

## **Charlotte Stagg & Wemyss Atkinson Blaxland, parents to Rupert & Sylvia.**

Joss Hawthorn, Jan. 2020

I write this, as for so many other similar documents I have written, to keep the memory of our forebears alive. Too many are based on men because they had "professional careers" and are easier to trace. For the women, documenting their lives is more difficult, but it is possible. I have benefitted from materials and comments supplied by Nick Welch, Shaun Scott (see below), and Simon Blaxland de Lange, along with my own findings on BNA and Ancestry (J S Howden, A D M Burwell).



To my knowledge, these are the only surviving photographs of Rupert & Sylvia's parents, Charlotte and Wemyss. The photographs appear to be taken close together in time,



presumably on the same day. Rupert's son Simon Blaxland de Lange suggests that the first baby is Rupert, and the second is Sylvia, so both were taken around 1912. I think this is right given what the children were wearing. Wemyss was born Atkinson but changed his name to Blaxland by 1912, as discussed below.

At that time, the 1911 census shows that they were living at 33 Highbury, Jesmond, Newcastle, a pleasant street opposite a large park known as the Town Moor (see colour photo below). The Highbury house had two maidservants, Elizabeth & Margaret, shown below. (Re. Wemyss' birthplace, see the Appendix.)

1911 England Census for Wemyss Henry Atkinson  
Northumberland · Jesmond · ALL · 24

**CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.**

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

| NAME AND SURNAME  | RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family | AGE (last birthday) and SEX | PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE | PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards | BIRTHPLACE of every person | NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country | INFIRMITY |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|---|-----------|
| <p>of every Person, whether Member of Family, Visitor, Boarder, or Servant, who</p> <p>(1) passed the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in this dwelling and was alive at midnight, or</p> <p>(2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday, April 3rd, not having been enumerated elsewhere.</p> <p>No one else must be included.</p> <p>(For order of entering names see Examples on back of Schedule.)</p> |                                |                             |                            |  |                            |   |           |
| 1. Wemyss Henry Atkinson  | Head                           | 44                          | Married                    | Solicitor  | London, Middlesex          | 290   |           |
| 2. Charlotte Atkinson   | Wife                           | 33                          | Married                    |  | London, Middlesex          | 340   |           |
| 3. Elizabeth Atkinson   | Daughter                       | 31                          | Single                     | Domestic servant (Cook)  | Stockport, Cheshire        | 220   |           |
| 4. Margaret Taylor Dwyer  | Servant                        | 31                          | Single                     | Domestic servant (Nurse)                                       | Belfast, Ireland           | 290   |           |
| 5. Rupert Blaxland Atkinson   | Son                            | 1                           |                            |  | Newcastle-on-Tyne          |   |           |
| 6.  |                                |                             |                            |  |                            |   |           |
| 7.  |                                |                             |                            |  |                            |   |           |
| 8.  |                                |                             |                            |  |                            |   |           |
| 9.  |                                |                             |                            |  |                            |   |           |
| 10.   |                                |                             |                            |  |                            |   |           |
| 11.   |                                |                             |                            |  |                            |   |           |
| 12.   |                                |                             |                            |  |                            |   |           |
| 13.   |                                |                             |                            |  |                            |   |           |
| 14.   |                                |                             |                            |  |                            |   |           |
| 15.   |                                |                             |                            |  |                            |   |           |

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that—

(1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper age column.

(2) I have entered the marks and figures in Column 2 and 4 accurately.

(3) I have entered the necessary figures in Column 5 and 6 accurately.

(4) After making the necessary enquiries I have ascertained all persons on the Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.

Initials of Enumerator: *W. E. C.*

Males: 2 Females: 5

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (Room, Tenement, or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count outhouses, outhouses, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor wardrobe, office, shop.

9

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: *Wemyss H. Atkinson*

Postal Address: *33, Highbury, Newcastle-on-Tyne*





Note on historical context: Sylvia was born just three weeks before the sinking of the Titanic in April 1912, a magnificent vessel that was launched in the previous year. This was an active time for the Suffragette movement, particularly in the Newcastle area. Emily Davison would die tragically under the King's horse at Epsom in the following year(\*), and the insanity of WWI was just two years away.

(\* <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/may/26/emily-davison-suffragette-death-derby-1913> ).

There are accessible online videos of Suffragette demonstrations, one in Jesmond:

<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-scenes-from-suffragette-demonstration-at-newcastle-1910-online>

## Wemyss' early years, study and career





In 1867, Wemyss was born in the "lost village" of Bigges Main, now part of Wallsend (see Appendix). His father Thomas Atkinson was a highly respected coal fitter/broker who had the responsibility of assembling mine machinery in the Victorian era where coal fired UK industry. His mother was the impressive Sarah Blaxland, a devout woman who kept excellent notes (along with ferns) in her 1857 bible. I am in possession of that bible, carefully bound in Sydney, Australia. In a separate document, and on Ancestry, I show scanned images of Thomas (a photograph) and Sarah (a colourised miniature). Simon has the well-annotated copy of Wemyss' bible in his possession. He notes:

"It has just biblical notes ... but these are written in a beautifully clear hand and very detailed in places (for example, about the dimensions of the Tower of Babel). The inscription in the front reads 'Wemyss H. Atkinson, 3, Oakhurst Terrace, Long Benton, 20th October 1896'."

Wemyss studied at Felsted, one of England's leading private schools. I found this out from the 1881 Census – here is the entry:

1881 England Census for Wemyss Henry Atkinson  
Essex - Felstead - ALL - District Felstead Grammar School

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|   | NAME and SURNAME                           | (1) RELATION to Head of Family—or (2) Position in the Institution. | CONDITION as to Marriage  | AGE Last Birthday |         | RANK, PROFESSION, or OCCUPATION | WHERE BORN                 |
|---|--|--|---|-------------------|---------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
|   |  |  |   | Males             | Females |                                 |                            |
| 1 | Adam Edward Haslewood Pennington Sharnwood | Scholar  |  | 14                |         | Scholar                         | Kent - Whitfield           |
| 2 | Montague James Woodbridge                  | Scholar  |  | 14                |         | Scholar                         | Middlesex - Harebridge     |
| 3 | Wemyss Henry Atkinson                      | Scholar  |  | 14                |         | Scholar                         | Northumberland - Newcastle |
|   |  |  |  |                   |         | Scholar                         | Buckinghamshire - Burnham  |

Wemyss began his legal career in 1891 (aged 24; see obit. below). In 1913, he was Under Sheriff to Dr Dawson (Sheriff) of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Here's a relevant quote from Wikipedia:

In [England](#), [Wales](#), and [Northern Ireland](#), but not in [Scotland](#), the under-sheriff is the deputy of the [High Sheriff](#) and is appointed directly by the High Sheriff. It is a requirement of the [Sheriffs Act 1887](#) that a High Sheriff appoints an under-sheriff within one month of taking office. In practice, the under-sheriff performs most of the legal functions of the High Sheriff. The same person (usually a [solicitor](#)) is appointed annually by successive High Sheriffs over many years, leaving the High Sheriff to perform the ceremonial functions of the office.

Wemyss trained and practiced as a solicitor. He was a senior partner in the regionally known firm of Joseph A Phillipson & Co., Pilgrim St., Newcastle, and he was solicitor clerk to the Local Tribunal and to Longbenton Urban Council & Schools that arose from the 1870 Education Act.

**Blyth Gas.**—From a report supplied by Messrs. J. and H. S. Pattinson, public analysts, the quality of gas supplied by the Blyth and Cowpen Gas Company is three candles above the requirements of their Parliamentary Act.

**Longbenton Parish Council.**—A special meeting of Longbenton Parish Council was held on Thursday night, 6th inst., to consider the question of the lighting of the district. Mr. D. E. Stanford presided.—At the outset, Mr. Wemyss Atkinson, Clerk to the Council, presented a statement showing that the average cost per lamp in the parish was £1 9s 6d per annum, the lamps being lit for nine months, and this including maintenance as well as light. There were 262 lamps in the parish, so that this meant roughly £400 a year to be found for lighting. On considering the requests for extra lamps which came in from various parts of the district, it was found that 38 more were asked for.—A motion was moved that the parish meeting be asked to sanction £425 for lamps for next year, but this was defeated in favour of a request for £400, which means that there will be practically no increase.—It was further agreed to maintain a lamp which the Rural District Council propose to erect, which will incidentally and without interfering with the light it gives, extract and consume the sewer gas in the main sewer.

This is an interesting article from July 1905 where Wemyss Atkinson (before the switch to Blaxland) is dealing with the problem of the many gas lamps that lit the street, and the need for more at considerable cost. This was some years before the electricity grid was properly set up in 1926. The article speaks of powering light with sewer gas. Blyth is a small port town, north east of Newcastle.

Wemyss’ character and freemasonry

The Worshipful Master is carefully selected for the role, and he is someone that has been groomed for the Chair during his tenure as Senior Warden, Junior Warden and other **Masonic** positions. The Worshipful Master oversees everyone in the Lodge and ensures that they are carrying out their duties efficiently. Jan 8, 2019

The obit. below mentions that Wemyss practised in Alston and was the Worshipful Master of the Alston Freemasons up to about the time of his death. There is a unique insight into his personality: “Mr. Blaxland was of a somewhat quiet and retiring disposition [shy, reserved], but by those who knew him he was held in high esteem.”

Wemyss’ name – a longstanding mystery

Before 1912, Wemyss was married, studied and entered into business as an Atkinson. There are numerous records to his earlier incarnation. Below, the 1891 census shows Wemyss Atkinson still living at 24 with Sarah, along with my great-grandmother Jane at 29.

| 1891 England Census for Wemyss H Atkinson       |   |   |                               |          |     |    |                    |          |                |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------|----------|-----|----|--------------------|----------|----------------|
| Northumberland - Longbenton - ALL - District 11 |   |   |                               |          |     |    |                    |          |                |
| 95  | Westbourne House  | 1 | Lily Atkinson                 | Serv     | 0   | 64 | Wemyss H. Atkinson | 24       | Northumberland |
|   |   |   | Sarah A. Atkinson             | Head     | Wid | 64 | Jane B.            | 29       | Newcastle      |
|   |   |   | Jane B.                       | Daughter | S   | 24 | Wemyss H. Atkinson | Son      | Newcastle      |
|   |   |   | Mary J. T. Ramage             | Serv     | S   | 46 | Mary E. Ramage     | Sister   | Newcastle      |
|   |   |   | Mary E. Ramage                | Serv     | S   | 46 | Daniel E. Stamford | Head     | Newcastle      |
|   |   |   | Daniel E. Stamford            | Head     | M   | 46 | Helen M.           | Wife     | Newcastle      |
|   |   |   | Helen M.                      | Wife     | M   | 46 | Fredrick           | Son      | Newcastle      |
|   |   |   | Fredrick                      | Son      |     | 7  | Florence           | Daughter | Newcastle      |
|   |   |   | Florence                      | Daughter |     | 5  |                    |          |                |
| 4   | Total of Houses and of Tenements with less than Five Rooms ...) | 4 | Total of Males and Females... |          | 9   | 33 |                    |          |                |

I never understood why Wemyss switched from the name of his father Thomas Atkinson to the name of his mother Sarah Blaxland (even while appropriate); it was most unusual for the time. *This article on George Blaxland’s estate dating from 1912 explains why.*

Evening Mail - Wednesday 02 October 1912

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Mr. GEORGE BLAXLAND, of Gillingham, retired civil engineer, who died on August 8, aged 78, left estate valued at £20,388 gross, with net personalty £18,069. He stated that he had no children and was the last survivor of the family of Blaxland, and being particularly desirous that the name should not die out, he left 2,520 £1 shares in Marshall, Sons, and Co. (Limited), of Gainsborough, and 252 £5 Debentures in that company to his nephew **Wemyss Henry Atkinson**, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on condition that he assume the name of Blaxland within 12 months of the testator's death.

The change was immediate. The 1913 voting register records Wemyss as Blaxland:



|                             |             |                |             |
|-----------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| * McDonald, David           | 32 Highbury | dwelling house | 32 Highbury |
| Stephen                     |             |                |             |
| 1892 Blaxland, Wemyss Henry | 33 Highbury | dwelling house | 33 Highbury |
| 1893 Brown, John Arnott     | 34 Highbury | dwelling house | 34 Highbury |
| 1894 Slater, Elizabeth      | 35 Highbury | house          | 35 Highbury |
| 1895 Mackey, Jane           | 36 Highbury | house          | 36 Highbury |

\* The persons against whose names an asterisk is placed are not entitled to vote in this Ward.

I have much information on the surly George Blaxland, including his personal letters & patents (original copies), photographs and sundry. He lived at Gillingham House, Kent; this is covered in a separate long document from materials bequeathed by Judith on her death in 2017. George and father George enjoyed long, successful and interesting lives.

The magnificent Sarah Blaxland, mother to Wemyss, was sister to George. Sarah and husband Thomas gave rise to a large family, including my branch through Ernest, of course Wemyss' branch (Tassell/Welch), Aunt Hally's branch through her marriage to Thomas, that died with Rollo & Leonard. I have written long documents on all of these branches. There are other branches that were known to Judith and Sylvia (d. 1991), but lost to our side of the extended family, at least for now. (Michael Fowler, who descends from G B Atkinson, is active on Ancestry. He has made contact at various times since about 2010.)

On the name change, son Rupert went through Sedbergh School as Atkinson-Blaxland; the Sedbergh years are covered in the Rollo Atkinson document.

## Wemyss' death & will

Wemyss died in January 1917 from bronchitis & measles (see below) and bequeathed a generous estate, as indicated in the Will statement below, but this was but a third of what he inherited; see above. (This may be due to the estate tax levied on inheritances in excess of £10,000?) He was only 49 years old.

| Registration District TYNEMOUTH.  |   |                             |      |             |                     |  |   |   |
|---|---|-----------------------------|------|-------------|---------------------|--|---|---|
| 1911. DEATHS in the Sub-District of LONGBENTON in the County of NORTHUMBERLAND, &c. |   |                             |      |             |                     |  |   |   |
| No.   | When and Where Died.                            | Name and Surname.           | Sex. | Age.        | Rank or Profession. | Cause of Death.  | Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.                         | When Registered.                              |
| 247   | 8th Jan 1917<br>"Ashgrove"<br>Longbenton<br>Nth | Wemyss<br>Henry<br>Blaxland | Male | 49<br>years | Solicitor           | (1) Measles<br>(2) Capillary Bronchitis<br>cardiac failure<br>Certified by<br>J. P. Parkinson M.B. | B. Brack<br>Present at the death<br>2 Granville Road<br>Newcastle upon Tyne | 1917<br>1st Jan<br>John Newrick<br>Registrar. |

Morpeth Herald - Friday 12 January 1917

Image © Johnston Press plc. Image created courtesy of THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD.

The death took place on Monday, at his residence, Ashgrove, Northumberland Avenue, Gosforth, of Mr. Wemyss H. Blaxland, solicitor, at the age of 49 years. The deceased gentleman served his apprenticeship with the well-known firm of Messrs. Joseph A. Phillipson and Company, and later became senior partner in the firm. The late Mr. Blaxland held several public appointments, and was clerk to the Longbenton Urban Council Schools. He was also clerk to the managers of the Longbenton Group Council Schools since the coming into operation of the Education Act. He acted as clerk to the Longbenton Local Tribunal. In 1915 he was Under-Sheriff of Newcastle to the late Dr. Dawson. The deceased gentleman is survived by a widow and two young children.

Newcastle Journal - Saturday 24 March 1917

Image © Reach PLC. Image created courtesy of THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD.

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tive rescue effort, and in a short speech Lillingston asked for patrols of women for the streets of the city to rescue their young sisters from temptation.

### LOCAL WILL.

Mr Wemyss Henry Blaxland (formerly Atkinson), of Ashgrove, Northumberland Avenue, Forest Hall, solicitor clerk to the Longbenton Urban Council since its formation in 1912, and Under-Sheriff of Newcastle, 1914-15, has left estate of the gross value of £7,186 5s 11d. of which £6,411 18s is nett personalty. By his will he left all his estate to his wife, Mrs Charlotte Blaxland, to whom probate thereof has been granted.



**DEATH OF MR. W. H. BLAXLAND.**

The death took place, yesterday, of Mr. Wemyss Henry Blaxland, of Ashgrove, Northumberland Avenue, Forest Hill. The deceased gentleman, who was 49 years of age, was the sole surviving partner of Messrs. Joseph A. Philipson and Co., solicitors, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle. He had been in practice since 1891, having been articled to the late Mr. J. A. Philipson. Mr. Blaxland had been the clerk to Longbenton Urban District Council since its formation in 1912, and also Clerk to the managers of Longbenton Grouped Council Schools since 1902. He was also clerk to the Local Tribunal at Longbenton. The late Mr. Blaxland practised, too, at Alston, where he had just passed through his term as W.M. of the Alston Lodge of Freemasons. In 1915, during the time that the late Dr. Dawson, of Walker, held the office of Sheriff of Newcastle, Mr. Blaxland acted as Under-Sheriff for the city. The late Mr. Blaxland was of a somewhat quiet, retiring disposition, but by those who knew him he was held in high esteem. He leaves a widow and two children to mourn his loss.

## Charlotte's family

Through BNA, there are numerous references to the Staggs going back to at least the early 1800s, including her parents Robert Stagg (1848-1891) and Caroline Bennett (1840-1907). For example, Caroline appears as an Executor on the 1893 will of Harriet Sophia Dixon, Spinster (see RHS).

This family has a long attachment to the Pennines. The Stagg family appears to have been held in high esteem for many years.

Robert was a yeoman who earned a living from his pastures. There are adverts in local papers before and after his death with respect to renting pastures.

Caroline was active locally, e.g. assisting in church affairs and local functions, and active in women's groups.

The image below is taken from the 1881 Census showing the presence of the family and a maidservant at Hill House, Alston. (I have requested photographs from the Alston Moor historical society.)

**RE MISS HARRIET SOPHIA DIXON, SPINSTER, DECEASED.**

Pursuant to the Act of Parliament 22nd and 23rd Vic., cap. 35, intituled "An Act to further Amend the Law of Property and to Relieve Trustees,"

**NOTICE** is hereby given that all Creditors and other persons having any CLAIMS or DEMANDS against the Estate of HARRIET SOPHIA DIXON, late of IVY COTTAGE, TEMPLE SOWERBY, in the County of Westmorland, Spinster, deceased (who died on the 3rd day of December, 1892, and whose Will was proved in the Principal Registry of the Probate Division of her Majesty's High Court of Justice, on the 7th day of February, 1893, by James Byres, of Temple Sowerby aforesaid, and Caroline Stagg, of Hill House, Alston, in the County of Cumberland, Widow, the Executors therein named), are hereby required to send the Particulars in writing of their Claims or Demands to us, the undersigned, Messrs. WATSON, SONS, & ROOM, on or before the 30th day of September, 1893, after which date the said Executors will proceed to distribute the Assets of the said Deceased amongst the persons entitled thereto, having regard only to the Claims and Demands of which they shall then have had notice; and they will not be liable for the Assets of the said Deceased, or any part thereof so distributed to any person or persons of whose Claims or Demands they shall not then have had notice.

Dated this 11th day of August, 1893.

**WATSON, SONS, & ROOM,**  
12, Boulevard Street, Fleet Street, London, E.C.,  
Solicitors for the Executors.

1881 England Census for Albert Ed. Stagg  
Cumberland > Alston > ALL > District 2

| No. of Schedule | ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE | HOUSES<br>In-<br>habited<br>(1) or<br>Building<br>(2) | NAME and Surname of each Person | RELATION to Head of Family | CON-<br>DITION as to Marriage | AGE last Birthday of |         | Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION | WHERE BORN                 | (1) Deaf-and-Dumb<br>(2) Blind<br>(3) Imbecile or Idiot<br>(4) Lunatic |
|-----------------|---|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
|                 |   |   |                                 |                            |                               | Males                | Females |                                 |                            |  |
| 170             | Hill House                                  | 1   | Robert Stagg                    | Head                       | Mar                           | 32                   |         | Yeoman, Income from Land        | Alston, Catterall St. Mary |  |
|                 |   |   | Caroline de                     | Wife                       | Mar                           | 40                   |         | do Wife                         | do - Bordenburg            |  |
|                 |   |   | Charlotte de                    | Daughter                   |                               | 3                    |         | do daughter                     | Cumberland Alston          |  |
|                 |   |   | Albert Ed. de                   | Son                        |                               | 1                    |         | do son                          | do                         |  |
|                 |   |   | Margaret Holmes                 | Servant                    | Unm                           | 19                   |         | General Servt Domestic          | Northumberland Knaresdale  |  |
| 171             | do do                                       | 1   | John Widdowson                  | Head                       | Mar                           | 58                   |         | Farmer of 40 Acres              | Cumberland Alston          |  |
|                 |   |   | do                              | Wife                       | Mar                           | 60                   |         | do Wife                         | do                         |  |



## Charlotte's early years

In July 1877, Charlotte was born in Alston, Cumbria, a lovely market town on the spine of the Pennines, "the highest market town in England." As mentioned, the full family (Robert, Caroline, Charlotte, Albert) appears in the 1881 Census living at Hill House, Alston. The villages and hamlets surrounding Alston, some associated with this family, are all very delightful (e.g. Garrigill, Nenthall, Nenthead). But the surrounding peaks like Cross Fell are very rugged. I found numerous BNA articles warning of hazards that can befall the witless.



Charlotte was clearly very musical. I found several articles on BNA dating back to her teenage years. At 15, Charlotte had passed the practical exam in connection with the International College of Music, results that were announced in several local papers in 1892. I presume this was for the piano because Simon, a pianist, still has copies of her sheet music.

**THE MID-CUMBERLAND & NORTH WESTMORLAND HERALD, SATURDAY, JULY 30, 1892.**

AMONGST the pupils who have successfully passed the practical examination in connexion with the International College of Music, held at Newcastle appears the name of Miss Charlotte Stagg, Alston, who has passed with 2nd class honours in the junior division. Miss Stagg has been the pupil of Miss Edith Spence, Ryton.

In 1902, the year of Edward VII's coronation, at 24, Charlotte was performing in a local drama production to strong reviews. I include both articles below with surrounding text - all articles are charming, e.g. corruption within the cricket team.

**Mid Cumberland** FIRST EDITION  
and  
**North Westmorland Herald**  
And Penrith, Appleby, Kirkby Stephen, Keswick, and Alston Advertiser.  
No. 1,899—2nd Week in Quarter. [PRINTED BY J. W. B. FOR THE PROPRIETOR] PENRITH, SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 1902. PRICE ONE PENNY.



## ALSTON NOTES & NEWS.

A football match was played at Nenthead between Alston and Nenthead on Saturday last, and resulted in a win for Alston by 2 goals to nothing.

### NENTHEAD AMATEUR DRAMATIC CLUB.

At the Town Hall, Alston, on Tuesday, the Nenthead Amateur Dramatic Club gave a performance for the benefit of the funds of St. John's Church, Nenthead, and the relief of a necessitous case in Alston Parish, specially recommended by Dr. Carson. I happened to be present for the first time, and I must say the performances were most creditable to all who took part. It is seldom that a company of theatrical amateurs attain the proficiency that this local society has, and to me it seemed a pity that the attendance was not what it might have been. But the audience was really interested and enjoyed themselves immensely. There was an absence of awkwardness and very little amateurism was displayed, some of the acting approaching pretty closely on the professionals. The first part of the program was entitled "Poor Pillicoddy," a farce by J. M. Morton. The characters were:—Mr. Pillicoddy (nurseryman), Mr. J. C. H. Blayney; Captain O'Scuttle, Mr. R. Corsey; Mrs. Pillicoddy, Miss Charlotte Stagg; Mrs. O'Scuttle, Miss Leila Sowrey; Sarah Blunt, Miss Elena Fernau. The second part was entitled "Ici on parle Francais," a farce by T. J. Williams, and the characters were:—Major Rattan, Mr. C. Blaney; Victor Dubois, Mr. R. Corsey; Mr. Spriggins, Mr. W. Sykes; Mrs. Spriggins, Miss Leila Sowrey; Angelina (their daughter), Miss Eva Akerigg; Julia, wife of Major Rattan, Miss Elena Fernau; Anna Maria (maid of all work), Miss Charlotte Stagg.

Now, regarding the productions, it would be rather difficult to attempt to criticise the respective players in their order of merit. However, I cannot refrain from first mentioning the ladies, not only as a matter of courtesy, but because they all displayed a great deal of talent in acting. The four engaged were very successful, although there was great dissimilarity in their methods. Whatever faults they displayed in their elocution, these were by no means easily detected in an otherwise splendid performance. So much for the ladies. Now for the gentlemen. The two

## ALSTON & DISTRICT NEWS.

**BANK HOLIDAY.**—The tradesmen in the town have decided to close their respective places of business on Monday 1st August, that being Bank Holiday. The members of the Union Club will hold their annual day's outing on the same day, when they purpose visiting Ullawater.

**FLOWER SHOW.**—The committee have secured the services of the celebrated Northern Union Band from Newcastle (conductor, Mr. R. Smith) for the forthcoming exhibition to be held on Friday, Sept. 2nd. The ground in front of the Town Hall has been granted for the exhibition.

**AMONGST** the pupils who have successfully passed the practical examination in connexion with the International College of Music, held at Newcastle appears the name of Miss Charlotte Stagg, Alston, who has passed with 2nd class honours in the junior division. Miss Stagg has been the pupil of Miss Edith Spence, Ryton.

**THE MOORS.**—The prospect for grouse shooting this year is better than was anticipated considering the stormy weather that was experienced during the spring. On Ayle Fell, broods are numerous, but the coveys are only small. There are a good many "cheepers." On Hartside birds are healthy and more numerous than was expected. Taking the weather into consideration the high-lying fells are promising fairly well.

**VOLUNTEERS.**—On Saturday evening a parade in review order was held when there were present 2 officers (Major Dickinson and Lieut. Carson) 3 sergeants and 30 rank and file. 2 officers and 20 men left Alston this morning by the 7-20 a.m. train for the week's encampment at Blackpool. The annual inspection will take place at Blackpool on Thursday August 4th. Every member of the corps is expected to be present unless leave of absence is granted. Special train arrangements have been made. The train will leave Alston at 6-5 a.m., arriving at Blackpool at 11-5. At night the train leaves Blackpool at 4-45 arriving at Alston at 10.

**CRICKET.**—The cricket club is evidently in a sad way at present. It is minus a captain, owing to the gentleman who occupied that position having resigned on account of misconduct on the part of some of the members on the ground, and to having been insulted himself. One or two attempts have been

### Charlotte's wedding day

Charlotte married Wemyss in Alston on 18 June, 1908 at the relatively advanced age (for the time) of 30. Albert also married Ethel Rudd of Richmond, Surrey *just two months later*. This could have been a happy year for the Stagg family, except that mother Caroline had died the previous year sadly at the age of 67. Did she live to see them both engaged? The wedding day appears to have been one of mixed emotions – see below.

Father Robert died in 1891 at 43 years of age; he was eight years younger than Caroline.



This 1908 article is one of the best “finds” to date. It is a detailed report of Charlotte & Wemyss’ wedding day published in the next-day’s edition of the Carlisle Journal. Charlotte was given away by brother Albert. It names H. Dent as the Best Man. Both reverends (one from each town, an old tradition) and musicians are named. There was a large gathering, a ceremonial lunch but no reception due to the deep mourning of the bride, presumably for her mother who died in the preceding October. Charlotte must have looked radiant in her outfit; hopsacking is a woven fabric.

**WEDDING AT ALSTON.** — Yesterday the marriage took place at St. Augustine's Church, Alston, of Mr. Wemyss H. Atkinson, solicitor, Newcastle, and Miss Stagg, Hill House, Alston. There was a large gathering of friends in the church. The officiating clergy were the Rev. W. Oxland, vicar of Alston, and the Rev. E. Grover, vicar of Benton. The bridegroom was supported by Mr. H. Dent as best man. Mr. Oswald, organist of St. Andrew's, Newcastle, and Mr. C. Blayney, of Nenthead, contributed the musical portion of the service. The bride was given away by her brother, Mr. Albert Stagg. She wore a coat and skirt of cream hopsacking heavily braided and a white hat trimmed with chiffon and an ostrich plume. She carried a bouquet composed of lilies of the valley and roses, the gift of the bridegroom. After the ceremony lunch was served at the Angel Hotel to the immediate relatives and guests, but owing to the deep mourning of the bride there was no reception.

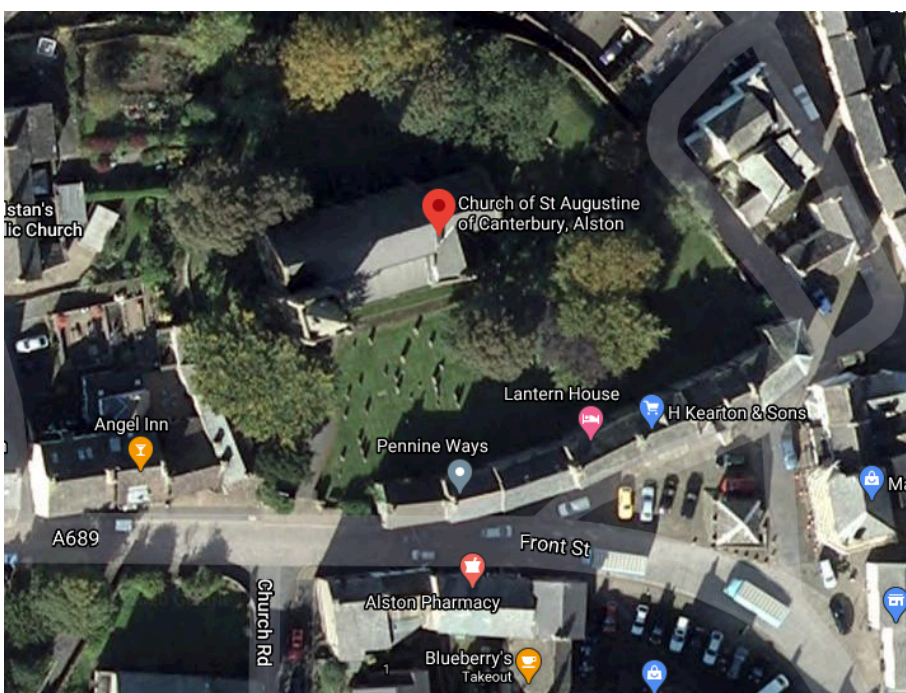


Published: Friday 19 June 1908

Newspaper: [Carlisle Journal](#)

County: Cumberland, England

Type: Article | Words: 1796 | Page: 4 | Tags: none



Both church and pub are shown here next to each other, the endearing tradition of an English village.



## When Wemyss served as defense lawyer for Albert – a country tale

Published: Saturday 15 May 1909

Newspaper: [Cumberland & Westmorland Herald](#)

County: Cumberland, England

Type: Article | Words: 673 | Page: 1 | Tags: none

Arguably the most interesting “find” is this one in the following year of both Stagg marriages. Here, Wemyss is defending his brother-in-law and other defendants from accusations concerning dog attacks on local sheep. (BNA articles concerning dogs and sheep are commonplace, at least for local publications along the Pennines.) This would inevitably involve the local constabulary and evidence obtained by them.

Albert was charged with a similar offence on April 12, a month earlier, and he seems to have received earlier warnings. But was he found guilty?

**DANGEROUS DOGS.**

Michael Laidler, hotel-keeper, Alston, was charged with being the owner of a dangerous dog and failing to keep the same in proper control at Alston on April 16. Mr. Atkinson, of Messrs. Chater and Atkinson, appeared for defendant.

Evidence was given by Miss F. A. Dixon, Crown Hotel, and Mr. Stephen Dickinson, Bridge End Farm, to the effect that the dog was chasing the sheep near the Firs footpath on the 16th ult. Sergt. Stephen said he received information, and he saw Mr. Laidler, who said he was not aware that the dog had been chasing sheep. Defendant said he did not think he would put the dog down, but said he would see. He again saw defendant on April 16, when he said he would tie the dog up in the stable. In cross-examination by Mr. Atkinson as to who had given him the information, witness refused to answer unless the Bench requested him. The question was allowed to remain unanswered. Witness also said that after reporting the case he received another complaint about the same dog chasing sheep in the same vicinity.

The magistrates made an order for the defendant to keep the dog under proper control, or to destroy it; also to pay costs.

Albert Stagg, Hill House, was charged with a similar offence on April 12.

Stephen Dickinson said that on the date named, whilst near Bridge End Farm, he saw defendant's dog jump out of the field on to the road. Suspecting that something was wrong he went to the field and found a lamb newly worried, its throat being pulled out. He looked around, but could see no other dogs about the place.

Sergeant Stephen said he received information about the matter at the same time as the previous case, and made inquiries. He saw defendant, who asked, "Who could prove it?" He added that no one saw the dog worry the lamb, and he only paid Mr. Dickinson 15s. because they thought that it was his dog. Witness had cautioned the defendant about this dog in March, and had had several complaints about the dog being dangerous.

Evidence for the defence was given by defendant and Mr. Atkinson, the latter stating that the dog had now been sent away from Alston.

The magistrates made a similar order as in the previous case.

Teasdale Lowe, farmer, Hill House, was charged with a similar offence.

J. J. Shield gave evidence to the effect that on two occasions previous to the 18th ult. he had seen defendant's dog chasing his sheep in a field near Glenwood. On both occasions he told defendant and asked him to look after the dog.

Jacob Walton, Glenwood, said that on April 18 he saw defendant's dog chasing sheep belonging to Mr. Shield. He frightened the dog away and went and told Mr. Lowe.

P.C. Sprout said that he saw defendant who admitted that Mr. Walton had told him about the dog chasing sheep. The dog was only about five months old.

Evidence was given for the defence, and a similar order was made as in the previous cases.



## Charlotte's brother & family

Charlotte moved to 4 Harewood, Darlington after the death of Wemyss in January 1917. His death is given as Longbenton, but this is a neighbouring suburb. (In my collected notes, there are many references to Atkinsons and Blaxlands in the Longbenton area.) She lived there with her children Rupert and Sylvia, and her brother "Bertie", two years her junior, according to the inquest notice below. (Albert "Bertie" Stagg married Ethel Rudd in 1908, had a daughter Dorothy Caroline in 1912; I presume they were also living in the house?)

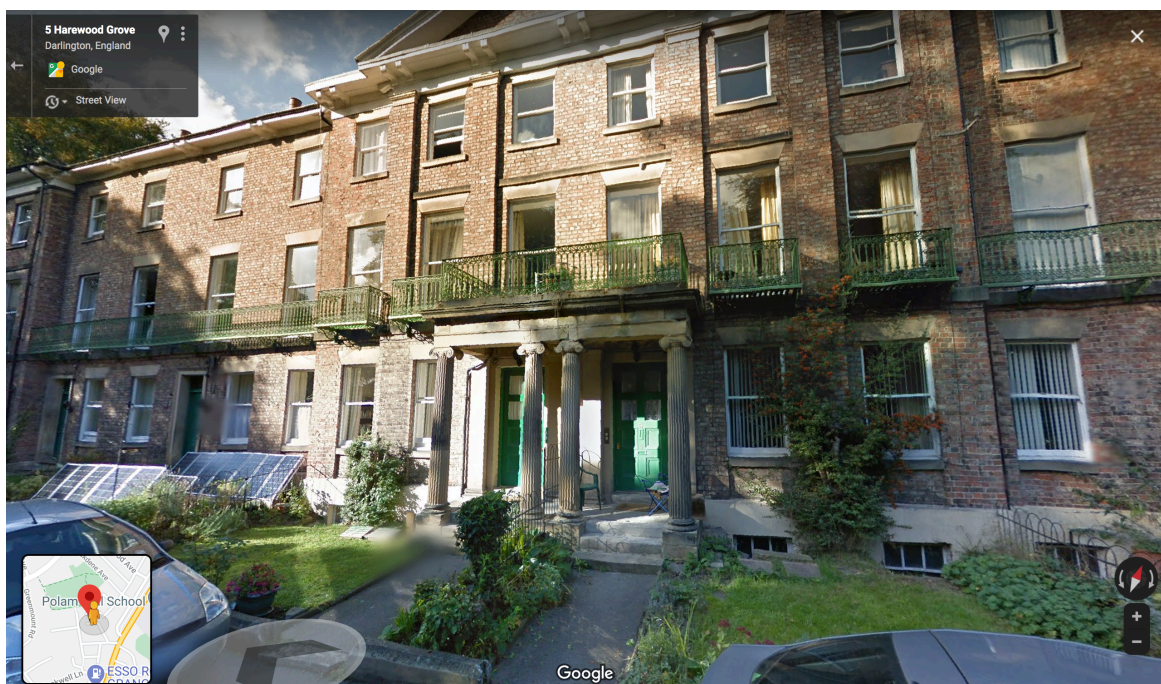
I have many notes from Ancestry on Albert. In brief, he was a marine engineer, went to war as a driver (35 yrs old) in March 1915, as recorded by the Alston Historical Society (they incorrectly refer to him as Arthur Stagg; I have updated them). He was of medium stature, 5'7" tall, with a 38" chest. He had already served 4 years in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, and managed to survive WWI, living to the age of 78 (d. 1956). Ethel died in 1933 and Bertie married Edith Humphrey in 1939 (she lived to modern times, dying in 1988).

Dorothy, Charlotte's niece, was a "retired" commercial artist at 27, working with the Red Cross. She married William C Chapman in April 1941, then Arthur J Holford-Strevens in January 1948, both in Cuckfield, Sussex. In 1956, in the same year as her father, Dorothy died in Tonbridge, Kent at only 44 years of age.

## Charlotte's 1919 house in Darlington

In November 2020, I was contacted by Shaun Scott, a resident of 4 Harewood, Darlington (see colour photo below) in his search for information on the former occupant, Charlotte Blaxland. He supplied various materials that he had come across, some of it accessible via the BNA website. J.S. Howden and the Burwell family found more details relating to this case, posted on Ancestry.

Shaun informed me that the house was built in the 1840s: the basement contains two kitchens; on the first floor, a dining and breakfast room; on the 2nd floor, a large living room and bedroom; on the third floor, three bedrooms and attics above. The building was modernised in the late 1920s to apartments, which they are today. During WWI, the house was occupied by the Kirkup family and had a strong connection with the railway company.





## Charlotte's death

I have long known that Charlotte died tragically in her 40s having discussed this with Sylvia, Jane and Judith in years past. The nature of her death was always unclear. In fact, Charlotte's untimely death was reported in a dozen newspapers across the UK. It appears that most refer to the same news source. Here's one such article from January 1919:



The inquest notice (RHS) is far more informative.

It does appear to have been a tragic accident due to a faulty gas leak. Charlotte showed signs of a headache even before she succumbed to the CO gas. This is long before industry applied strong odours to gases to avoid this kind of tragedy, but this may not have helped given that CO is a byproduct.

This is a very moving vignette of an event that took place almost exactly 100 years ago. The article is remarkably detailed and lucid on the events as they unfolded. I don't think modern inquests are published today in such detail.

Wemyss was buried at Benton cemetery, which is St Barts, Longbenton (colour photo below). Shaun found a link to Wemyss' gravestone shown below. It seems likely that Charlotte is buried with him given the interment notice below:

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/166122433/wemyss-henry-blaxland/photo>

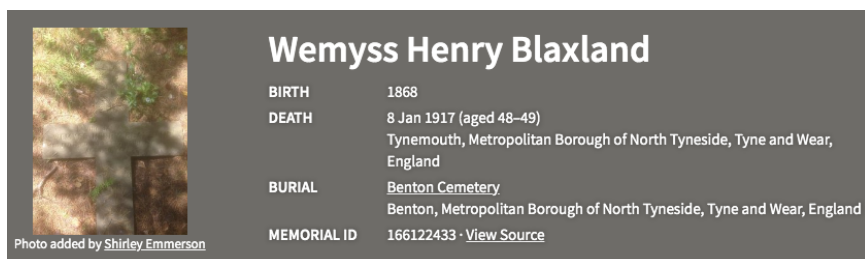
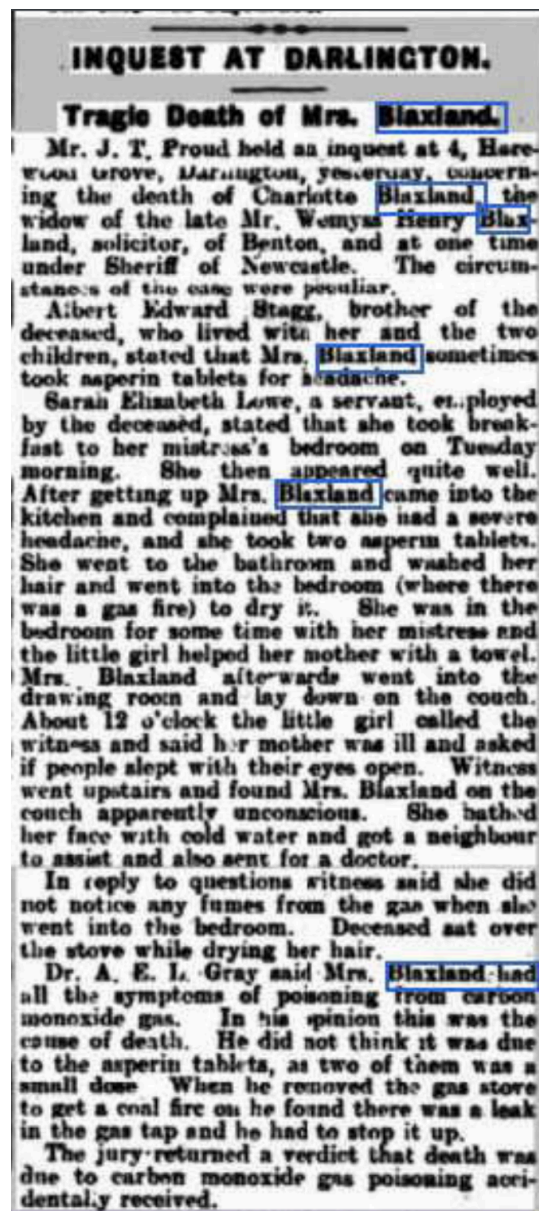
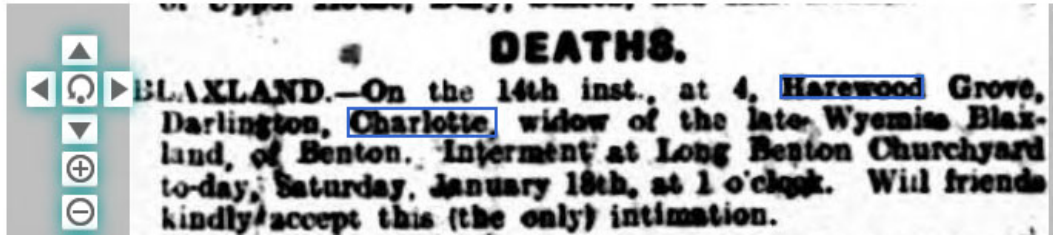




Image © Reach PLC. Image created courtesy of THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD.



I find it remarkable that family gravestones are still lying around to be found like this. Only recently, we recovered the magnificent memorial to Aunt Hally's four men, forgotten in a churchyard since 1925. Some appear to be lost, e.g. I am still searching for George Blaxland's memorial – I have a photo of his Gillingham graveside from 1912 only.



In 1919, Rupert and Sylvia were adopted by Aunt Hally/Holly at Middleton Tyas, discussed at length in a separate document. There are many beautiful surviving photographs of these years, from 1919 to about 1943 as shown there.



## Appendix: "The lost village of Bigges Main"

It is interesting to note in the 1911 Census that Wemyss has listed Bigges Main, Wallsend (also Longbenton) as his birthplace. It was established as a colliery in the late 1700s, flooded and abandoned in 1857, and finally the village was demolished in the 1950s. There are interesting websites about what happened here.



### Re: Where exactly is Bigges Main?

« Reply #2 on: Thursday 21 February 08 22:13 GMT (UK) »

From a book entitled "The Folks Along the Road".  
"Bigges Main-- The Village that Died":

*"The village was founded in the seventeenth century when Thomas Charles Bigg, who lived at Benton, opened a pit there. He leased his coal royalties to Messrs. Bell, Brown and Johnstone in 1785; the lease to last for 40 years. The new owners sank three shafts, built cottages for the miners and successfully ran the enterprise for 41 years."*

*"In 1910, Bigges Main with its population of 690 was incorporated into the Borough of Wallsend. In its post-mining era, Bigges Main, about half a mile outside Wallsend was a pretty peaceful village with its own village school, chapel and country inn."*

Stan



### Re: COMPLETED - Where exactly is Bigges Main?

« Reply #7 on: Sunday 07 February 10 23:03 GMT (UK) »

Hi Stephen, I have only just discovered this site and your query about Bigges Main. Regardless of which local authority it belonged to Bigges Main was situated geographically about 50 yards behind where Wallsend Sports Centre is now. If you take a diagonal line from Benfield School to the top of West Street Wallsend it was about half way along that line.

It was accessed by a dirt road half way along the Coast Road from West St to Wills cigarette factory until it's demolition around the mid fifties. The village pub was called The Mason's Arms and was still open until the early sixties when it was demolishe as part of the development of the area to form Wallsend Sports Centre.

Bigges Main played quite a part in my early life as I was born about three quarters of a mile away in Cross Avenue Westmorland Estate Wallsend. I remember quite vividly as a young boy that outside the Masons Arms there was a ramshackle brick stucture of sorts that I always thought was the actual village but maybe it was the school. There were also remnants of foundations nearby which were lost amongst the piggeries and allotments that had taken over the area. There was also an old disused mansion almost on the Coast Road until about 1957.

Around 1930 Westmorland Estate was built and two of the streets were named after Bigges Main. These were Main Crescent and Bigges Gardens and it was said that these names would help the new settlers who were rehoused when Bigges Main was demolished.

I have tried to obtain a photograph of 'The Main' for many years but it seems that for some reason nobody has one. I know it must have been quite a primitive place to live, what with no electricity and flush toilets but in my memory it must have been like Brigadoon or a village out of a Walt Disney film. Surprisingly there seems to be very few people in Wallsend who know very much about Bigges Main even though it is, or was, right on their doorstep.