
The mystery of Arthur Holland's father

Arthur Holland's Family Background

According to his son, George, Arthur Holland was "born in 1879 and always understood that his birthday was on 9th February; where he was born there was always talk of a place called Cats Meat Square".

Just after leaving the Army, Arthur Holland married Emily Welch on 25th December 1901 at St Andrew's Church, Islington, he gave his age as 23 and his residence as 61 Gifford Street, his father was named as George Holland deceased.

A few months earlier, at the time of the 1901 census, the address of 61 Gifford Street, Islington, was occupied by Thomas and Charlotte Tisdall, and John and Amelia Haslam. Both Charlotte and Amelia were half-sisters of Arthur Holland.



Photo taken in 1931 showing Arthur and Emily Holland, on the right just behind Arthur can be seen his half-sister Amelia

Ten years earlier, at the time of the 1891 census, Arthur Holland can be found living at 13 Lyon Street, Islington, boarding with the family of his half-sister Charlotte Tisdall, however her name was written as Elizabeth Tissall. Arthur's age was given as 14 which would make him born about 1877 not 1879.

Arthur joined the Royal Scots regiment on 8th August 1895 and gave his age as 18 years and 6 months and his place of birth was stated to be St Pancras, his age would make him born about February 1877. His next of kin was stated to be his elder brother George Holland of the 2nd battalion Royal Scots. Arthur was invalided out of service in June 1901 and returned to England from India after serving nearly six years.

Arthur's brother George Holland joined the Royal Scots regiment in 1888. He gave his next of kin as his mother Mary Ann Holland of 88 Hampden Road, Holloway. Their mother Mary Ann Holland died 21st July 1890 at 88 Hampden Road, aged 43, described as a charwoman, the widow of George Holland a cab driver. Her death was registered by her daughter C.Tisdall of 13 Lyon Street, Islington.

Cat's Meat Square

When tracing the family back in time, George and Mary Ann Holland can be found on the 1871 census at 3 Prospect Terrace, St Pancras, with daughters Charlotte, Amelia and son George. Next door at 4 Prospect Terrace can be found Charlotte Boyett, the widowed mother of Mary Ann Holland.

Sadly, George Holland senior, died 12th October 1873 at 3 Prospect Terrace, St Pancras, from fatty degeneration of the heart, and just three months later Mary Ann's mother, Charlotte Boyett, died 26th January 1874 at 4 Prospect Terrace from bronchitis. Her death was registered by her daughter Mary Ann Holland who gave her residence as 5 Wellington Square, therefore she had moved from Prospect Terrace to Wellington Square in the previous three months. Mary Ann Holland also suffered the loss of a young child just three weeks later when her 20-month-old son Charles died of bronchitis at 5 Wellington Square. Mary Ann lost a total of three children at a young age out of nine children born, all three died from either bronchitis or pneumonia.

By the time of the 1881 census Mary Ann Holland can be found living at 47 Sidney Street, Islington, and described as a widow; her son Arthur was 4 years old and born in St Pancras.

As George Holland died in October 1873 he cannot be the father of Arthur Holland born in 1877.

Arthur's birth can be found registered as Arthur John Holland on 10th February 1877 at 5 Wellington Square, St Pancras. His mother stated her name as Mary Ann Holland formerly Boyett and the father's name was stated to be Henry Holland a cab driver. Mary Ann Holland registered his birth with her mark as she could not write. It's very unlikely that Arthur's father's surname was actually Holland, but it's a big clue that his father was called Henry. It is likely that the Registrar asked her name, she replied 'Mary Ann Holland', what is your maiden

name? – ‘Boyett’, what is the name of the father? – ‘Henry’. As she could not read she would not realise that he had written the father’s name as Henry Holland, if she had realised and explained the situation then Arthur’s father’s name would have been left blank.

Mary Ann Holland did not register Arthur’s birth until 24th March 1877, which is exactly six weeks after 10th February. Since civil registration began in 1837, births had to be registered within six weeks otherwise the parents had to pay a fee, however from 1875 the law changed so that births registered up to three months after the birth were free. It’s likely that this change of law was not well known by the general public though, therefore it was quite common for birth dates to be adjusted by a day or two when registered to make sure the birth date was within the six weeks limit. It is very likely that Arthur was born on 9th February 1877, but his birth certificate has his birth date as a day later.

Wellington Square was just around the corner from Prospect Terrace and the area was one of the poorest in London, with poor quality houses with little light and ventilation. In 1881 number 5 Wellington Square was home to 6 families consisting of 23 people.



Map showing Wellington Square and Prospect Terrace, St Pancras in 1871

London - Middlesex VII.43. Surveyed: 1871, Published: 1874.

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The small area of Wellington Square, Prospect Terrace and Derry Street was known locally at the time as ‘Cats Meat Square’.

ON Saturday afternoon Dr. W. Wynn Westcott, Deputy Coroner for Central Middlesex, held an inquest at Crowndale Hall, Camden Town, on the body of Solomon Worms, twenty-nine years old, a bricklayer's labourer. The widow of the deceased stated that she resided with her husband at 11, Wellington-square, Gray's Inn-road, "properly called Cat's-meat-square"—(a laugh)—and she last saw him alive and quite well on Tuesday last, when he came home to dinner. He was engaged in the demolition of the house in Cromer-street, and she subsequently learnt that a wall had fallen upon him and killed him.

Illustrated Police News 30 July 1887

According to the book 'Cat's Meat Square: Housing and Public Health in South St Pancras 1810-1910' by Stephen W. Job; in 1877 an inquest was held into the death of a local woman aged 50 whose 'frightfully emaciated' body was found in Derry Street, just off Wellington Square. Reynold's Newspaper reported that Derry Street was part of 'Wellington – or as it is more generally known from it's character as a rookery, "Cat's-meat" – Square'. The court was told that 'the whole of the houses in this Cat's Meat Square are in a filthy and unsanitary condition'.

The Royal Commission met in 1884 to consider housing conditions in England and Wales. Their report stated that the death rate in 1882 in Wellington Square was 53.7 per thousand, the London average was around 20 at this time, and in the Old Nichol area of Bethnal Green, one of the capital's most infamous slums, death rates averaged 40 in the 1880's so Wellington Square was even worse than that slum. The report went on to state 'some of the houses in Wellington Square are not specifically unsanitary with regard to their construction, they are old houses and have been roughly handled by the people living in them... The houses in Prospect Terrace have no backs; they abut on the houses in Derry Street'. A Police Inspector gave evidence that the houses in Prospect Terrace had seven rooms, families paid 4s 6d per week for one room or 5s 6d for two rooms.

Wellington Square backed on to a disused cemetery which in 1877 was home to a private dissecting room for the instruction of medical students. By 1880 residents in the surrounding streets were complaining of 'most unpleasant smells' from the burning of sawdust and refuse at the Wellington Square end of the burial ground. A variety of animal refuse was discovered in the overgrown and dilapidated burial ground but the complaints were dismissed and the dissecting room was permitted to remain open following some improvements to drainage.

DNA never lies

Two of Arthur Holland's grandsons, Alan Willis and Terry Holland, who are first cousins to each other, had their DNA tested to try to solve the mystery of who was Arthur Holland's father.

Firstly, the Y-DNA of the direct line Holland grandson was tested, this tests for the male ancestry from father to son. Although no close matches were found he did have a distant match to someone with the Pope surname.

Next, both cousins' autosomal DNA was tested, which shows DNA matches from all sides of the family. Both had numerous DNA matches to descendants of the other children of Mary Ann Holland (formerly Boyett). They also had matches to people related to the Boyett family line further back.

When looking for matches that may be from Arthur Holland's father's family it slowly became clear that there were several matches that were descended from a Pope family who lived in the London area.

Joseph Pope and Sarah Pitcher had six adult sons, Joseph Isaac Pope born 1820 and died 1904 in Marylebone, John Pope born 1822, Thomas Pope born 1825 and died 1884 in Kensal Town, William Pope born 1833, George Pope born 1835 and died 1884 in St Pancras, and Henry Skeet Pope born 1843.

No trace can be found of John or William Pope after the 1841 census so they may have died or emigrated. The youngest son Henry Skeet Pope married in 1865 in St Pancras but after that no trace could be found.

Due to the DNA matches it seemed very likely that one of these six men would be the father of Arthur Holland, and suspicion fell on the youngest, Henry Pope, as he was living in St Pancras and Mary Ann Holland named the father as Henry on Arthur's birth certificate.

Where was Henry Pope?

Henry Pope married Elizabeth McMahon on 16th April 1865 at St Pancras Church. No children can be located for the couple and they cannot be found living together on the 1871 census or later censuses.

As his brother George Pope remained living in the St Pancras area until his death, his death certificate was purchased in the hope of finding a clue on it. His death was registered by R. Pope sister-in-law; however, George had no known sister-in-law with a name beginning with R – could she be Henry Pope's wife or partner?

On the 1881 census a Henry and Rachel Pope were found living at 1 Cloudesley Road, Islington, Henry's age was given as 41 instead of 37 and his place of birth was stated to be Paddington instead of Marylebone, just slightly wrong but wrong enough to make him hard

to find. Henry had added a few years to his age to make himself one year older than Rachel. No marriage entry could be found for Henry Pope and Rachel.

Ten years later, the 1891 census shows Rachel Pope living as a widow at 87 Upper Ground Street, Southwark with her niece Carrie Robins aged 15. Carrie Robins was the daughter of John Robins and Caroline Varney. Rachel and Caroline Varney were sisters.

From this information it was found that Rachel Varney had married in 1862 at St Pancras Church to a John Harris. The couple gave their address as Cambridge Street, Agar Town, this was the very same area where Joseph and Sarah Pope had lived with their family at the time of the 1851 census as they lived at Cambridge Crescent, so possibly the Pope and Varney families knew each other in the 1850's.

No children's births can be found registered for John and Rachel Harris.

It seems that Henry Pope and Rachel Harris could not marry as they were both married to other people, so they lived together as husband and wife. Neither can be found on the 1871 census returns, so it is possible that they were living together as a couple at that time and were just missed from the census.

On searching for the death of Henry Pope it was found that he had died the day before the 1891 census was taken. On 4th April 1891 Henry died at 87 Upper Ground Street, Southwark, his cause of death was stated to be an accident, he had a haemorrhage from fractured ribs caused by falling off a barge whilst at work on 5th January. 87 Upper Ground Street was very close to Blackfriars Bridge.

On the date that Henry Pope had his accident that ultimately led to his death, the weather was a severe frost and the southern side of Blackfriars Bridge was completely blocked by ice. Perhaps Henry's fall off the barge was caused by him slipping on the ice.

THE WEATHER IN LONDON.

In London the weather to-day is again fine, and the sun is shining. The frost is still severe, and a keen north-east wind is blowing. There was a slight fall of snow in the morning. The ice in the parks is in good condition, and thousands of persons are skating to-day. Two accidents occurred on the Serpentine (where skating by torchlight is allowed) last night, and one or two accidents have happened on the ice in Regent's Park. None of the cases are of a very serious nature.

The Thames at London is to-day fuller than ever of floating masses of snow and ice. The ice has accumulated chiefly on the south side, and the space spanned by the last southern arch of Blackfriars Bridge is completely blocked by the ice. Traffic on the river is carried on with great difficulty.

The forecast for London and the South of England for the twenty-four hours ending at noon to-morrow is north-easterly and northerly winds, light or moderate; fair in daytime, foggy to-night, with hard frost.

St James Gazette 6th January 1891

Henry Pope seems to have been quite accident prone as there were three other mentions of him in the newspapers.

SEVERE CASUALTY TO A COALHEAVER.

Early on Saturday morning, a man named Henry Pope, aged 27, of 12, Pembroke-road, was brought to the Great Northern Hospital, suffering from fracture of the ankle. Pope, it appears, is in the service of Mr. Parry, of the North London Coal Depot, Caledonian-road, and was employed in removing the coal from the waggon on to the bank. Whilst thus engaged, a trap of one of the waggons, which had inadvertently been left open, fell down, striking him with great violence on the ankle, thereby fracturing the bones. He was in an exhausted state when admitted, and was suffering severe pain. Mr. Dempsey, house-surgeon, reports the case progressing favourably.

Islington Gazette 5th September 1871

SERIOUS ACCIDENT THROUGH THE KICK OF A HORSE.

On Saturday morning Henry Pope, aged 30, a coal porter, living at 48, River-street, Copenhagen-street, was admitted to the Royal Free Hospital suffering from severe injuries to the body.

It appears that the unfortunate man, who is in the employ of Messrs. Charrington, Sells, and Company, went to their stables to put his horse to, and putting on the harness, the horse kicked him in the stomach and severely injured him. He was at once taken to the above hospital, where he was admitted by Mr. P. Kingsford, one of the house surgeons, and it will be some time before he will be able to leave.

Islington Gazette 14th January 1873

Shocking Accident Near Blackfriars Bridge.

On Saturday morning a sad accident occurred at Messrs. Cockerell's Wharf, Upper Ground-street, Blackfriars, necessitating the immediate removal of Henry Pope, aged 45 years, residing at No. 1, Devonshire Grove, Old Kent-road, to St. Thomas's Hospital. A number of men were employed at the wharf when Pope fell with a crash into the hold of a barge. He was terribly injured, and partially unconscious when rescued. He was removed to the Leopold Ward at St. Thomas's Hospital. There he was examined by the house-surgeon, who ascertained that the sufferer's spine was injured. He had also sustained concussion of the brain.

South London Press 16th February 1889

Henry Pope's occupation was described on various documents as coal porter, coal heaver, and general labourer, whereas Mary Ann Holland described Arthur Holland's father as a cab driver, the same occupation of her late husband George Holland. She may have been unsure of Henry Pope's occupation, however the occupation of cab driver could be used to describe either a driver of a hansom cab or a horse-drawn delivery vehicle. It can be seen in the above 1873 newspaper report that Henry Pope was working as a coal porter but his occupation involved harnessing a horse to a vehicle.

Henry Pope may have received some compensation from one of his last falls as at the time of his death he had an estate worth £40 and 18 shillings, which is equivalent to about £3500 in today's money; it would be unlikely that he could have saved that amount of money.

As Henry died without a Will his estate had to be administered by his next of kin, i.e. his widow. Sadly, Rachel was not married to Henry so administration was granted to Henry's real widow, Elizabeth Pope (formerly McMahon). Despite not living together for many years, Elizabeth still benefitted from Henry's death.

POPE Henry.

Personal Estate £40 18s.

22 April. Administration of the Personal Estate of Henry Pope late of 87 Upper-Ground-street Blackfriars-road in the County of **Surrey** Coal Porter who died 4 April 1891 at 87 Upper - Ground - street was granted at the Principal Registry to Elizabeth Pope of 51 Andover-road Hornsey Rise in the County of Middlesex Widow the Relict.

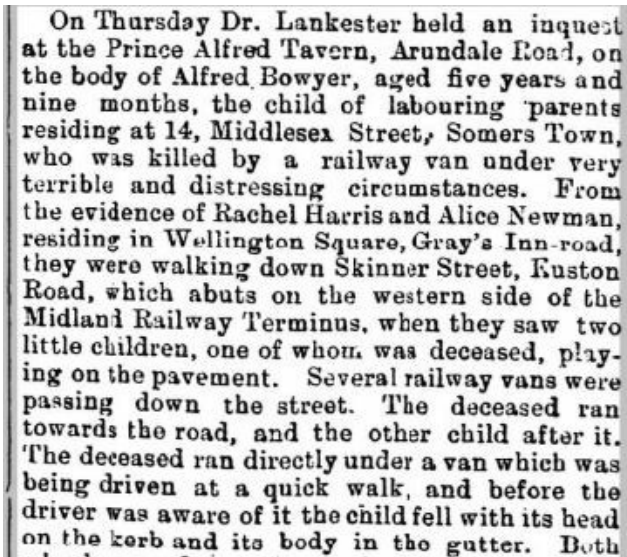
National Probate Calendar for England and Wales for 1891

Ten years later in 1901 Rachel had reverted to using her married surname of Harris and at the time of the 1901 census she was living with her niece Carrie at 64 Church Way, St Pancras. Rachel Harris died in 1906.

Henry Pope's connection to Wellington Square

If we look closer at the baptisms of the children of John and Caroline Robins (sister of Rachel Varney/Harris/Pope), it is found that during the 1870's the couple lived at several addresses in Wellington Square, St Pancras. In 1871 their son William was born at 10 Wellington Square, in 1873 their son Henry was born at 11 Wellington Square, and in 1877 another son called William was born at 4 Wellington Square, next door to where Mary Ann Holland lived.

As Rachel Harris' marriage broke down it seems that she either lived with her sister Caroline's family or lived close by, as can be seen from this 1874 newspaper report of a tragic accident that Rachel witnessed which states that Rachel Harris lived in Wellington Square in 1874.



On Thursday Dr. Lankester held an inquest at the Prince Alfred Tavern, Arundale Road, on the body of Alfred Bowyer, aged five years and nine months, the child of labouring parents residing at 14, Middlesex Street, Somers Town, who was killed by a railway van under very terrible and distressing circumstances. From the evidence of Rachel Harris and Alice Newman, residing in Wellington Square, Gray's Inn-road, they were walking down Skinner Street, Kuston Road, which abuts on the western side of the Midland Railway Terminus, when they saw two little children, one of whom was deceased, playing on the pavement. Several railway vans were passing down the street. The deceased ran towards the road, and the other child after it. The deceased ran directly under a van which was being driven at a quick walk, and before the driver was aware of it the child fell with its head on the kerb and its body in the gutter. Both

The Star 12th March 1874

At some point in the 1870's Henry Pope started to cohabit with Rachel Harris, very likely in Wellington Square where she was living and quite possibly next door to Mary Ann Holland. It is also possible that Henry Pope and Mary Ann Holland were living together first in Wellington Square before he started a relationship with Rachel Harris and left to set up home with her. It is unlikely that he ever knew he had a son, and Arthur Holland certainly did not know that his father was anyone other than George Holland. Every piece of evidence, both DNA and research, points to Henry Pope being the father of Arthur Holland, having lived in Wellington Square and possibly next door or even in the same house as Mary Ann Holland at the time of Arthur Holland's conception.

Mary Ann Holland went on to have two more children after Arthur's birth, Charles John Holland in 1882 and Jessie May Holland in 1885. It is unlikely that their father was also Henry Pope as Mary Ann stated that their fathers were called 'John Holland' on their birth certificates.