

The Johnson Family (*names changed*)

In this study we will look at the ancestry of Dianne Penelope Johnson who was born on 9th June 1965 in Tynemouth, Northumberland focusing on the Johnson family line.

Dianne married her husband Mark Hudd at Market Harborough in Leicestershire in 1992. Dianne and Mark had six children:

Jack Owen Hudd, born 19th March 1995 at Leicester

Adam Benjamin Hudd, born 28th October 1997 at Leicester

Oliver Thomas Hudd, born 28th October 1997 at Leicester

Timothy Eric James Hudd, born 15th May 2005 at Leicester

Rebekah Lydia Grace Hudd, born 28th February 2008 at Leicester

Sophie Elizabeth Hudd, born 2nd April 2013 at Burton on Trent.

Rebekah died on 29th February 2008, Sophie is adopted.

Dianne was the second of the three children of Eric Johnson and his wife Doris Millicent Wilkinson, who were married on 9th July 1957 at Tynemouth. Dianne's siblings are:

Susan Johnson, born in 1958 at Tynemouth. Susan married Roy Dryden in 1983.

Richard Thomas Eric Johnson, born in 1966. Richard married Sian Davies in 2000.

Dianne also has an elder half sister Helen Gray, who was born at Newcastle in 1951 and who was her mother's daughter by her first husband Robin Gray.

Eric Johnson was one of five children. He was born on 31st March 1920 at Tynemouth. Eric died on 16th November 1998. Eric's siblings were:

Evelyn Maud Johnson, born at Tynemouth on 24th May 1914. Evelyn married James Henderson in 1935 and died on Tyneside on 1992.

Thomas Francis ("Frank") Johnson, born at Tynemouth on 18th August 1916. Frank married Grace Cappleman in 1939 and died on Tyneside in 2003.

Rachel Isobel Johnson, born at Tynemouth on 17th July 1923. Isobel Johnson married Ernest Ricks in 1946 and died on Tyneside in 1991.

Norman Johnson, born at Tynemouth in 1927. Norman married Ivy Anderson in 1952.

These five children were the offspring of Thomas Smith Johnson (junior) by his wife Rachel Hunter. Thomas and Rachel were married in 1913, Thomas died in 1960 aged 70 and Rachel in 1970.

The birthplace of Thomas Smith Johnson (junior) was not immediately apparent from the records. Unlike his children and many of his grandchildren, it was clear that he was not born in Tynemouth. In fact, he did not appear to have been born in the North-East of England at all.

Indeed he was not.

Thomas was found on the 1911 census with his parents and siblings at 2 Edith Street, Tynemouth. Now, it was not immediately clear that this was Thomas as his name had been recorded by his father who was also named Thomas Smith Johnson as "Thomas *William* Johnson". This was an error on the part of his father as later became clear from other records.

At this time, although the registration of the births of children was required by law, the provision of birth certificates to parents was not routinely carried out and with so many children, people occasionally simply forgot or became confused about some details of the names that had been given to their children.

This census suggested that Thomas (junior) was aged 22 and born at Poplar in the East End of London.

The previous census, that of 1901 also found the family living in Tynemouth, but in a tenement block at 44 Percy Street. It was suggested that Thomas (junior) was 12 years of age.

On the 1891 census, the family were indeed living in London, specifically at 50 Dee Street in the parish of Bromley by Bow. On this occasion, Thomas (junior) was stated to be one year old.

Thomas Smith Johnson was christened at the parish church of All Hallows, East India Docks, London on 19th March 1890. His date of birth was stated to have been 27th February 1890.

Interestingly, his parents gave their address as 86 John Clay Street, South Shields, so they must have only recently moved from the North-East when Thomas junior was born.

Thomas' parents Thomas Smith Johnson (senior) and Catherine Moore Gilbert Blackburn were married at Tynemouth on 7th December 1876. Thomas was 21 and Catherine 16.

Thomas Smith Johnson (senior) was a seaman, sometimes described as a Master Mariner or Ship's Steward. It is this occupation that would have taken the family from the North-East, to London for a number of years in the 1890s. Presumably Thomas was able to get a better paid job there, but had to bring his family with him.

Thomas and Catherine had a number of children besides Thomas (junior). These were:

John James Blackburn Johnson, born at North Shields in 1879. John married Isabella Fry Hunter in 1908 and died in 1946. John was named after his maternal grandfather James Blackburn.

Annie Isabella Johnson, born at North Shields in 1881. Annie married her husband John Crawford in 1900 when the family were living in London, but returned with them to the North-East.

Charles Frederick Wormwell Johnson, born at Tynemouth in 1884. Charles married Isabella Welch on Tyneside in 1903. He was the only member of the family who is known to have served in the First World War.

His name seems somewhat elaborate, but the source in particular of his unusual middle name has not been discovered. It does not appear to have been a family surname.

Richard Smith Johnson was, like Thomas, born in London. He was born on 14th April 1892, but his birth was not registered.

William Alfred Johnson was born in London in 1895 and his birth registered. He died in the North-East in 1962.

Stanley Gordon Johnson was born in London on 27th August 1898. Again, like his brother Richard, his birth was not registered. Their dates of birth are known only from christening records. Stanley married Margaret Stephenson at Tynemouth in 1920 and died in 1969.

Thomas Smith Johnson (senior) died in 1934 aged 78. He was born at North Shields on 27th October 1855. Apart from the ten years that he spent based in London, he seems to have spent most of his life based in the North-East, specifically in his home town of Tynemouth. I say 'based' because for many mariners, their home was the sea.

Thomas Smith Johnson (senior) was one of the eight children of a sea captain named John Johnson and his wife Jane Matthewson, who were married at Tynemouth on 15th May 1843.

John and Jane lived in North Shields and all their children were born there. Their eldest was Susanna Johnson born in 1843 and she was followed by John (junior), James, Jane Isabella, Eleanor Smith, Thomas Smith, Charles William and William Alfred Johnson.

Jane was widowed by 1871, her husband John Johnson having died at sea sometime in the previous ten years. She is recorded on this census at 23 Hudson Street, North Shields and is described as a dress maker. Thomas Smith Johnson (senior) was at this time still a teenager and being employed as a blacksmith.

Jane died in 1902. Some members of her family had a stone erected in her memory. A photograph of this event was taken. It seems that at least two and perhaps three of her five sons are pictured. Whether Thomas Smith Johnson is one of those on the photograph, I do not know. Certainly if not him, then his brothers are photographed. Some grandchildren are also on the photograph.

The stone records that "Jane Johnson, the relict of the late Captain John Johnson of North Shields died on 7th June 1902 aged 79 years". A grandson was also buried with her. The family clearly held her in high regard.

What of the origins of John Johnson? His birth precedes the commencement of Civil Registration in 1837 by some years, so we have to rely for the most part on church registers. These are not completely indexed and "John Johnson" is not an uncommon name, so how can we tell if we have the right person?

John Johnson does not appear on any of the extant census returns made during his lifetime: those of 1841, 1851 and 1861. On these dates he was clearly away at sea. The census, especially those of 1851 and 1861 should have stated his birthplace.

When he was married John said that his father was also named John Johnson, but that he was an ironmonger. While "John Johnson" is a common enough name, the occupation of ironmonger is much less so, and that should aid with identification.

There was one other important piece of evidence found, which enabled his origins to be traced. On the christening of their elder child Susanna Johnson, John gave his name not as "John Johnson", but as

"John *Jagger* Johnson".

Now it might be supposed that this is some sort of strange nickname, but "Jagger" is certainly a surname and it would be very unusual for nicknames to appear on christening records.

So if he was "John Jagger Johnson", then he might be unique as the chances of there being two people so named would be very low as Jagger is not a common surname.

Just speculatively looking for "John Jagger Johnson" in a general index covering christenings for much of England gave a result which looked promising. Checking those church registers revealed that a child named John Jagger Johnson was baptised on 4th October 1821 to an ironmonger named John Johnson and his wife Ann.

This must be right as his father's name and unusual occupation are also right. The really surprising thing is that his birthplace was a long way from the North-East. John Jagger Johnson was born in the parish of Holy Trinity, Kingston Upon Hull!

While this is a long way from the North-East, it is of course a fact that Hull is a seaport and many mariners lived in the town. Clearly John Jagger Johnson went to sea, and must have met his wife Jane Matthewson on one occasion when he stopped off in Tyneside.

John Jagger Johnson was the son of John Johnson and his wife Ann Jagger who were married at Sculcoates - a parish which is now regarded as a part of Hull - on 15th June 1817. They had, in addition to John, a further five children: Eleanor, James, Charlotte Ann, Charles Stuart and Thomas Johnson.

Eleanor is the most interesting of these, because on 29th October 1837 she married at the parish church of St Mary's Hull, her husband, a boiler maker whose name was Thomas Smith.

It is this man who Thomas Smith Johnson (senior) was certainly named after. His sister was named Eleanor Smith Johnson after his father's elder sister Mrs Smith, and he was named after her husband.

It is possible that Mr and Mrs Smith were Godparents to these two and that is why they were named after them. Sometimes at this period people were named after Godparents in this way. In fact, children were often named after their Godparents, but usually did not also pick up their surnames.

John Johnson was living in Hull on the 1841 census, but had recently been widowed, his wife Ann having died earlier in the year. She was apparently aged 48. Several of his children were living with him. He was by this time working as a marine store dealer.

John Johnson was also born in Hull and christened at the parish church of St Mary's on 1st January 1793. John had at least six siblings, possibly more. His parents James Johnson and Susanna Brown were married at Holy Trinity, Hull on 15th July 1780. Both signed the church register.

James Johnson was a cabinet maker. He died in 1830 and was buried on 5th August 1830 in St Mary's churchyard. He was apparently aged 74, but his origins are not known with certainty. He died less than a year after his wife Susanna who was buried on 14th December 1829 at the age of 72 years.

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Catherine Moore Gilbert Blackburn was the wife of Thomas Smith Johnson (senior). She was born at Tynemouth in 1860 and married her husband when she was 16 and died in 1949 at the age of 88.

Catherine was the eldest of three girls. She had sisters Isabella and Jane Blackburn. Her father James Blackburn was a cabinet maker and joiner. He married her mother Mary Jane Davison at Tynemouth also in 1860.

It seems strange to see that Catherine's mother was not surnamed either "Moore" or "Gilbert", but as we have seen, some children were named after Godparents and it is possible that these were the surnames of her Godparents, though there is no record of who they were.

Mary Jane Davison, Catherine's mother was born in Tynemouth in 1841, the daughter of a joiner named Robert Davison and his first wife Jane Bell.

James Blackburn was also born in Tynemouth, in 1833, being the son of James Blackburn and his wife Elizabeth Johnson. He was baptised on Christmas Day 1833. His grandfather was also named James Blackburn, his father being born in Tynemouth in 1797. This elder James Blackburn married his wife Mary Hopper in 1785 at Tynemouth.

While his origins have not been discovered, it is nevertheless likely that he was also from the North-East and possibly Tynemouth as there were Blackburns in the district many years before this time.