after the opening of the railway station at Rockdale Station on the Illawarra line. It seems the change of name of his house at Bexley from Lidham Hill to Lydham Hill occurred around this time.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail how the sale of the Lydham Hill Estate proceeded both within Joseph Davis's lifetime and after his death.

So we have resolved some, though not all, of the questions relating to the land owned by Joseph Davis of Newtown and of Lidham Hill or later Lydham Hall. We have learned the date of purchase of the Bexley property on which Lidham Hill was built was 1 November 1859 but the registration of the deed did not happen until 2 August 1860. The location of Joseph Davis's Arncliffe slaughter yard has been confirmed as being the site of Earl Park, as earlier historians had noted, to the north of Arncliffe Railway Station and the sale date of Lots 22 to 25 of the Tempe House Estate where his Arncliffe business has been confirmed as 12 April 1859. Even the address of Joseph Davis's boiling down works has been given as 56 Illawarra Street, West Botany, later known as Arncliffe in the

²²⁹ *SMH*, 8 Oct 1884, p. 15 (13573568).

Municipality of Rockdale. Finally we have touched upon Joseph Davis's plans to speculate on his land following the opening of the Illawarra Railway to Hurstville on 15 October 1884. It would take many years for the Lydham Hill Estate to be finally sold. That is a topic which will require much more detailed research.

Chapter 6 Lidham Hill or Lydham Hall – when was the house built?

At this point we should turn to determining the question of when the Bexley home of Joseph and Ellen Davis was likely to have been built and occupied by the family. There are several strands to this investigation, focussing on the stonemasons, the Davis family itself and the celebration of the opening of the house.



Figure 19: Aerial view of Bexley, circa 1934, showing Lydham Hall with Lydham Avenue to its right (digital file name: Bexley_001). *Image courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection.*

The Stonemasons

Valmai Long (*St George Historical Society Bulletin*, September 1970) states, 'James Benson was the stone mason and, like most of the early

settlers, related to Granny Parkes.' The article was illustrated by Gifford Eardley's drawing of Lydham bearing the date 1855.²³⁰

R.W. (Ron) Rathbone's *History of Bexley* (1980, unpaginated) identifies Granny Parkes as Margaret Parkes, 1852-1935, under 'Some Personalities of the Nineties',

The person who left a mark on Bexley which endures to this day was Margaret McFarlane, or as she was better known, "Granny" Parkes. Margaret McFarlane was born in 1852, the daughter of Robert and Bridget McFarlane. In 1870 at the age of 17 she married in St Peter's Church of England, Cook's River, Isaac Parkes junior, son of the man who bought the first land off Forest Road.

In the *St George Historical Society Bulletin* May 1980 Ron Rathbone reported for the Lydham Hall Local Committee on 24 March 1980 stating,

Lydham Hall stands on portion of the original Bexley land grant. It has always been assumed that information on the building supplied by the previous owners had been correctly researched. This is not the case. Lydham Hall could not possibly have been built in 1855 as an elaborate plaque on the front of the building proclaims as Joseph Davis did not buy the land until November 1859. It was not built (as previously claimed) by a Dutch stonemason named James Benson but by a Swedish stonemason named Sven Bengtson and his son Solomon Peter Benson whose granddaughter is still living at Casula. Action is in hand to correct these facts.²³¹

The granddaughter of Solomon Peter Benson was not named.²³² Soon after R.W. (Ron) Rathbone's *History of Bexley* (1980, unpaginated) revised the date of Lydham Hall to 1860, in line with the purchase date being late in 1859, with the story principally based on information apparently provided to Rathbone by Joseph Davis's granddaughter 'Mrs. V. Hindmarsh' who is acknowledged in the book. As previously noted, I have been able to identify her as Mrs Victoria Pitts Hindmarsh (1901-1981),

²³⁰ *St George Historical Society Bulletin*, September 1970.

²³¹ *St George Historical Society Bulletin*, May 1980.

²³² This granddaughter may be Cora Stella Benson (1902-1972) (who married Roy Harold Bailey in 1935), daughter of Solomon Peter Benson's son William Benson (1876-1965), who lived in the Liverpool area, but her residence at Casula has not been confirmed. (NSWBDM Birth Index 1876/5954 William Benson; Ancestors of Robyn Bray website, <http://www.thetreeofus.net/18/160359.htm> source: Peter Grace (accessed 11 July 2023).

daughter of Joseph Davis's son Joseph Davis and his second wife Eliza Pitts.²³³

In this 1980 history Rathbone states, under 'New Neighbours',

Solomon Peter Benson, a Swedish stonemason, whose father had built Joseph Davis's home, "Lydham", married Isaac Parkes' daughter, Mary, and settled on portion of the Parkes' land at the corner of Forest and Cumberland (now Harrow) Roads.

As noted above the family of Isaac Parkes were early Bexley settlers.

The Bensons

Solomon Peter Benson

Solomon Peter Benson did marry Mary Ann Parkes, daughter of Isaac Parkes, on 17 April 1875. This makes him a brother-in-law of "Granny" Margaret Parkes. His occupation is recorded as a stonemason with his birthplace as Sweden.²³⁴ Solomon Peter Benson died, aged 58, on 19 May 1904 and had spent 33 years in New South Wales, thus he appears to have arrived about 1871. When he died his father's name was recorded as 'Not known Benson (Swede Benzson)'.²³⁵

Further research on the names Bengtson or Benson and other variants, in Swedish records is needed to further understand the origins of the Benson family. First names may also be listed in contemporary records with variant spellings. Solomon Peter Benson's first name is sometimes recorded as 'Salomon'. For example, in the Bexley school file he signed a surety relating to a tender to build the proposed school as 'Salomon Peter Benson'.²³⁶

Swen Johan Peter Benson

Swen Johan Peter Benson died on 11 December 1927 in St Peters Municipality.²³⁷ He too was from Sweden. Note that his first name was not **S**ven but **S**wen and his surname was given as Benson, not Bengtson. His occupation was recorded as a stonemason and he had spent 50 years in NSW, thus Swen Johan Peter Benson appears to have arrived about

²³³ NSWBDM Birth Index 1901/5835 Victoria P Davis and NSWBDM Death Index 1981/202051 Victoria P Hindmarsh.

²³⁴ NSWBDM Marriage Transcription 1875/1363 Solomon Peter Benson to Mary Ann Parkes.

²³⁵ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1904/6990 Solomon Peter Benson.

²³⁶ MHNSW StAC: NRS-3829 School files, 1876-1979. NRS-3829-[5/14910] Bexley School file, 1886-1912 (Bundle A).

²³⁷ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1927/21996 Swen Johan Peter Benson.

1877.²³⁸ Swen Johan Peter Benson lived within walking distance of Bexley, at 33 Lymmerston Street, St Peters, with his wife Hanna Benson.²³⁹

Swen Johan Peter Benson's Probate packet records his name as 'Swen Johan Benson, sometimes known as Swen Peter Benson and Swen Johan Peter Benson'.²⁴⁰

Solomon Peter Benson was not Sven [sic] Benson's son as suggested in Rathbone's *A History of Bexley* (1980). They were instead brothers.

Andrew Benson

Solomon Peter Benson did have a known brother, Andrew Benson. Andrew Benson died in a railway accident on or about 10 November 1885 at Arncliffe, aged 32. The death registration records that Andrew Benson was a stonemason from Sweden. He had been 5 years in New South Wales.²⁴¹ Thus, Andrew Benson appears to have arrived about 1880, after Lydham Hall was completed.

Among the first reports on his death we find that:

The body of a man about 45 years of age was found early yesterday morning on the railway near the Arncliffe tunnel, by a shunter named Sullivan. The body was taken to the South Sydney morgue, where it awaits identification.²⁴²

It was further reported that 'it is supposed that straying along the line he was knocked down and killed.'²⁴³

Andrew Benson was described at the inquest as 'about 45 years of age, 5 ft 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in in height, of fair complexion, with light-brown hair, brown eyes, sandy beard, whiskers and moustache.'²⁴⁴ The supposed age was incorrect as he was only 32.

A further account on the tragedy in the *Riverine Grazier* provided even more detail, including that the deceased

²³⁸ MHNSW StAC: NRS-13660 Probate packets.NRS-13660-11-240-Series 4_149303 Swen Johan Benson - Date of Death 11/12/1927, Place of Residence St Peters NSW.

²³⁹ *SMH*, 11 June 1926, p. 9 (16298114).

²⁴⁰ MHNSW StAC: NRS-13660-11-240-Series 4_149303 Swen Johan Benson - Date of Death 11/12/1927, Place of Residence St Peters NSW.

²⁴¹ NSW BDM Death Transcription 1885/3861 Andrew Benson.

²⁴² *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 12 November 1885, p. 1 (237149987).

²⁴³ *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 12 November 1885, p. 5 (18881575).

²⁴⁴ *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 14 November 1885, p. 43 (70986371).

... was about 45 years of age, 5 ft 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in in height, of fair complexion, with light-brown hair, brown eyes, sandy beard, whiskers and mustache [moustache]; he had lost one tooth in the upper jaw; was dressed in black twill coat, blue striped twill vest, white moleskin trousers, blue checked cotton shirt, and white flannel undershirt, white cotton socks, and old elastic-side boots. On the body were found £4 8s 2d in money, silver watch and chain, a looking-glass, a knife, and a piece of paper on which was written "Henry Wilmer, 88, Well-street, Redfern."²⁴⁵

This information was provided to the public before the man had been identified.

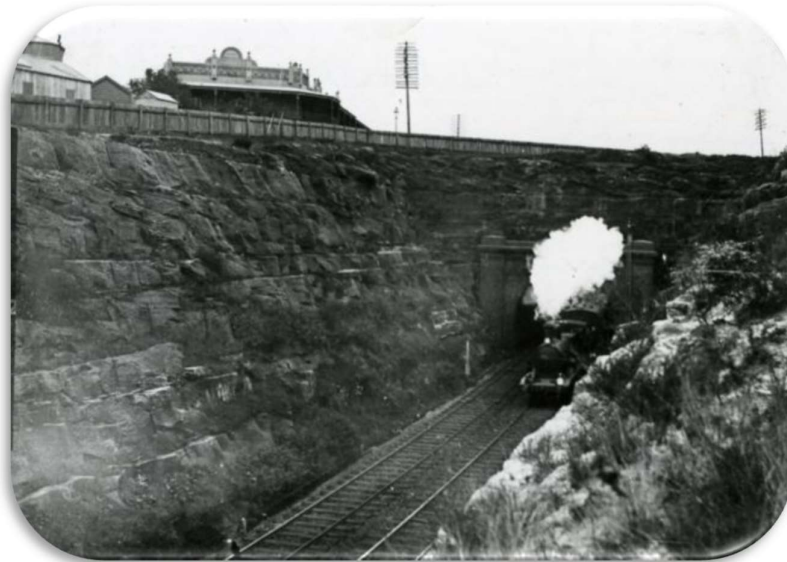


Figure 20: The railway cutting where Andrew Benson died in 1885.²⁴⁶
Image courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection.

It was Solomon Peter Benson who had identified his brother Andrew as the man found on the railway line at Arncliffe. The *Sydney Morning*

²⁴⁵ *The Riverine Grazier* (Hay, N.S.W.), 14 November 1885, p. 2 (139987230). The first part of the description only was also recorded in the *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 14 November 1885, p. 43 (70986371).

²⁴⁶ Steam train travelling through the Arncliffe Tunnel, 1911 (digital file name: railway_t_003). *Image courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection.*

Herald, dated Friday 13 November 1885, states 'Deceased was identified by his brother, with whom he had been residing at Bexley.'²⁴⁷

The inquest reported the circumstances:

Deceased was seen alive at 7 o'clock or thereabouts on Tuesday evening at Rockdale. The wheels of the three trains that had passed over the spot where he was found between Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning were examined but there were no traces of blood on them. It is surmised that when attempting to cross the rails he was knocked down by a passing train.²⁴⁸

Solomon Peter Benson provided key information to the coroner W.T. Pinhey, who was shown as the informant on Andrew Benson's death certificate. The certificate gives Andrew's age as 32 (so born about 1853) and records Andrew's father as Peter Benson and his mother as Catherine Anderson. As brothers the logical conclusion is that Solomon Peter Benson and Andrew Benson would have had the same parents.

When Andrew Benson died the following notice was placed in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, on 16 November 1885:

Deaths

BENSON.—November 11, Andrew Benson, found dead on the railway line near Arncliffe tunnel; loved and respected by all, aged 32.

Dearest brother, how we miss thee,
None but living hearts can tell.

Earth has lost thee;
Heaven has found thee.

Dearest brother, fare thee well.

A native of Sweden. Inserted by his loving brothers, Salomen [sic] and Sven [sic] Benson.²⁴⁹

This notice shows the relationship of Solomon Peter Benson, Andrew Benson, and Swen Johan Peter Benson as brothers. All three brothers were stonemasons from Sweden.

Naturalisation

Both Solomon Peter Benson and Swen Johan Peter Benson applied for naturalisation. Andrew Benson did not apply for naturalisation before his untimely death.

²⁴⁷ *SMH*, 13 November 1885, p. 4 (13603479).

²⁴⁸ *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 November 1885, p. 3 (237148745).

²⁴⁹ *SMH*, 16 November 1885, p. 1 (13603701).

Solomon Peter Benson's naturalisation certificate was dated 30 June 1883.²⁵⁰ Solomon Peter Benson first applied unsuccessfully in 1876 to be naturalised.²⁵¹ He stated that he had arrived in New South Wales in April 1871. His application was supported by Joseph Davis who stated that he had 'known the Memorialist Solomon Peter Benson ... for 4 years'. This document shows that Solomon Peter Benson was known to Joseph Davis since 1872. Benson's 1883 naturalisation application, by which time he had resided in New South Wales for 12 years, was successful.²⁵²

Swen Johan Peter Benson's naturalisation certificate was dated 4 December 1893.²⁵³ Swen Johan Peter Benson stated in his 1893 application for naturalisation that he had arrived in New South Wales in 1877.²⁵⁴

Exact ships of arrival in the Australian colonies for each of the Benson brothers have not yet been determined. Many Swedish emigrants travelled to Australia or New Zealand via Hamburg or Gothenburg. Further research is needed in extant passenger lists.

We have found that the builders of Lydham Hall, based principally on information provided by Victoria Pitts Hindmarsh and probably also told to Valmai Long, were Swen Johan Peter Benson (d.1927) and Solomon Peter Benson (d.1904). Both Swen Johan Peter Benson and Solomon Peter Benson were stonemasons as evidenced by NSW death and marriage registrations and archival records. From the death registration for Andrew Benson and the death notice placed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* following his tragic death on the railway line near the tunnel at Arncliffe we can conclude that Andrew Benson, Solomon Peter Benson and Swen Johan Peter Benson were brothers from Sweden and all were stonemasons.

Solomon Peter Benson was only known by Joseph Davis since 1872 so Lydham Hall could not have been build prior to 1872 if Solomon Peter Benson was the builder. Swen Johan Peter Benson did not arrive in NSW

²⁵⁰ MHNSW StAC: Naturalization Index 1834-1903: INX-30-4747 NRS-1040, Registers of Certificates of Naturalization, 1849-1903: [4/1207] Register No 8 Page No 174 Reel 132.

²⁵¹ MHNSW StAC: NRS-905 Main series of letters received [Colonial Secretary], 1826-1982: [1/2327] CSIL 76/2527 with 76/2527.

²⁵² MHNSW StAC: NRS-905 Main series of letters received [Colonial Secretary], 1826-1982 [1/2534] CSIL 83/3520.

²⁵³ MHNSW StAC: Naturalization Index 1834-1903: INX-30-4748 NRS-1040, Registers of Certificates of Naturalization, 1849-1903: [4/1211] Register No 12 Page No 75 Reel 135.

²⁵⁴ MHNSW StAC: Main series of letters received [Colonial Secretary], 1826-1982 NRS-905-57-[5/6157] CSIL 93/14292.

until 1877 so could not have worked on Lydham Hall earlier than 1877. This narrows the possible dates for the building of Lydham Hall to the period 1872 to 1877 at the earliest.

The Davis Family's association with the St George community

The Davis family originally resided at Newtown where Joseph Davis had a butcher's shop at 257 King Street, Newtown.²⁵⁵ The date of Davis Family's taking up permanent residence of the house known as 'Lidham Hill' may not be certain but their involvement with the local community in Bexley, Rockdale and Hurstville may indicate they were permanent residents.

Place of residence from civil registrations

Birth, death, and marriage civil registrations (1856+) of the children of Joseph Davis and Ellen Davis (nee Turner) have been examined. These show that the Davis children from Joseph Davis (born 1856)²⁵⁶, Charlotte Ellen (born 1858)²⁵⁷, Amy Ada Davis (born 1860)²⁵⁸, Frederick James (born 1872)²⁵⁹, to the youngest son Herbert Edward (born 1875)²⁶⁰ were all born at Newtown with either Dr West or Dr Sedgwick present along with midwife Mrs Broadley who was present at every birth.

The earliest marriage in the St George District is that of Charlotte Ellen Davis to George Sydney Brock in October 1881 at St George's Church of England, Hurstville.²⁶¹ The death of Frederick Davis is recorded as at Bexley, though registered at St Peters.²⁶² Frederick was buried at 'Hurstville Cemetery', being the cemetery at St George's Church of England, Hurstville.

The death certificates of Joseph Davis who died 24 January 1889 at Bexley²⁶³ and Ellen Davis who died 10 April 1906 at Newtown²⁶⁴ show they were both buried at the Church of England Cemetery at Hurstville.

²⁵⁵ R.W. Rathbone, *Cameos of Bexley*. Carlton, N.S.W., Printed by St George Instant Print, 2006, pp. 8-9; Joseph Davis, photograph of Davis Butchering Co., p. 9. Photographic image held by Bayside Library Service.

²⁵⁶ NSWBDM Birth Transcription 1856/2166 Joseph Davis (son). (Note the eldest son Austen Davis was born prior to civil registration.)

²⁵⁷ NSWBDM Birth Transcription 1858/2546 Charlotte A Davis.

²⁵⁸ NSWBDM Birth Transcription 1860/2854 Amy A Davis.

²⁵⁹ NSWBDM Birth Transcription 1872/3747 Frederick J Davis.

²⁶⁰ NSWBDM Birth Transcription 1875/4196 Herbert E Davis.

²⁶¹ NSWBDM Marriage Transcription 1882/2321 Charlotte Ellen Davis to George Sydney Brock.

²⁶² NSWBDM Death Transcription 1887/3016 Frederick James Davis.

²⁶³ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1889/3481 Joseph Davis.

²⁶⁴ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1906/5959 Ellen Davis.

Civil birth registrations show the Davis family residing at Newtown to at least 1875. Thus, the earliest evidence from civil registrations shows the Davis family residing at Lydham Hall from at least 1881.

Newspaper references to the Davis Family at 'Lidham-hill'

The earliest newspaper reference to any member of the family as residing at 'Lidham-hill' is for the marriage to Thomas Dransfield of 'Amy Ada, youngest daughter of Joseph Davis, Lidham-hill, Hurstville, Cook's River' in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 10 September 1881, though the marriage took place at Forest Lodge.²⁶⁵ Likewise the marriage of 'Joseph, second eldest son of Mr. Joseph Davis, of Lidham-hill, Cook's River,' to Mary Mahoney in June 1881 appears in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 6 October 1881.²⁶⁶ These show that Joseph Davis and his children were publicly associated with the 'Lidham Hill' house as early as September 1881.

Thus the earliest evidence from newspaper references shows the Davis family at Lydham Hill in 1881.



Figure 21: Lydham Hall, 2019. *Photograph courtesy of Olga Sedneva.*

²⁶⁵ *SMH*, 10 September 1881, p. 1 (1349435).

²⁶⁶ *SMH*, 6 October 1881, p. 1 (13496118).

Joseph Davis and family and West Botany (Rockdale) and Hurstville municipalities

The Bexley area was not part of the original West Botany Municipality, established in 1871. On 10 May 1886 Davis family members were listed as signatories to a counter-petition against a proposed annexation of the Bexley area to the West Botany Municipality.²⁶⁷ The petition record Name, Qualification and where situated, Address and Witness to Signature. It was signed by Charlotte E. Brock, Freeholder, Bexley, Newtown; Austen Davis, Freeholder, Bexley, Newtown; Joseph Davis, jr., Freeholder, Bexley; Herbert Davis, Freeholder, Bexley, Bexley; Fred. Davis, Freeholder, Bexley, Bexley; Amy Dransfield, Freeholder, Bexley, Burwood. The witness to their signatures was James B. Cahill. Joseph Davis [senior] was also listed as a Freeholder, Bexley.

Joseph Davis, landowner, Bexley along with Austen Davis, freeholder of Lydham Hill, Bexley were signatories to a petition dated 22 September 1886 for a municipality at Hurstville.²⁶⁸

Thus from municipal petitions the earliest date for the Davis family residing at Lydham Hall is 1886.

Joseph Davis proposes a Public School at Bexley

Joseph Davis was one of four signatories to an application to establish a public school at Bexley in December 1885. This was unsuccessful so a further application was also signed by Joseph Davis in May 1886 with the proposed school at Bexley then approved by the Department of Public Instruction.²⁶⁹ Both Herbert Davis and Frederick Davis were noted with the applications as prospective pupils of the proposed Bexley school.

This shows that the Davis family were still resident in the Bexley area in 1885 and 1886.

Involvement of Joseph Davis with Christ Church Bexley from 1885

E. Herbert Bates, *First Four Score Years, Christ Church Bexley*, edited 1985 [published by the Church] has several mentions of Joseph Davis. Joseph Davis (Bates, pp. 3, 10) was one of the original 1885 supporters of establishing a Church of England at Bexley. Bates repeats much of what was published in Ron Rathbone's *History of Bexley* (1980) on pp. 16-17

²⁶⁷ *NSW Government Gazette*, No.265, 10 May 1886, pp. 3327-3328, 3331 (22168392).

²⁶⁸ *NSW Government Gazette*, No.540, 22 September 1886, pp. 6445-6447 (222437674).

²⁶⁹ MHNSW StAC: NRS-3829-[5/14910] Bexley School file, 1886-1912 (Bundle A).

noting 'Mr and Mrs. Davis placed their home at the service of the Church Committee, and for the active interest and generous liberality they had shown in connection with the erection of Christ Church, the Trustees recorded in 1887 their appreciation of the Davis Family. The scroll relating to the foundation stone of the Church laid on Saturday 24 July 1886 (Bates, pp. 17-18) records 'Committee, Rev. W.H. Saunders. Chairman; Henry Kinsela; George Preddy; Joseph Davis; Alexander Milsop; Thomas Milsop; C.J. Burney; H.P. Tidswell; Thomas Leeder; Fred T. Gibbons [sic, Gibbins]; David White.' These were the names of the first parochial committee (Bates, p. 34).²⁷⁰

The earliest newspaper source of these names is the *Daily Telegraph*, 19 July 1886, which records that,

When completed in every respect the cost is estimated at about £1400. Towards this sum there is something like £400 in hand, and Mr. Joseph Davis, of Lydham-hill, has generously lent £500 at 5 per cent., thus making £900 available for the building. The remaining £500 the building committee is prepared to find in order to complete the church. ... It is expected that the church will be opened for service in about three months, and it is said there is much need for it in this locality, for the reason that those who live at Bexley, when they attend service, go to Hurstville, two miles distant, with a consequence that the congregation at the church in this thriving locality is often an overflowing one.²⁷¹

Further,

As stated, the Rev. W. H. Saunders is the incumbent connected with the church; Messrs. Ransoms and Hardy are the architects, and Mr. John Bonner, the builder. The committee consists of Mr. Saunders as chairman, with the following gentlemen as members:—Messrs. H. Kinsela, G. Preddy, J. Davis, A. Milsop, T. Milsop, C. J. Burney, H. P. Tidswell, T. Leeder, F. J. Gibbins, and D. White.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Herbert E., *First Four Score Years, Christ Church Bexley*, edited 1985 [published by the Church], pp. 16-18, 34. Thank you to Olga Sedneva for providing this reference.

²⁷¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 19 July 1886, p. 7 (237296653).

²⁷² *Daily Telegraph*, 19 July 1886, p. 7 (237296653).



Figure 22: Christ Church, Bexley, 2023.
Photograph courtesy of Olga Sedneva.

The *Daily Telegraph* of 26 July 1886, also gives the full names of the committee,

Committee: Rev. W. H. Saunders, chairman; Henry Kinsela, George Preddey, Joseph Davis, Alexander Milsop, Thomas Milsop, C. J. Burney, H. P. Tidswell, Thomas Leeder, Fred. J. Gibbins, David White.²⁷³

These references show that Joseph Davis was resident in Bexley in 1886 and was involved in the local religious community and gave financial support towards the building of Christ Church, Bexley.

²⁷³ *Daily Telegraph*, 26 July 1886, p. 5 (13641910).

St George's Church of England, Hurstville, and the Davis family from 1881

As stated above the closest Church of England to Bexley prior to 1886 was St George's Church of England at Hurstville. As shown above, Joseph Davis's daughter Charlotte Davis married there in 1881.

The Sydney '*Echo*' dated October 23, 1890, and reproduced in *The Propeller* (Hurstville, N.S.W.), 11 October 1934, provides a brief history of the church,

Hurstville was chosen as the site for the parish church and St. George's Church, the first church in the parish of St. George, is said to have been built about 1856. It was a plain weatherboard structure, and some years ago was found to be so rotten and damaged by white ants that it was removed, and a more substantial building erected. The new church is of brick, with a portico over the entrance door. In the front is a stone, with the inscription: "This memorial stone was laid by the Most. Rev. Dr. Barry, Primate, April 6, 1889, and the church was licensed on October 12, 1889. Charles H, Halstead, Architect. " ... Other stained glass windows have been erected to the memory of Joseph Davis (63), 1889 and his son [Frederick] James Davis (15) 1887... At the rear of the church is the burial ground in accordance with the ancient English custom of burying in the churchyard.²⁷⁴

Among those buried in the church cemetery, which no longer exists in 2023, is 'Joseph Davis, of Newtown (63), 1889'. Hence it is likely Joseph Davis and his family were parishioners of St George's Church of Hurstville, prior to 1886 but they were not living in the area when the first church was established there about 1856. The stained glass windows were provided by Joseph Davis's surviving family after his death in January 1889 in the new church building which was not opened for worship until October the same year.

Thus the earliest date the Davis family can definitely be shown to be involved with St Georges Church of England, Hurstville is 1881, and with Christ Church, Bexley is 1886.

Joseph Davis, his wife Ellen Davis, and members of the Davis family have been documented as residents of 'Lidham Hill' at Bexley from at least 1881.

Joseph Davis was also a supporter of and signatory to applications in December 1885 and May 1886 for a government school to be established

²⁷⁴ Sydney '*Echo*' October 23, 1890, reproduced in *The Propeller* (Hurstville, N.S.W.), 11 October 1934, p. 8 (235371511).

at Bexley, principally so his sons Frederick and Herbert Davis would be able to attend.

Joseph Davis is known as a benefactor and committee member of Christ Church, Bexley, from 1886.

The Davis family were also parishioners of St George's Church of England, Hurstville, from at least 1881 when Charlotte Davis was married there and where Joseph and Ellen Davis and their son Frederick Davis were later buried in the churchyard cemetery. Following his death Ellen Davis and family endowed the new Hurstville church opened in October 1889 with stained glass windows in memory of both Joseph Davis and his son Frederick Davis.

The earliest newspaper reference to any member of the family as residing at 'Lidham-hill' is for the marriage to Thomas Dransfield of 'Amy Ada, youngest daughter of Joseph Davis, Lidham-hill, Hurstville, Cook's River' in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 1881, though the marriage took place at Forest Lodge.²⁷⁵ Likewise the marriage of 'Joseph, second eldest son of Mr. Joseph Davis, of Lidham-hill, Cook's River,' to Mary Mahoney in June 1881 appears in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 October 1881.²⁷⁶ These show that Joseph Davis and his children were publicly associated with the 'Lidham Hill' house as early as September 1881.

Thus the earliest evidence from newspaper references shows the Davis family at Lydham Hall in 1881.

The Lidham Hill Mazurka

R.W. (Ron) Rathbone's *History of Bexley* (1980) notes under 'Joseph Davis' that,

When the house was completed, a special piece of music – "The Lidham Hill Mazurka", was composed for the occasion.

As we have seen the property today known as Lydham Hall was first known 'Lidham Hill'.

Valmai Long (*St George Historical Society Bulletin*, September 1970) states,

The coach entrance at the junction of Forest Road and Clarence Road, was the scene of one of Bexley's biggest social nights, when Joseph Davis gave his house warming.

Carriages swept down the circular driveway to the front entrance ... and were greeted by an orchestra engaged for the occasion.

²⁷⁵ *SMH*, 10 September 1881, p. 1 (1349435).

²⁷⁶ *SMH*, 6 October 1881, p. 1 (13496118).

The "Lidham Hill" mazurka was especially composed for the opening and the music is still kept at "Lydham Hall".

This detail had not been recorded by Geeves in 1954 nor by Rathbone in his first *Bexley* history. Valmai Long does not provide her source for this information, except for the fact that as the owner of Lydham Hall prior to its sale to Rockdale Council she would have been familiar with the copy of the "Lidham Hill" mazurka still kept at "Lydham Hall", her then home. Accompanying the article was the sketch by Gifford Eardley with the caption, "Lydham Hall", and the year 1855.²⁷⁷ The mention of an orchestra at the opening may have been an embellishment! Nevertheless the composition of a piece of music for the opening of a house is significant to the story of Lydham Hall.

From the acknowledgement in Rathbone's *History of Bexley* (1980), as noted above, the information strongly linking the opening of (then) 'Lidham Hill', now Lydham Hall, with the *Lidham Hill Mazurka* appears likely to have been provided by Joseph Davis's granddaughter Victoria Pitts Hindmarsh.

The published music for the *Lidham Hill Mazurka; for the pianoforte* composed by Nellie Marchant²⁷⁸ is available as digitised images from the National Library of Australia. The published score is not dated.

Nellie Marchant, composer of the *Lidham Hill Mazurka*

The question then arises, who was Nellie Marchant?

Ellen (known as Nellie) B. Marchant was born on 10 June 1864, at Buckland Street, Redfern, the daughter of Joseph Keeale Marchant, a draper from Brighton, Sussex, and his wife Annie Emily Marchant (nee Cogswell) who had been born at Bath, England. Her parents had married in December 1840 at Bristol, England.²⁷⁹ Ellen Bellomi [sic] Marchant was married to William Miller Stokes, a mariner born at Glasgow, on 31 October 1888 at St James Church of England, Sydney. Ellen's father Joseph's occupation was given as a warehouseman.²⁸⁰ Ellen Bellomin [sic]

²⁷⁷ *St George Historical Society Bulletin*, September 1970.

²⁷⁸ The National Library of Australia catalogue entry is at <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/1344404>. Digitised images of the *Lidham Hill Mazurka; for the pianoforte* composed by Nellie Marchant are available from the National Library of Australia <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-168543502>.

²⁷⁹ NSWBDM Birth Transcription 1864/3295 Helen Bellaume [sic] Marchant.

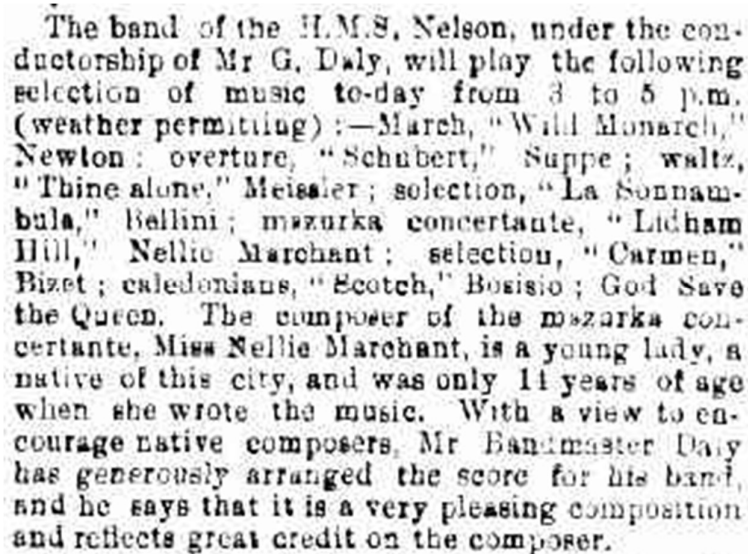
²⁸⁰ NSWBDM Marriage Transcription 1888/1586 Ellen Marchant to William Stokes.

Stokes died on 12 September 1942, at 2 Victoria Road, Bellevue Hill.²⁸¹ It appears likely that the Marchant family must have known the Davis family well for Nellie Marchant to have composed a piece of music for the opening of Lidham Hill.

Further information about the *Lidham Hill Mazurka* and its author, Nellie Marchant is provided in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*:

The band of the H.M.S. Nelson, under the conductorship of Mr G. Daly, will play the following selection of music to-day from 3 to 5 p.m (weather permitting):—March, "Wild Monarch," Newton; overture, "Schubert," Suppe; waltz, "Thine alone," Meissler; selection, "La Sonnambula," Bellini; mazurka concertante, "Lidham Hill," Nellie Marchant; selection, "Carmen," Bizet; caledonians, "Scotch," Bosision; God Save the Queen. The composer of the mazurka concertante, Miss Nellie Marchant, is a young lady, a native of this city, and was only 14 years of age when she wrote the music. With a view to encourage native composers, Mr Bandmaster Daly has generously arranged the score for this band, and he says that it is a very pleasing composition and reflects great credit on the composer.²⁸²

Note that the article states that Nellie Marchant "was only 14 years of age" when she wrote the music' for the 'Lidham Hill' mazurka.



The band of the H.M.S. Nelson, under the conductorship of Mr G. Daly, will play the following selection of music to-day from 3 to 5 p.m. (weather permitting):—March, "Wild Monarch," Newton; overture, "Schubert," Suppe; waltz, "Thine alone," Meissler; selection, "La Sonnambula," Bellini; mazurka concertante, "Lidham Hill," Nellie Marchant; selection, "Carmen," Bizet; caledonians, "Scotch," Bosisio; God Save the Queen. The composer of the mazurka concertante, Miss Nellie Marchant, is a young lady, a native of this city, and was only 14 years of age when she wrote the music. With a view to encourage native composers, Mr Bandmaster Daly has generously arranged the score for his band, and he says that it is a very pleasing composition and reflects great credit on the composer.

Figure 23: Miss Nellie Marchant, composer of the mazurka.²⁸³

²⁸¹ NSWBDM Death Transcription 1942/23792 Ellen Bellomin Stokes.

²⁸² *The Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 8 October 1883, p. 2 (239273811).

²⁸³ *The Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 8 October 1883, p. 2 (239273811).

A further article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in March 1882 also referred to the "Lidham Hill mazurka" and again gave Nellie Marchant's age:

A copy of the "Lidham Hill Mazurka," composed by Miss Nellie Marchant, has been forwarded to this office. The composition is more in the concert than dancing style, and displays much talent in a musician, who is but 16 years old. Complete originality is scarcely to be expected, but the different movements are well carried out and successfully harmonized. The octave and arpeggio are the leading characteristics of the mazurka.²⁸⁴

As we have seen Nellie Marchant was born on 10 June 1878. On the basis that Nellie turned 14 years of age on 10 June 1878 and 15 years of age on 10 June 1879 the opening of Lydham Hill (now Lydham Hall) when her composition called 'The Lidham-Hill Mazurka' was performed must have happened sometime either between these two dates or very shortly afterwards.

Dating of Lydham Hall from the Mazurka

Lydham Hall must have been completed in late 1878 or early 1879 based on Nellie Marchant's age when she wrote the 'Lidham Hill Mazurka' for the opening of Joseph Davis's house then known as 'Lidham Hill'. This information, together with information found on Solomon Peter Benson and Swen Johan Peter Benson, provides the most precise dating of Lydham Hall to date. My conclusion is that Lydham Hall can now be said to have been built sometime between 1872 and 1879 with its completion and opening taking place between 10 June 1878 and 10 June 1879 or very shortly afterwards.

Conclusion on the dating of Lydham Hall

The final conclusion is that the earliest possible dates for building Lydham Hall are from 1872 to 1877 based on the stonemason builders, Swen Johan Peter Benson and Solomon Peter Benson. The *Lidham Hill Mazurka*, with the information most likely provided by Mrs Victoria Pitts Hindmarsh, strongly suggests a completion date ranging from late 1878 to mid-1879 based on the age of its composer, Nellie Marchant. The Davis family can be shown to have been in residence at Lidham Hill by 1881 (though they may have been there earlier) and were involved in the St George District community from at least 1881 to January 1889 when Joseph Davis died.

²⁸⁴ *SMH*, 2 March 1882, p. 5 (13506137).

Conclusion

We have seen that Joseph Davis came from a large family originating in East Sussex. His family can be traced back to the eighteenth century. He came from a large family as his father had married twice. Joseph Davis of Newtown and Bexley had many brothers and sisters, most of whom also came to New South Wales. His brothers Alfred, George and Thomas Austen Davis all worked as butchers in Australia. His brother Thomas Austen Davis became a Mayor of Canterbury and his half-brother William Lovel Davis became a Mayor of Petersham as well as a prominent politician in the NSW Parliament as Member for Canterbury. He was also a well-known racing identity.

Much more knowledge of Joseph Davis's early life in Sussex, his migration to New South Wales, his marriage, his children, his properties, his business and his travels has been learned in the course of this research. No doubt more is still to be written about what happened to his family, his properties and his business following his death in 1889.

While Joseph Davis spent much of his business life at Newtown his endeavours have had a lasting impact on the St George District of Sydney. Through him we have learned more about the early history of Bexley and its school and the establishment of Christ Church, Church of England as well as of the purchase of some of the land in that area. We have read of the Davis family links to St George's Church of England, Hurstville and seen the stained-glass windows which commemorate Joseph Davis and his son Frederick James Davis. We have also learned some of the early history of Arncliffe including the subdivision of the Tempe House Estate and the slaughtering business of the Davis family which existed there.

We have learned of the Swedish builders of Lydham Hall, stonemasons Solomon Peter Benson, and Swen Johan Peter Benson his brother. We have read of the death of their brother Andrew Benson on the Illawarra railway line. We have learned the story behind the 'Lidham Hill Mazurka' and its composer, Nellie Marchant and how this may help us to date Lydham Hall itself.

Perhaps most significantly we now understand the origin of the name of Lydham Hall. Joseph Davis's Sussex family had lived at Lidham-hill, near Guestling, and it is this property which can be identified as the origin of the name for Joseph Davis's property at Bexley, originally called Lidham Hill. Over time the name was changed first to Lydham Hill, and eventually it became well-known as Lydham Hall, with the property purchased by Rockdale Council and finally opened to the public as a museum in 1971. With this rich history more fully known it is to be hoped the public from

within the Bayside Council area and wider afield will be able to visit Lydham Hall and appreciate the impact of the life of one man, Joseph Davis, on the St George District in Sydney.

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Bayside Library Service Local History Collection (Images)

Aerial view of Bexley, circa 1934 [showing site of Lydham Hall] (digital file name: Bexley_001).

Joseph Davis (digital file name: davis_j_002)

Joseph Davis' butcher shop, King Street, Newtown (digital file name: shops_b_005).

Mrs Ellen Davis (digital file name: davis_e_001).

Mrs Ellen Davis (digital file name: davis_e_002).

Staff of the Davis Butchering Company (digital file name: shops_b_007).

Steam train travelling through the Arncliffe tunnel, 1911 (digital file name: railway_t_003).

The Davis Butchering Company, King Street, Newtown (digital file name: shops_b_004).

The Davis Butchering Company, King Street, Newtown (digital file name: shops_b_006).

The stables and coach house of Lydham Hall, Lydham Avenue, Rockdale, 19t1 (digital file name: roads_ly_014).

(Images courtesy of Bayside Library Service Local History Collection).

Photographs

Janette Pelosi:

257 King Street, Newtown, 2023

Olga Sedneva:

Christ Church, Bexley 2023.

Lydham Hall, 2019.

THE END