

William Dark



The census returns for William state that he was born in Norwich, Norfolk. However, there is an IGI record for his christening having taken place on 30th August 1829, at St. Peter's, Leeds. It may well have been that his parents had him baptised in their home town after his birth in Norwich, or it may just have been convenient to have all the children listed as being born in Norwich? William was living at home for both the 1841 and 1851 census nights, but by 1861 he had joined the Royal Navy, had married and set up house at 26 Cumberland Street, Portsea close to the Portsmouth naval base.^v

| | | | |
|--------------|----|---------------------|----------------------|
| William Dark | 23 | Engineer Royal Navy | Norwich |
| Annie Dark | 24 | | Appleton, Yorkshire. |

William and Annie, or more formally Ann(e), were married in the March quarter 1856 at Kensington.ⁱⁱⁱ Annie was the daughter of William and Maria Norton. The Norton family has been traced back to the 1841 and 1851 census records.^{iv} For the first census they were living in Carr Street, Hunslet where William was a shopkeeper, and ten years later the parents were living on their own at 9 Prymer Terrace, Raywell Street at Sculcoates, Kingston upon Hull, by which time William's occupation was journeyman tailor. For the earlier census all members of the family were recorded as having been born in Yorkshire, but there is a discrepancy in the 1851 census as regards Maria's place of birth.

| | | | |
|-----------------|------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| William Norton | 1791 | | |
| Maria Norton | 1791 | | |
| David Norton | 1826 | | |
| Ann Norton | 1827 | | |
| Harriet Norton | 1830 | | |
| William Norton | 63 | Tailor Journeyman | Yorkshire, Bolton Percy |
| Maria P. Norton | 61 | | Lincolnshire, Hull |

David Norton has not been followed up. We will come across Harriet later on. In 1851 daughter Ann was a domestic servant in the large household of Samuel Laing, at 37 Montpelier Crescent, Brighton.^v As William was not living too far away from Brighton it was perhaps during her time at the Laings that she came to his attention!

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------|--|--------------------------|
| Samual Laing | 39 | Barrister and Managing Director of Railway Company | Scotland |
| Mary Laing | 37 | | Scotland |
| Samual Laing | 8 | Scholar | Paddington, Middlesex |
| Malcolm Laing | 4 | Scholar | Norwood, Surrey |
| Robert Laing | 3 | Scholar | Sydenham, Kent |
| Cecilia Laing | 2 | Scholar | Sydenham, Kent |
| Mary Laing | 1 | Scholar | Sydenham, Kent |
| Agnes Laing | 1 mo | | Brighton, Sussex |
| Amy Stevens | 32 | Nurse | Farringdon, Berksihire |
| Harriet Canham | 33 | Cook | Thrandeston, Suffolk |
| Ann Norton | 35 | Housemaid | Appleton, Yorkshire |
| Ellen Bryant | 20 | Under Nurse | Vauxhall, Surrey |
| Mary Bonner | 45 | Sick Nurse | Winchelsea, Kent |
| Elizabeth Cash | 30 | West Nurse | High Littleton, Somerset |
| Elizabeth Trail (Visitor) | 27 | | Scotland |

There are two references to William Dark in the 1871 census. In one he is recorded at home, at 33A Haddington Road, Devonport, with wife Annie and a young visitor.^{vi}

| | | | |
|--------------|----------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| William Dark | 42 | Chief Engineer | Norfolk, Norwich |
| Anne Dark | 43 | | Yorkshire, Appleton Roebuck |
| Rose Omer* | Niece 14 | Scholar | Yorkshire, Hull |

* More about Rose later.

For the second census record, William is among the "List of Officers, Men and Marines bone on the Books of the Ship (*HMS Dee*)^{vii} but not on Board on the Night of Sunday, April 2nd 1871".^{viii}

| Name and Surname | Rank and Rating | Cond | Age | Where Born |
|------------------|-----------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| William Dark | Chief Engineer | Married | 42 | Norwich, Norfolk |

The 1881 census finds William and sea and Annie at Home. William is Chief Engineer on board HMS Boadicea.^x This vessel, launched at Portsmouth in 1875, was the third to bear the name Boadicea and was a 16-gun screw corvette.^x

Meanwhile, Annie, now living back in the Portsmouth area, was holding the fort at 384 Commercial Road, Portsea.^x

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|----|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Anne Dark | | 54 | Engineers Wife | Yorkshire, Appleton |
| Rose Hook | Niece | 24 | Engineers Wife | Yorkshire, Hull |
| Rose H Hook | Great Niece | 4 | | Hampshire, Portsmouth |
| Annie H H Hook | Great Niece | 2 | | Hampshire, Portsmouth |
| Martha (?) M J Walsworth | Servant | 20 | General Servant | Hampshire, Gosport |

Reference has been made already to Annie's sister Harriet Norton and her niece, then Rose Omer and, given the composition of above household, now is a good point to digress from William and Annie Dark.

Harriet, Annie's younger sister was born about 1830, also at Appleton Roebuck, Yorkshire. Her parents has moved to Sculcoates by the time of the 1851 census and, from the place and date of Harriet's marriage, it would seem that the move occurred not long after the 1841 census. In the March quarter of 1847, Harriet Norton married William Homer at Sculcoates. The ages of both bride and groom was given as 22.^{xii} As we will see when we trace the family through the census returns, the surname "Homer" proved to be a nightmare for census collectors (and for later researchers). The name appears alternatively as "Omer" and "Homer". If the correct spelling is "Omer" it suggests that the enumerator was not going to have any dropped aitches on his returns and therefore duly transcribed the name as "Homer"! Harriet's future in-laws were recorded in the 1841 census at the borough of Kingston upon Hull as follows.^{xiii}

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Ann Homer | 30 |
| William Homer | 15 |
| Sarah Homer | 15 |
| Charlotte Homer | 5 |
| Elizabeth Homer | 5 |
| Thomas Homer | 1 |

Four years after their marriage, William and Harriet are living at 9 Hellards Row, Drypool, Kingston upon Hull, and they have two children.^{xiv}

| | | | |
|---------------------|----|---------|----------|
| Wm Homer | 24 | Cartman | Hull |
| Harriet Homer | 23 | | Appleton |
| Ann Elizabeth Homer | 3 | At home | Hull |
| John Homer | 1 | | Hull |

In 1861 the family is at a new address, Omerod Street, Kingston upon Hull and there are some additions, including Rose Omer who we have come across already, living with William and Annie Dark in 1871.^{xv}

| | | | |
|--------------|----|---------|----------|
| William Omer | 35 | Stoker | Hull |
| Harriet Omer | 33 | | Appleton |
| Ann E Omer | 13 | Scholar | Hull |
| John Omer | 11 | Scholar | Hull |
| Henry Omer | 4 | Scholar | Hull |
| Rose Omer | 4 | | Hull |
| William Omer | 2 | | Hull |

But before we go back to William and Annie, another name will be introduced into this account – that of James Hook, which will help explain why Rose's surname changed from Omer between the 1871 and 1881 census returns.

The marriage of Rose Omer and James Hook occurred in the June 1876 quarter at Portsea. Nothing has been found for James prior to the 1861 census, but judging from his profession he was very likely either a family friend or, at least, a colleague of William Dark.

On the night of Sunday 7th April, 1861, James Hook was aboard HMS Bachante at Esquimault Harbour, Vancouver Island.^{xvi}

| Name | Rank and Rating | Cond | Age | Birthplace |
|------------|----------------------------|--------|-----|---------------------------------------|
| James Hook | Assistant Engineer 3 Class | Single | 22 | Geneva, Switzerland (British Subject) |

In April 1871, shortly before his wedding, James was still at sea, but this time on board the Cheerful Class wooden gunboat HMS Pert.^{xvii}

| Name and Surname | Rank and Rating | Cond | Age | Where Born |
|------------------|-----------------|--------|-----|---------------------|
| James Hook | Engineer | Single | 33 | Geneva, Switzerland |

Because from now on the Dark and the Hook families are very closely connected they will dealt with together. We have seen from the 1881 census, that Rose, now Hook, and her two young daughters Rose and Annie, was living with Annie Dark. Husband James was still with the Royal Navy^{xvii} this time as a crew member of HMS Tourmaline. Like William Dark, James is now Chief Engineer.^{xix}

| Name | Rank and Rating | Cond | Age | Birthplace |
|------------|-----------------|---------|-----|---------------------|
| James Hook | Chief Engineer | Married | 43 | Switzerland, Geneva |

By 1891 both William Dark and James Hook had retired, but are found in the same household at 74 Kingston Crescent, Portsea.^{xx}

| | | | | |
|------------------|--------------|----|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| William Dark | | 63 | Fleet Engineer RN Retired Navy | City of Norwich |
| Anne Dark | | 64 | | City of York |
| James Hook | Nephew * | 52 | Inspector of Machinery Retired | Geneva (British Subject) |
| Rose Hook | Niece | 34 | | Hull |
| Rose Hook Hook | Great Niece | 14 | Scholar | Southsea |
| Anne Hook Hook | Great Niece | 12 | Scholar | Landport |
| Maud Hook Hook | Great Niece | 7 | Scholar) Twins | Landport |
| William J Hook | Great Nephew | 7 | Scholar) | Landport |
| Gladys Hook Hook | Great Niece | 5 | Scholar | Landport |
| Eliza Collings | | 21 | Servant General Domestic | Waterloo |

* Nephew of Anne by marriage.

The families presumably continued to reside together at 74 Kingston Crescent, and it would have been there that three deaths occurred in quick succession, as by 1901, Rose Hook was the head of the household.^{xxi}

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|----|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Rose Hook | Wid | 44 | Living on own means | Hull |
| Rose H Hook | | 24 | | Portsmouth |
| Gladys H Hook | | 15 | | Portsmouth |
| John O Olive Hook | | 8 | | Portsmouth |
| Marjorie V H Hook | | 3 | | Portsmouth |
| Harriet Gough | | 19 | General Servant Domestic | Hampshire, Cosham |

The FreeBMD records the deaths of William Dark, aged 69, in the first quarter of 1898 at Portsea Island, of Ann Dark, aged 72, in the second quarter of 1899 at Portsea Island, and of James Hook, aged 63 in the first quarter of 1901 at Portsmouth.

The transcription of the names of the Hook children is somewhat confusing. However the FreeBMD records help to clarify this to some degree! In order the children are :^{xxii}

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|------|----------------|
| Rose Hook Hook | Jan-Feb-Mar | 1877 | Portsea Island |
| Annie Harriet H Hook | Jul-Aug-Sep | 1878 | Portsea Island |
| Maud Hook Hook | Jan-Feb-Mar | 1884 | Portsea Island |
| William James Hook | Jan-Feb-Mar | 1884 | Portsea Island |
| Gladys Hook Hook | Jan-Feb-Mar | 1886 | Portsea Island |
| John Omer Hook | Apr-May-Jun | 1892 | Portsea Island |
| Marjorie Victoria H Hook | Jul-Aug-Sep | 1897 | Portsea Island |

James and Rose may have had other children as the following are also listed for the Portsea Island District, and as far as has been established, there were no other Hook families living in the district at the same time.

| | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|------|--|
| John William Hook | Jul-Aug-Sep | 1890 | (no further record found, but may have died as the child born in 1892 is also named John). |
| William Albert Hook | Oct-Nov-Dec | 1891 | (died Oct-Nov-Dec 1891 at birth or shortly after). |
| Alfred Hook | Oct-Nov-Dec | 1892 | (no further record found). |

No further record has been found for Rose, who widowed relatively young, may have remarried. Similarly nothing more in the online records has been found as yet for twins Maud and William James Hook, John Omer Hook and Marjorie V. Hook.

Daughter Annie was not at home for the 1901 census as she was visiting the Coade family at 61 Brixton Hill, Norwood, Lambeth.^{xxiii}

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|---|----|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| James W Coade | Head | M | 45 | Auctioneer (Employer) | Plymouth |
| Alice Coade | Wife | M | 46 | | Westminster |
| Arthur E Coade | Son | S | 19 | Actor | Brixton |
| Cecil J Coade | Son | S | 12 | | Brixton |
| Marjorie A Coade | Dau | S | 10 | | Brixton |
| Doris S Coade | Dau | S | 2 | | Brixton |
| Annie H Hook | Visitor | S | 22 | | Portsmouth |
| Caroline Ougood | Nurse | S | 25 | | Chatteris, Cambridgeshire |
| Eleanor Ougood | Parlourmaid | S | 17 | | Chatteris, Cambridgeshire |
| Sarah L Bollomley | Cook | S | 35 | | Peckham, London |

There is a marriage record on an Annie H.H. Hook for the first quarter of 1911, at Portsmouth. From the people listed on the same page, her husband would have been either George T.A.W. Luxton or Edward S. Websdale. Rose H Hook probably married in the last quarter of 1904 at West Ham, Essex, but no other people are listed in the FreeBMD record, so who she married is at this stage a mystery. James's and Rose's fourth daughter Gladys is probably the Gladys Hook Hook who married in the second quarter of 1909 in Portsmouth, and her husband was probably either Charles Lewis Cox or Ernest James Parratt. Some further research is required for these.^{xxiv}



ⁱ IGI Individual Record, C071933 1825-1830.

ⁱⁱ HO107/788/7/p9; HO107/2318/p23; RG/637/p38.

ⁱⁱⁱ FreeBMD Marriage Index.

^{iv} HO107/1356/12 p12; HO107/2361 p12.

^v HO107/1646/p50.

^{vi} RG10/2139/p17.

^{vii} A wooden hull 2nd Class sloop, paddle propulsion, 704 tons, with 4 guns. The Dee was decommissioned in 1871. In 1852 it was a troopship and in 1868 a storeship. (<http://www.pdavis.nl/ShowShip.php?id=1330>).

^{viii} RG10/2140 p15.

^{ix} RG11/5460/p1.

^x The third "Boadicea" was of 4140 tons, 5290 horsepower and 14.9 knots speed. Her length, beam, and draught were 280ft, 45ft, and 24ft. In 1879 the "Boadicea," flying the broad pennant of Commodore Frederick W. Richards, proceeded to Cape Town to take part in the Zulu War. In March the "Boadicea" supplemented the Naval Brigade already at the front by 16 officers and 378 men under commodore Francis Romilly. The naval brigade fought in the battle of Ginginhlovo, rendering excellent service with the guns, and holding the corners of the British Square, and it contributed greatly to the relief of Ekowe. The conduct of the Naval Brigade was eulogised by Sir Garnet Wolseley, and the "Boadiceas" were the last to re-embark on July 31st. In 1881 the "Boadicea" flying the broad pennant of Commodore Frederick Richards, assisted in the first Boer war by the landing of the Naval Brigade. On January 6th 128 officers and men, two machine guns, and a couple of rocket tubes proceeded to the front under Commodore Francis Romilly. The Naval Brigade took part in the battle of Laing's Nek, and the disaster at Majuba on February 27th. In this latter affair the "Boadicea" lost 1 officer and 10 men killed, Commander Romilly and 5 men mortally wounded and 10 severely wounded. The Dido's Naval Brigade lost in addition 3 killed and 3 wounded. Surgeon Mahon displayed magnificent devotion and gallantry, and was specially promoted. A peace was concluded soon afterwards, and the Naval Brigade returned to their ships. In 1888 the "Boadicea," commanded by Captain the Hon. Assheton Curzon Howe, and flying the flag of Rear Admiral the Hon. Edmund Fremantle, was at the head of a fleet of seven English vessels and one German ship took part in the blockade of the Zanzibar Littoral. This was undertaken in the interests of the suppression of slavery, and partly in consequence of the revolt of several of the coast towns against German authority. The blockade was of an uninteresting nature. On November 6th the "Boadicea's" pinnace, commanded by Lieutenant Walter Clifton Slater, captured a large slave dhow off Pemba, after an exciting chase of six hours. The dhow had 41 slaves on board, and was not brought to until shots had been shot on both sides. In September 1890 nine German traders were murdered in Vitu, a small state about 230 miles north of Zanzibar. On October 24th the boats of the "Boadicea" Captain the Hon. Assheton Curzon Howe, and those of two other ships, proceeded to Baltia and burnt the village. On October 26th a Naval Brigade of 700 seamen and marines were landed under the personal command of Vice-Admiral the Hon. Edmund Femantle. Meeting with some brisk resistance en route, the expedition captured the town of Vitu on October 27th, Gunner George Alfred Jenning, of the "Boadicea" blowing up the town gate with gun cotton. The town and the Sultan's house were burned, and the brigade returned to their ships, having lost 12 men wounded and developed several cases of sunstroke. Captain the Hon. Assheton Curzon Howe was made a C.B. for this service. In 1900 she was dismantled for use as a hulk. She was the last of the fully masted and sparred steam frigates which immediately preceded the sail vessels. In 1905 the "Boadicea" was broken up. (www.battleships-cruisers.co.uk/bacchante_class.htm).

^{xi} RG11/1142/p3.

^{xii} FreeBMD Marriage Index.

^{xiii} HO107/1225/2/p21.

^{xiv} HO107/2330 p35. A George Omer, born abt 1811, also a Cartman, is also living at Hellards Row. He has a wife Elizabeth (born about 1822) and there are 2 children – Anne and Mary Jane Omer. George may be William's father (not found in 1841 Census as yet). His first wife Ann may have died. William and Harriet Omer named their daughter Ann Elizabeth – the names of the both (?) George's wives.

^{xv} RG9/3580/p12.

^{xvi} RG10/5783/p1. HMS Bacchante was a wooden hulled 51-gun frigate, launched on 30th July 1859 at Portsmouth. She was broken up at Portsmouth in 1869 (<http://www.pdavis.nl/ShowShip.php?id=75>).

^{xvii} RG10/5783/p1.

^{xviii} RG11/5636/p31.

^{xix} HMS Tourmaline was a 12 gun corvette of the Emerald Class, launched on 30th October 1875 and broken up in 1920. She saw service in the Pacific and the West Indies (<http://www.pdavis.nl/ShowShip.php?id=2197>).

^{xx} RG12/855/p6.

^{xxi} RG13/979/p18.

^{xxii} FreeBMD Birth Index.

^{xxiii} RG13/428/p8.

^{xxiv} FreeBMD Marriage and Death Indexs.