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This is the newsletter for the One-Name Study of the surname COLLOFF. It will be published twice a year, Summer and Early each Winter and used to keep the other interested Colloff relations up to date with the latest research, whether completed by me, or by one of the other Cousins.

John Colloff , June 2003.

**Comment**

I am sorry that this issue is a little late, but those readers in the Northern hemisphere will understand when I ask them to forgive me for enjoying our amazingly fine summer instead of sitting indoors working away at the computer.



Fortunately I have another excellent article from Ken giving yet more insight into the hard work he has put, (and is still putting, see STOP PRRSS) into the Colloff genealogy. Not only that but he manages to sort out order and family patterns out of the myriad of various facts that he uncovers.

John.

**CONVENTIONS**

There will be no publishing of personal details, dates, addresses, etc. of living people without their express permission. If you want to see the details of you and yours on the trees, you will have to write to me giving me express permission to do exactly that. You might like to include your comments on this enterprise as well. ☺

Should you choose to send me a photo or two to include I will take that as permission to publish unless you expressly forbid it. Contributions in the form of letters, articles and/or photos by any of you would be a very welcome addition for me to include in forthcoming issues.

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**Success and Distribution of COLLOFF COUSINS.**

I encourage you to photocopy any of CC and send it on to anyone that you think might be interested. For computer owners I can provide a copy in colour in Adobe <\*.pdf> or M\$ Word .doc format so that you can print off your own copies. I still hope to have my web page [www.colloff.org.uk](http://www.colloff.org.uk) up and running soon. On it I hope to have coloured downloadable issues of COLLOFF COUSINS in .GIF and .html browsable formats. If possible the pages containing living family information will only be accessible with a password freely sent to all family members, mainly to avoid Data Protection Act registration.

**DISTRIBUTION.** I have split up the list of 24 copies to the three (and-a-half?) branches as follows.

**Benjamin (c.1760 – 1834).** Kenneth Edward Colloff, Rainham. Roy William Colloff, Alderholt. Mildred, wife of Reginald Percival Colloff, Dagenham.

**Thomas (c.1790 – 1839+).** Matthew via John & Mary Colloff, Tonbridge.

**Joseph (c.1814 – 1876).** Hilary Colloff, Seattle, USA. Charlotte Hinde, West Sussex, William Colloff, Todmorden, Audrey Palin, Phyllis Colloff, Christine & John Wilson, Brian & Pauline Colloff, and Lyn & Garry James, Birmingham. Derek Colloff, Worcester. Audine & Jamie Watson, and Sheila Kirk, British Columbia. Trevor Rogers, Shotton. Edith Colloff, Swansea. Sidney Colloff, Alcester, Helen Williamson, Witney.

**Kohlhoff** Elizabeth Kohlhoff in Kelso, Australia, Katy Kohlhoff, Germany.

**Other,** The British Library. Guild of One-Name Studies, file.

## Ken Colloff's Conundrum Tale

This is an amazing story of Ken's painstaking research and reasoning (with help from Mildred) in sorting out the first three generations of the descendants of Benjamin Colloff (d.1834). Because he presents us with the completed tree, it is difficult to realise how difficult it was as he slowly put together and made sense of such a disparate collection of facts, from the limited records of that time. It is a feat of memory that few of us could have achieved. As each source reveals yet another record of a birth, marriage, death or family grouping, Ken had to hold in his mind the dates and records gathered so far. Not only that, but he had to be on the alert for possible name changes and variations in the details recorded. The results are the core of the Colloff family tree as we know it today

Ken modestly ends his article saying that to help follow his ramblings he produced the descendants' tree attached. Unfortunately because this is a completed tree it makes it all seem very obvious, which is far from true. So that you can better appreciate just how many conundrums Ken unravelled. I give below the main individuals, and list against each the facts and relationships that Ken and Mildred uncovered and deduced. This fascinating detail is omitted from the bare bones of a family tree.

*The paragraphs are set in according to the generation of the named person.*

Elizabeth Colloff.

Birth certificate gives; b.28 August 1833, Islington, London.

Father, William b.1813, Mother, Ann, née Bates.

Appears as Ann when reporting the death of her mother in 1870.

Appears as Ann Elizabeth Colloff when marrying William Bailey in 1883, giving father as William Colloff deceased.

Henry William Colloff, b. 1856, found from a general search of the records.

Apply for and obtain a copy of the certificate to find; mother Elizabeth b. 1833, father, not named, born in the workhouse. Possibly living at 1 Vittona Street. Mildred suggests Henry Dingley as father.

1861 census finds the Dingley family with Henry still known as Henry Dingley b. 1856, mother Elizabeth, and sister Jane b.1859; check her birth certificate for more family details. Living at 47 Payne Street, Islington.

Appears as **Harry** Dingley, b. 1856, Islington in 1881 census, with wife Patience, and sister Amy.

Jane Dingley b.1859, at 15 Little Payne Street, Islington, registered as Elizabeth Jane.

Father Henry Dingley, mother Elizabeth Dingley, formerly Colloff, ties in with Henry Dingley being the father of Henry William, above.

Appears as Amy (maternal grandmother's name) Dingley, b. 1859, Islington in 1881 census, with brother Harry.

Ann Colloff, widow and head of household at 47 Payne Street, in the 1861 census, aged 52, and obviously grandmother to Henry, and Jane Dingley, (aged 6 & 2), but also looking after another granddaughter, Ann aged 9.

Died age 63 in 1870, at 17 **Vittona** Street, Islington. Shown as née Bates, and the person in attendance was recorded as Ann Dingley of 4 Penton Grove, Clerkenwell. This has to be daughter Elizabeth b.1833, who was the only Dingley living there at the time of the 1871 census the next year. But why take the name of her sister who had died in 1838, and change back for the census? There is no answer to this bit of the puzzle, and she has not been found in the 1881 census, but re-appears as Ann in 1883.

Annie Dingley, b. abt.1865.

Father Henry Dingley, mother Elizabeth, living 4 Penton Grove Clerkenwell in 1871 census.

Alice Dingley, b. abt.1870.

Father Henry Dingley, mother Elizabeth, living 4 Penton Grove Clerkenwell in 1871 census.

Henry Dingley, b. abt.1833 in either Bristol or Islington, d. aged 49 in 1882, in Islington, London.

Living as single lodger at 9 Islington Green, Islington, in the 1881 census.

Elizabeth Ann Colloff, b. 9 September 1852 in Islington, father James Colloff, mother Elizabeth Bates.

Appears in the 1861 census as Ann, cared for by her grandmother Ann (née Bates Colloff).

births, deaths or marriage, no census entries.

## RESEARCH CONUNDRUMS



By **KEN COLLOFF**

Sometimes with family research, you have to take an educated guess, or read between the lines. A lot depends on information that you have uncovered, or not, as in the next story.

### Elizabeth b.1833.

It starts with Elizabeth b 1833 in Halton St., Islington, daughter of William 1813 and Ann, née Bates. Looking to place a Henry William Colloff, b.1856 on the tree, I purchased a birth certificate to find out who he

belonged to, and was surprised to find he was the son of Elizabeth.b.1833. No father's name appeared on the certificate, and we could not find a marriage, so we have to assume he was illegitimate. On top of that, the certificate states he was born in the Workhouse. Not a good start! Mildred's research put a Henry Dingley in the frame as the likely father.

### Henry and Elizabeth.

I then found the Dingley family in the 1861 Census. There was Henry Dingley, b. Bristol, and Elizabeth, with their children, Henry b.1856, now listed as a Dingley, and Jane b.1859. I again purchased a birth certificate, this time for Jane, to find out for sure if her mother, Elizabeth, was a Colloff. Elizabeth 1833 was calling herself Elizabeth Dingley, formerly Colloff. Henry Dingley was indeed Jane's father, and since they nearly always named children after parents and grand parents, almost certainly the father of Henry b.1856, as well. At the time of Henry's birth, they were living at 1 Vittoria Street, Islington. I also found Jane was registered as Elizabeth Jane, which tallied with my birth register. She was born at 15 Little Payne Street, Islington. So they were using her second name at an early age. With so many "Elizabeth's" around it probably seemed like a good idea at the time.

### Ann (née Bates) b.1809?

The 1861 census address was 47 Payne Street, Islington. Being large houses there were more than one family living in them; and at this address, there were five families. A nice surprise was an Ann Colloff, a widow age 52, as Head, also living there. That has to be Ann Bates who became William's wife in 1833. *[We can now put William's death between 1840 and 1851.]* Being Elizabeth's mother, she should have been entered as mother in law, but as Head she must have had her own flat. Also living with her was Ann Colloff, age 9, entered as 'grand daughter'. More on her later, *[Just keep a look out for an Ann b.1852.]*

The next time we came across the Dingley family was when Mildred found them in the 1871 census, living at 4 Penton Grove, Clerkenwell. That showed they had an addition of two more children, Annie b.1865 and Alice b.1870.

### Ann (née Bates) b.1807?

In 1870 Ann Colloff, nee Bates, died at the age of 63, living at 17 Vittoria Street, Islington. That's just round the corner from Payne Street, and Little Payne Street. On her death certificate the person in attendance was an Ann Dingley, of 4 Penton Grove, Clerkenwell. Was Elizabeth Dingley using the name Ann for this purpose? Moreover, did she then change it back to Elizabeth for the 1871 census? The mind boggles!

. The 1881 census throws up another conundrum. Looking for the Dingley family I can only find Henry Dingley. At this time he is living at 9 Islington Green, Islington, as a boarder in a lodging house. His age is given as 47, and birthplace Bristol. The age and birthplace tie in nicely with the information I obtained from the 1861 census and the "Vital Record Index". Mind you, on the 1871 census, it states he was born in Islington! Here your guess is as good as mine. Therefore, it looks as if Henry and Elizabeth split up and went their separate ways. Have not found any reference to Elizabeth Dingley, or Ann Dingley as she might be calling herself, in the 1881 census. The search for her entry in that census is still ongoing.

#### Elizabeth b.1833 again.

In 1883 an Ann Elizabeth Colloff married a William Bailey in Bethnal Green. Not being on my marriage register, (one I missed), I decided to check the marriage registers at the "Family Record Centre". Sure enough, it was one I had missed, but who was she? Ordering a copy of the marriage certificate I eagerly awaited its arrival. Surprise! Surprise! Ann Elizabeth was a spinster and her father's name was William Colloff, deceased at the time of the marriage. It seems Elizabeth b.1833 was using the name Ann again. Getting married as a spinster and not a widow, leads me to believe she and Henry Dingley never tied the knot. How do I know it was Elizabeth b.1833 I hear you ask? With all the Elizabeth's we have, it was the only Elizabeth with a father named William who was deceased. As I said earlier, it's either an educated guess, or read between the lines. Probably a bit of both. Plus finding the death of **Henry** Dingley in 1882 in Islington, with an age at death of 49, fits the bill.

#### Henry\Harry Dingley b.Bristol\Islington

Further research on the 1881 census reveals a **Harry** Dingley as head, and wife Patience. They were living in Tottenham and their occupation was given as hawkers. (Small wears dealers)? I wonder! (See death certificate for William 1859 at 6 months where his father Joseph b.1814 was a small wears dealer in Coleshill.) Also at the same address was an Amy Dingley, sister to head of house. Both **Harry** and **Amy** were born in Islington, and if you take their ages away from 1881 they go back to the same ages as **Henry** and **Annie** Dingley. I can see you are ahead of me. I have a cousin Henry who also calls himself Harry, nothing changes much. I have since found that **Henry** Dingley's mother was called Amy. So it looks as though **Annie** took to using her Grandmother's name.

#### Elizabeth Ann b. 1852

The next conundrum was an Elizabeth Ann b. 1852, (Not another one!), on my birth registers. Once again I invest in a certificate and the results threw up the biggest conundrum of all. Her father is named as James Colloff. Previously mentioned in "Colloff Cousins" as my genealogical hunch. Not a clue where he comes from, even more surprising, his wife's name was Elizabeth Bates. This is where I return to the 1861 census and Ann Colloff age 9, listed as Granddaughter, the age at the census takes her back to 1852. (You must be ahead of this time!) Yes, I believe her to be Elizabeth Ann b. 1852, and Grand Mother Ann Colloff nee Bates was looking after her. But where were James and Elizabeth?

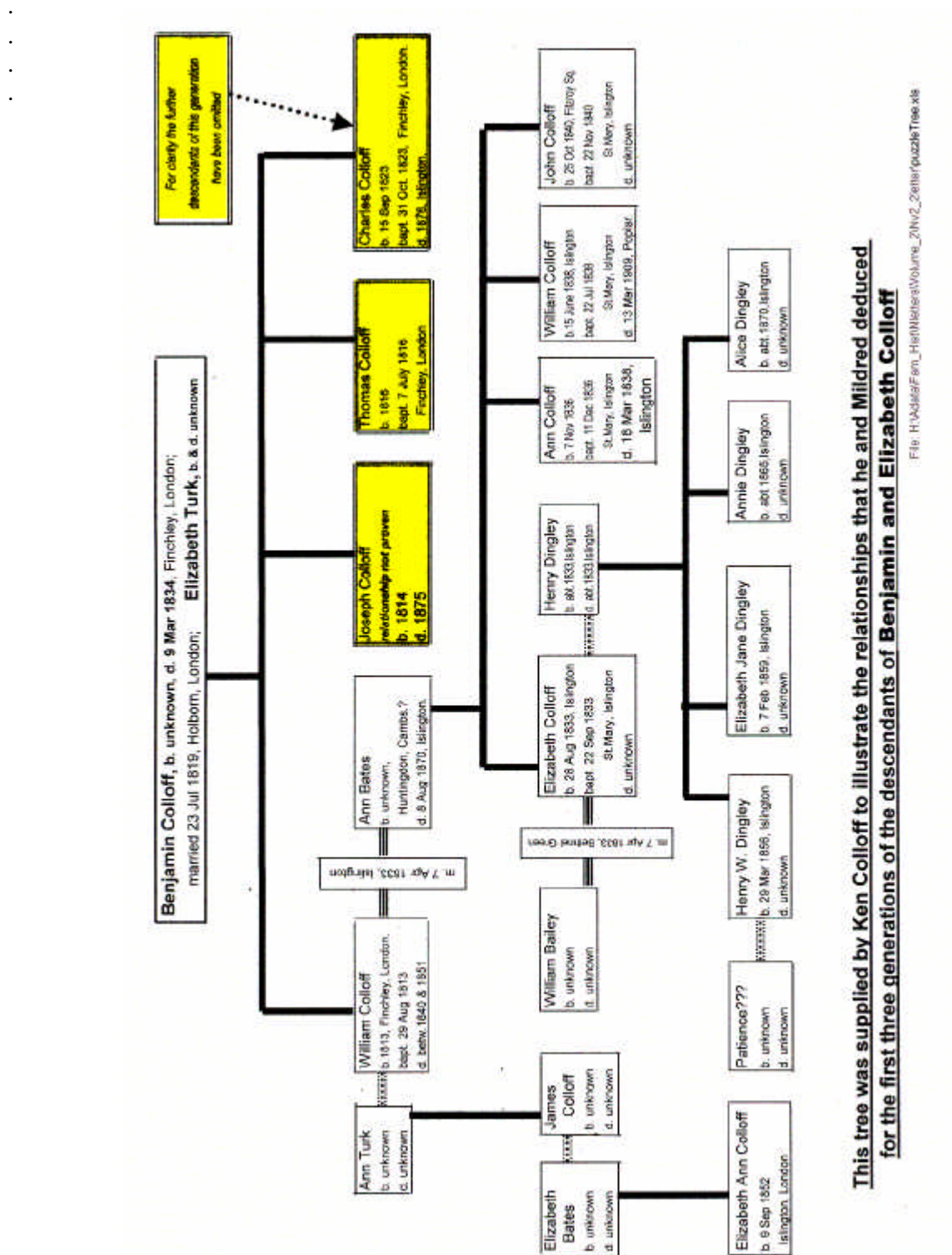
#### James, still missing.

I think I have exhausted most avenues, looking for the birth of James. The trouble is, if a child is not christened or baptised, prior to 1837, (when civil registration started), there is no way of tracing them. That is until they get married, and that is, "if" they get married. As in the Dingley case, no marriage can be found for James and Elizabeth either.

As a child, someone, (his Turk Grand parent's maybe,) must have brought up James, who I think was the result of William's first marriage to Ann Turk, in 1831. I was hoping to find him with the family of William b.1813, on the 1841 census, but no such luck. (See "Colloff Cousins Winter 2000 Third Issue).

It seems that all of the Elizabeth's preferred their second name, and if they never had one they made one up.

To help you follow these ramblings, I produced a descendant tree showing all the participants that make up this article..





## **COLLOFF Meetings**

In recovering from my last computer crash I found these photos recording a couple of recent meetings.



The first was whilst Ken and Maureen were visiting us in Cheshire last year, Ken and I drove down to Handsworth Wood and met Lyn James. We had been communicating by E-mail but it was great to meet up face to face.

The second was when I finally made it to Swansea and called for tea with my first cousin Edith in December 2002.



## Newly Discovered COLLOFFs.

After all of the hours of research that Ken, Mildred, Roy, myself and several others have put in over the past 40 years I thought that we had bagged them all, but there still seems to be some that have got away, so far.

### 1. A DNA Match.

This started with the following E-mail from the testing laboratory of Family Tree DNA;

**You have a match!**

*An exact match has been found between you and another person(s) in the Family Tree DNA database. You and the other person(s) have matched in all loci, which means that there is a 99.9% likelihood that you have a common ancestor. There is a 50% likelihood that the common ancestor is within the last 14.5 generations and 90% within the last 48 generations. If you and your match share a "prior" item of knowledge, such as a common surname, then a recent (within 14.5 generations) common ancestor is fairly likely. If not, then the common ancestor is probably closer to the 48 generations.*

Which was followed by

Hi John,

*I am the administrator for the Livingstone Surname Project. I recently had my DNA testing done and you popped up as one of the "12 for 12" matches that caught my interest. The old Gaelic name for Livingstone is "MacDhonnsliebhe", pronounced "mak-un-lay" or "mak-un-layf". We are a clan with ancient roots dating back to the 500s on the Isle of Lismore in Argyll, Scotland. Among the spellings identified with the name MacDhonnsliebhe are "MacOnlea", "MacConleif", "MacCulloiff", "MacLea", and "MakColluf". Take away the Mac (Son of) and it appears to me that these surnames come awfully close to "Colloff".*

*I'd be interested to know how much you know about your family history. Were they Scots? If so, what part of Scotland did they come from? Do you know of other Colloffs? Would you be interested in doing higher resolution DNA testing? It is my understanding the additional testing would cost about \$80.*

*So far, the project has eight participants. There are five that I would guess are going to be identified with the Lowland Livingstones - a blood line totally separate from the highlanders of Lismore. The other three include my cousin, Baron Niall Livingstone of Bachuil, Richard Levingston of Australia, and myself. Preliminary testing would indicate that we have a common ancestor with the MacGregor Clan.*

*I look forward to hearing from you.*

*Respectfully,  
Robert Livingstone  
Placerville, California*

Being naturally quite excited by this, in my haste I did not take in Rob's '12 for 12' statement about our match.

Only after I had back checked with the testing laboratory did I realise that he had only paid to have 12 tests carried out. Will and Jack's generous gift had paid for the fullest set of 25 tests. A full 25 test match would bring the possible common male ancestor within four to eight generations, and I would have had something to be excited about.

I am in correspondence with Rob Livingstone, but we do not appear to be any nearer to detecting a link between our families. I have already had as thorough a search as possible of all of the pre-1900 Scottish records, and there was no trace of Colloffs or any of our known variants. So unfortunately this does not help us in getting back beyond our current late 18<sup>th</sup> century 'brick wall'.

### 2. A 'Lost' Branch.

This also started with an E-mail, but one that had got mislaid in my computer following a crash.

*A friend who is well into family history gave me your contact details. We could be related! My mother was born Hilda Colloff, in 1920, in Birmingham, but soon after given for adoption following the death of her mother. I should like to find out more of her background, if you could help. And I could let you have details of her life if you should be interested.*

*Yours sincerely, Jean Millward*

As soon as I found this message I replied at once, apologising for the delay and explaining to Jean how her E-mail had got mislaid in my computer following a crash. There was a brief, but agonising delay before a reply appeared. Had I lost this contact?

No, they had been on holiday, and Jean and I have the same great-grandparents in Joseph

Colloff and Jane Jermy, soon to be integrated into the family tree, as you will see from Jean's reply.

Dear John, Thank you so much for your welcome E-mail, received just before my husband and I went on holiday, hence the time lag over the reply. So pleased my letter came to light on your computer, and to know that we are indeed related somehow!

Since I first wrote to you we have learned a lot more about the Colloff line, from record offices, and as a result of that, picking up relevant certificates in Birmingham register office. However, there are gaps to be filled, and any knowledge of my ancestor's lives to give the individuals some "body" would be so welcome.

Joseph and Jane (Jermy) Colloff were my great great grandparents. Joseph and Jane Barker my great gps, and William James and Alice Smith my grandparents. My mother was Alice's last child, given for adoption as Alice died soon after the birth. At only 31 years of age, too, which was sobering. I've discovered that William James married again later but haven't pursued that line yet.

I know my mother, Hilda, born 27-03-1920, had several siblings, and have found William James, Ivy, Minnie, and Phyllis in the records. Have also learned that there was more than one family of Colloffs in the Birmingham area, Colloff/Woodcock being one, which confuses things before 1911 when maiden names weren't included in the records. So I have several more Colloff children's names, but don't know which might have been in my mother's family, her parents having been married in 1908. This I'd really like to sort!

I have been in touch with Lyn, but her husband told me she'd been in hospital for a long period after Christmas and haven't heard further. I trust she is improving and that we may correspond in the future.

My mother had a happy life with her adoptive parents and never wished to delve into her "real" family, but since she died in 2001, I have been hoping to find out more of my roots. Facts learned so far have

Now we know that Joseph (1814 to 1876) and Jane (1827 to \_?) had ten children, Elizabeth, Joseph Benjamin, Charles, Mary Ann, William, Jane, Henry, Thomas, Emma and William. Also an extra great grandchild, Jean, a daughter to Hilda. {A new niece for Sid at Alcester!}

20/07/03

been fascinating, and I hope to find out more.

Looking forward to hearing from you again, and finding how we are related!  
Kind regards, Jean Millward.

### 3. STOP PRESS !!

After all the scouring of records Ken's persistence has paid off and found a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Colloff in another part of the country other than London and Birmingham

Just knew you would be interested in the attached certificate. Had to chase Smedley Hydro for a replacement, don't know where the original order went. Received this one today. What with a Collaff in Newcastle under Lyme in 1787 the plot thickens.

Ken.

The certificate that Ken had obtained, and copied to me surprised us both.

My great grandparents, Joseph Colloff and Jane (née Jermy) had produced a daughter, Elizabeth on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1851 whilst living at 7 Orchard Road, LEICESTER.

Previously, as far as we knew they had only had nine children who had all been born in the Birmingham area. With all the other early 19<sup>th</sup> century Colloff births being in the London area, we had assumed a single move by Joseph and Jane straight to Birmingham. As Ken said in a later E-mail;

I imagined they took the pretty route to Birmingham via Leicester. It makes you wonder where else they went. I checked the 1851 census for the address on the certificate yesterday. I make it 7 Orchard Rd. but the film was almost unreadable.

Will have to find another film.



## **COLLOFFS on the Internet**

Despite the fact that I still have not managed to get my *Colloff Cousins* web page up yet, a web search with, for example, the Google search engine gave 946 very varied results. Here is a selection of three COLLOFFs from them.

### 1. There is a very young web page making prizewinner;

#### Web Pages Created by Year7 Pupils

The Year7 ICT classes at QMHS were set the task of working in groups to design their own web pages based on their experiences during their first term at the school. None of the pupils had any prior knowledge of how to make web pages before they began the task. Not only did they have to create a fully functional web page, but also a complete piece of group documentation.

Two of the groups were entered into a regional school competition which was being run by the Walsall EBP in conjunction with Walsall Rotary Club and IST Ltd. The school won both first and third prizes in the lower school category, winning in total £175 with which to buy new equipment.

#### **Web Competition Winners**

Joanna Drinan, **Melissa Colloff** and Zoë Hallam

### 2. A very active Reunion Organiser at Brown University

Brown University  
1967 Class Campaign  
Gift Accounting Box 1877  
Providence, RI 02912

#### 35 Years and Still Making Waves

"We're at that point on the map where the road turns from a solid line into a dotted one."

--Margery Bletcher Colloff, at roundtable discussion Sunday afternoon

### 3. And an official in a magnificently presented Bowling Club'S Web Page

*I wonder if this is used on their letter heading as well?*



#### **Southend on Sea Bowls Club**

##### Men's Indoor Section.

President. P E Ramsey. Chairman. P E Ramsey. **Deputy President. P C Colloff.**  
Assistant Secretary. D Jacobi. Captain. J E Vile. Vice-Captain. J E Hooke.  
Team Manager. V J Betton.

## Introducing my 'Personal Notes' feature

During my stint (which ended in April) as librarian to the Guild of One-Name Studies (GoO-NS) I noticed that most of the family history newsletters that I handled were different from *Colloff Cousins*. All seemed much chummier than I had allowed *Colloff Cousins* to be, so far. So what have I been doing wrong?

As soon as I addressed the problem I saw that I had made it **my** One-Name Study newsletter and **not** your family history newsletter. I have included very few personal details of myself or my family, and not a lot about all **your** families either. This is my attempt to rectify matters, and I would like your help in turn, by providing some more information of you and your family groupings.

Whilst I hope to keep you all abreast of the quest for definitive proof of the origins of the family name, I would also like you to be looking to *Colloff Cousins* to find news and details of today's Colloffs.

To start the ball rolling, I have written, rather unwillingly, and perhaps far too fulsomely, a few pages about myself, describing my career, my likes and enthusiasms, and my home and family. I know that you cannot possibly find it all of interest, but if you can pick out a theme or incident that rings a bell with you, perhaps you would be good enough to drop me a few lines about it

From experiences in one of my other activities I also realise that many of us have lived through some interesting and historic events, and very many

social changes, some of which could well be of interest to present and future generations.

Therefore, I am adding a feature of personal notes that will be clearly labelled as such, so that if you want to avoid these little ego trips of mine, you can happily skip them and leave them unread.

I would also like to feature similar articles on other Colloff Cousins, giving details of them and their lives. In short, a few potted biographies, of one or another of you over the coming issues. I am certain Ken, Reg, and Mildred's experiences as child evacuees from London to Great Yarmouth, in World War II would be of interest. Not least to some of today's teenagers with a yen to get away from home.

I think another good example would be if I could obtain more information from Mary Colloff about Thomas W. Colloff (1871 - 1945). There must be some interesting stories to go with the photos of his shop and work as a wallpaper designer that she so kindly supplied, and that appeared in November 2000, in issue 3, volume I.

Has no-one else got an interesting family story to tell?

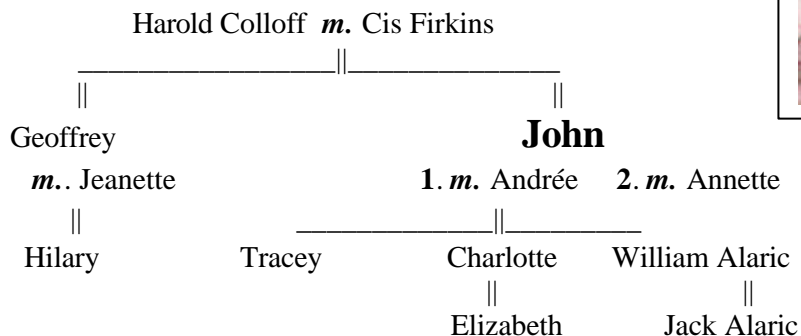
Of course I am open to suggestions and would be extremely grateful for any contributions. So if you would like to write your life story, and that of one of your Colloff forebears I would be delighted to include either or both of them. From what I have produced, you can see that the standard is not all that high, and the computer spell-check takes care of everything else. ☺

**Any article need not be very long, too polished, or even complete. If you make a start and get stuck, let me know, and I am sure that we can work something out to produce an item of interest to other family members.**

## Personal Notes' All about Me, John Colloff



*Geoffrey and John 1936*



*My Mother and Father  
1956*

### My Parents, brother and niece.

Following elementary schooling to the age of 14 my father, Harold (1907-1966) served a seven year apprenticeship as a printer in the Bull Ring, Birmingham. He met my mother Edith Margaret (1906-1964), but known as Cis, (née Firkins, 1906-1963), when sitting on a bench on Malvern Link common, letting the engine of his BSA Gold Star (motor cycle) cool down. Malvern was her home town, and she was between jobs working as a cook. After marriage, they moved to Manchester, for Harold to work as a Linotype operator on the newly established Daily Herald, buying a new semi in Fallowfield. I was born on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1933 in that house and my father died there on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 33 years later. He only left that house for his service during WW II with the 41<sup>st</sup> Royal Marine Commando. October 24<sup>th</sup> was also the birthdate of both my brother Geoffrey (1931-1997) and his daughter Hilary.

### Education and early years in Wales and Africa

I was educated through the state system, attending Wilbraham Road Elementary School from 1936 to 1945, and Manchester Central High School for boys from 1945 to 1952. Then I left home to obtain my honours degree in Civil Engineering at the University of Liverpool in 1956. From there, I had the following variety of jobs building up my work experience to become a Chartered Civil Engineer in 1961.

After graduating I worked for W.S. Atkins at Port Talbot, South Wales for two years, living in Porthcawl and Swansea; followed by one tour of duty working for the Government of Northern Nigeria designing, building and repairing laterite surfaced roads..

I was stationed for the first six months on the edge of the Sahara desert at Sokoto, then for 14 months near the confluence of the Rivers Niger and Benue at Ayangba. Apart from the rainy season the roads were very bumpy, hot, dry and extremely dusty. At the end of a day on the roads my Standard Vanguard pickup and I were coated with red laterite dust returning to a mud hut with its corrugated tin roof in a jungle clearing outside the village.

During this period Nigeria became independent and part of the Commonwealth and as a responsible European officer I was given the job of supervising the first free election at a little village, deep in the jungle. At the previous mock election the villagers, not fully understanding the electoral process, had rioted and slaughtered the supervising

officers. This time the village headman had everything under control and they all meekly filed through the polling booth to my great relief.

On my return from Africa to the UK I went back to South Wales, working on the Coke Ovens at the new Llanwern steelworks. With that varied design and practical site experience I was able to satisfy the examiners and became a corporate member of the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1961.

### **Newport and British Nylon Spinners**

During the first time I lived in South Wales I had married, in 1957, my first wife, Jean Andrée McNeil Donnan, who I had met whilst at University. With my professional qualification I was able to obtain a Design Engineer's post with British Nylon Spinners (BNS) at Pontypool, back in South Wales again,. One of my first jobs there was to supervise the dismantling of the Company's super secure store for ladies nylon stockings! These had been required in the Second World War to be made in the factory as the quickest and cheapest way to confirm the quality of the nylon yarn before it went into the manufacture of parachutes for the RAF. The stockings were distributed to the staff as a highly prized perquisite of BNS employment and they continued to be made until their availability had become commonplace by the time that I joined the company.

My wife Andrée was teaching in Newport and we made our home there. We started with a new semi on a main road, but moved on to a large neglected Victorian house in which I made, and let, two bed sitting flats to fund my then popular endowment mortgage. Whilst living there my two daughters were born, Tracey Jane in 1964 and Charlotte Anne in 1965. Ironically, my mother never saw any of her longed-for grandchildren (nor my father his grandson to carry on the family name.)

### **Holland and ICI Europa**

In the meantime BNS had become part of I.C.I. so I took the post of design engineer for ICI Europa. I was based near Rotterdam with ICI Holland, to set up a Civil Design office at Rosenberg, initially having to learn to speak Dutch in order to argue about Dutch Building Regulations with the Rotterdam Bouwpolitie. We lived in a rented house in a village call Oostvoorne, and my son William Alaric was born in the Rotterdam Zuidenzickenhuis on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1967.

### **ICI and BNFL**

After working in Rotterdam, Brussels, and briefly in Paris, I returned to England in 1966 to live in Rochdale, working for ICI Dyestuffs Division at Blackley. After ten very busy years building new chemical plants, ICI's business declined, and in 1980, I moved to British Nuclear Fuels as a Principal Engineer at the Company Headquarters at Risley, Cheshire. Work in the new environment of National Security and super safe radioactive considerations was very different and hard, not helped by the tedious daily journey from Rochdale to Warrington.

### **Earthquakes and a new life**

Nineteen eighty-four saw the beginning of several big changes. I was now BNFL's Seismic Co-ordination Engineer, responsible for ensuring that there was no closure of any of the Company's Plants due to any perceived risk of an earthquake releasing lethal doses of radioactivity to the public. This work was extremely challenging but it brought the bonus of travelling the world, visiting Germany, Russia, Japan, Portugal and the USA, with regular trips to our nearest radioactive neighbour, France. The next two years saw my divorce; my marriage to Mrs Annette Rowland (née Mooney); and our move to Milford Gardens, Appleton in January 1986. Within weeks of our wedding, immediately after a formal briefing of BNFL directors about current seismic affairs (following scare headlines in the Guardian), the left side of my face was paralysed by Bell's Palsy. For many weeks I had difficulty speaking, had to wear an eye patch, and drink through a straw! ☹ Annette was beginning to wonder what sort of marriage ours was gong to be, but, with her help, I have since made a full recovery.



*Charlotte, Will, Jack & Elizabeth 2002.*



In my first trip round the world I was able to meet up and stay with my brother Geoffrey for my 51<sup>st</sup> birthday, at his home outside San Francisco at San Rafael, Marin County. We visited him again in 1992, when Annette joined me in California after I had read a paper to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers at a conference in New Orleans. (Something that as a Civil Engineer I considered to be quite an achievement.) We returned from that trip with my first Personal Computer (a present from Annette), with which I was able to keep in close contact via E-mail with Geoff right up to his sudden death in 1997. I then used it to set up my Internet World Wide Web pages in his memory.



*Annette with her son Steven and his sons  
James and Jack 2002*

### **Retirement**

In December 1992, I retired nine months early from BNFL, and after a lot of persuasion, Annette joined me in retirement, from her job at Manchester Central Library, in 1997. By then I had satisfied my passion for creating music, both classical and popular with synthesisers and computers, filling the house whilst Annette was at work with the thunderous roar of Bach organ music or Brahms and Beethoven symphonies.

### **Other Interests and Hobbies**

Let's start with transport. I have been riding on two wheels since I was five and always seem to have had a push bike around, currently using one for the odd bit of shopping, and a folder to go in the caravan. From 17 to 27 years of age I had and started again in 1968. Currently I have a road-tax-free 1970 Honda 175cc, and a shaft drive 1982 500 cc of which I love to ride when the weather is fine.

For 19 years I cherished my (also road-tax-free) 1963 Jaguar 'E-type', but decided to cash in on its five-figure value, and got my current XJ40 saloon. My original aim was to maintain my 'Benign Sovereign' (**B9 SOV**) myself, which I still do, in part, but its eight computers do get a little beyond me. However it is superb for our forays in the caravan, taking us comfortably down the autoroutes for long stays in the South of France.



*Elizabeth 2003*

These stays away have to be balanced by our love for our garden and my household DIY both of which take some of my time also.

Finally there is my interest in music, both Classical and Jazz. As a child I learnt to play the piano. When my life-long interest in New Orleans Jazz took hold in my teens this enabled me to pickup banjo, guitar and trombone to play with different jazz bands. Since my spell with computer music I do not play anything, and dare not get my Spanish guitar out of its case to test how stiff my fingers are. We have had season tickets for the Hallé Orchestra for forty years now and regularly enjoy the acoustics of the

I think that that is enough

account of my forays into gliding, microlights and industrial archaeology!



## Genealogy

My interest in genealogy was fired by my father who had collected what information he could on a few scraps of paper, listing his parents and brothers and sisters. There was no mention of uncles or aunts and as far as I know, he was unaware of all the other Colloffs around him when he lived in Birmingham.

Whilst living in Holland I joined the Society of Genealogists and had their experts perform the standard searches for the origin of the family name. All of their searches drew a blank and I was unable to do anything more until I arranged for a 'working' holiday in London for the family. For three days, whilst their mother took the children around the London sights I worked my way through all of the quarterly registers which were, at that time, at Somerset House. I diligently noted every Colloff birth, marriage and death from when compulsory state records began in 1837 up to 1900, when I began to find the details of my living relatives.

Work and the family got in the way of any major search into the past until I retired. I had, with difficulty, found the death of my great grandfather in 1874, but I had not found his birth. An event that eludes us to this day, despite Ken and Mildred's far more meticulous fine tooth-combing of the records. Once I had my own PC I saw that computerising records was the way to go, and once under way, I realised that what really interested me was a One-Name Study of the surname Colloff. In 1999 I registered my study in the name of Colloff with the Guild of One-Name Studies, and from my experiences with them started this '*Colloff Cousins*' family history newsletter.

John Colloff, B.Eng (hons), C.Eng., MICE

## The Last Words

### Now it is Your Turn.

Well, I am sorry if the previous article reads more like a job application than a snapshot of my life, but I found putting the above together rather difficult. However I do feel that it was necessary to put a more human touch into *Colloff Cousins*. I am hoping that our children and their children's children might some day be reading the odd copy of this newsletter and find accounts of mid and late 20<sup>th</sup> century life interesting.

So, please, could I have some contributions from some of you? Hopefully they will not be as prosaic as my effort above, and more light-hearted to redress the balance. Have you any family memories, photos or keepsakes that you would like to share with us all? I promise to return any photos and will tidy up any damage on old prints for you. Just look them out, add a few titles, and I will be grateful.

Until the next issue, with *your* contribution in it;

**John and Annette.**

John Colloff, The Haven, 3 Milford Gardens, Appleton, Warrington WA4 5EF, England.

[colloff@one-name.org](mailto:colloff@one-name.org)