

The Three Lives of Christopher Christmas UNDERWOOD/BERRY (born Norwich, Norfolk, England 1796; died Auckland, New Zealand, January 1851)

In my adolescent years it was family lore that our BERRY family was related to that of Alexander BERRY born 1781 in Scotland and his brother David, who were among the more prominent of the first families who settled in New South Wales, Australia. A great claim to make when one learns that Alexander BERRY a pioneering Australian merchant and property owner was arguably Australia's first millionaire.

To illustrate the family's attachment and conviction in this claim I shall attach a copy of the Last Will and Testament¹ of my Great Grandfather, Charles BERRY which bequeaths "... all my estate and interest as heir to the Berry Estate property left by my uncles Alexander Berry and David Berry in New South Wales Australia to my children". ¹ Kindly provided by my cousin Scott Chalmers

The established fact is that none of that generation of that BERRY family with its origins in Cupar, Fife, Scotland had children. This together with my discovery of the Baptism of Christopher Christmas BERRY, 14 January 1803, at St Nicholas Chapel, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, England is clear evidence that after many years of speculation and high hope there is nothing to be gained from claiming kinship with that Berry family.

My further research has however revealed many mysteries and anomalies surrounding our ancestor Christopher Christmas BERRY and his families.

Why the plural "families" you might ask? From the following and my Family Tree published at www.bobvine.gen.nz/genealogy you will find that our man CCB fathered families in England to his wife Elisabeth, nee NEWDICK, and in New Zealand to Elisa FERGUSON, nee FELSTED with whom he had arrived in New Zealand in 1840 from Port Phillip, Australia with her three daughters, Rebecca, who later used BERRY as her Maiden name, Mary Ann and Sarah.

You will also discover that our man was baptised thrice with different names. Further, he resided in three countries. Hence the title I have given the writing up of my research – "The Three Lives of"

I shall break the life story of Christopher Christmas BERRY, as my maternal family knew him, into three parts:

- Part 1 – England, 1796 - c1837;
- Part 2 – Australia (Port Phillip) – c1837 to 1840;
- Part 3 – New Zealand – 1840 to 1851

Part 1: ENGLAND 1796 – c 1837

I can understand that many readers of this story will be interested to see that I have commenced this first episode of the story with the year 1796; particularly bearing in mind that eminent family researcher, the late Anne Bromell, used information about the BERRY family, starting with Christopher Christmas BERRY, to illustrate the recording of a Family Tree, in a number of her publications, and records CCB's birth as "c 1800".

Enquiry of family member John Miller, who conducted research in England on Anne's behalf, revealed that the best information that could be obtained was that the birthplace may have been Norfolk. My research has confirmed Norfolk as the County of his birth, and that in all probability Norwich was his birth town.

2 One of these is "Tracing Family History in New Zealand" ISBN 0 908877 85 4

3 See <http://bobvine.gen.nz/genealogy/documents/JohnChristopherUNDERWOODBERRYBaptisms.pdf>

4 See Notes for John Christmas UNDERWOOD, John BERRY and Christopher Christmas BERRY at

<http://www.bobvine.gen.nz/genealogy/getperson.php?personID=I00102&tree=Vine1>

There are 3 Baptism records of interest:

1. *John Christmas UNDERWOOD, b 25 December 1796, at Norwich, son of William UNDERWOOD and Mary his Wife, Late Mary GOODDY, Privately Baptised 08 Jan 1797, All Saints, Norwich. FreeREG transcriptions show a birth date of 15 December 1796 but a close examination of the Parish Register shows that the date could also be read as 25 December.*
2. *John BERRY, Baptised 27 Dec 1802, St Nicholas, Kings Lynn, son of Christopher and Elisabeth.*
3. *Christopher Christmas BERRY, Baptised 14 January 1803, St Nicholas Chapel, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, England, son of Christopher and Elisabeth (Baptisms, Parish Register, page 70) with an annotation "Born Dec 25".*

Further research to find family and events uncovered a morass of great proportions surrounding surnames and birth dates leaving us still with confusion as to who Christopher Christmas BERRY really was, and his origins. Research has revealed that at various times he used the surnames BERRY, UNDERWOOD and SALMON, and then there are still questions surrounding his birth.

Baptism No 3 could confirm a birth date of 25 December 1802, but this is thrown into doubt when one considers the baptism of a sibling, John, on 27 December 1802. It could be reasonably argued, that CCB under normal circumstances would have been baptised also on 27 December 1802, alongside his brother John, unless of course the baptisms of 27 December 1802 and 14 January 1803 were for the same child, a fact which became more and more obvious to me.

It would appear that the suspect 1800 birth date was calculated from his age of 51 given in his Death Certificate.

Baptism records for family of Christopher BERRY and Elisabeth SALMON include:

1. *Elisabeth Salmon Berry,*
2. *John, Baptised St Nicholas, Kings Lynn, 27 December 1802,*
3. *Christopher Christmas, born 25 December, Baptised St Nicholas Kings Lynn, 14 January 1803.*
5. *Judith, Baptised 23 October 1804, St Margaret's, Kings Lynn*
6. *James BERRY, Baptised, Buried, St Margaret, Kings Lynn 1 September 1813*

Later records, in particular those in respect of the marriage of Christopher Christmas

UNDERWOOD to Elisabeth NEWDICK, 6 June 1822, St Nicholas, Kings Lynn (See <http://bobvine.gen.nz/genealogy/showmedia.php?mediaID=64&medialinkID=73>), and Parish Register entries for their children conclusively identify John (Christopher) Christmas UNDERWOOD and Christopher Christmas BERRY as being the same person.

The Banns notice for this Marriage records Christopher Christmas UNDERWOOD as having an alias "Salmon", which was his mother's maiden name.

Parish records for St Margaret, Kings Lynn, Norfolk show Christopher Christmas BERRY and Elisabeth NEWDICK had the following children:

1. *Christopher, born 8 Dec 1821; St Margaret, Kings Lynn, Norfolk. Chr 11 Dec 1821, Parish Register, No 964, Page 121. No Father named, "Son of Elisabeth NEWDICK".*
2. *James-Newdick BERRY, Born 13 AUG 1823, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, England. First Baptised 20 August 1823, "Parish Register: No 1908, Page 216 "James-Berry son Christopher and Elisabeth NEWDICK, Tower Street, Lynn, Mariner". Second Baptism 19 July 1826, Birth * August 1823: James-Newdick s. Christopher and Elisabeth BERRY, S Clough Lane, Lynn Parish Register: No 454, Page 61*
3. *Edmund-Newdick BERRY, born 11 May 1825, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, England. Baptised St Margaret, Lynn, 19 July 1826. Father, Mariner. Buried 22 Jul 1826, St Margaret, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, England.*
4. *Elisabeth-Newdick BERRY, born 2 Feb 1827 S Clough Lane, Lynn. Baptised 5 Feb 1827, St Margaret, Lynn. Father, Mariner*
5. *William-Newdick BERRY, born 5 Aug 1833 S Clough Lane, Lynn. Baptised * Jul 1834, St Margaret, Lynn. Father, Mariner. Buried 18 Jul 1834, St Margaret, Kings Lynn, Parish Register, page 124, No. 987 "Infant"*
6. *Edward-Newdick BERRY, Buried 14 Apr 1832, St Margaret, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, son of Christopher and Elisabeth BERRY. Age 2, Abode Workhouse, Lynn, Parish Register page 31, No 248.*
7. *Sarah BERRY 18 Apr 1832, St Margaret, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, England. Parish Register page 32, No 255. Abode: Work-house, Lynn*

The marriage of CCB and the birth records above have taken me back in time in an attempt to reconcile facts surrounding the birth of Christopher Christmas. My starting point was to establish a connection between UNDERWOOD and BERRY families.

I found:

1. *Baptism, 01 Jan 1795, Lynn, Norfolk, England, St Nicholas Chapel, Mary Underwood BERRY, daughter of Christopher and Margaret BERRY (The underlining is mine)*
2. *Baptism, 01 Jan 1795, Lynn, Norfolk, England, St Nicholas Chapel, Elisabeth daughter of Christopher and Margaret BERRY (Note the similar baptism dates, venues and parents for Mary and Elisabeth – they could have been twins?).*

3. *Baptism, Maria Underwood BERRY, 29 Jan 1799, daughter of Christopher and Margaret BERRY (the same person as in 1. above?)*
4. *Baptism, 08 Jan 1797, Norwich, All Saints, John Christmas son of William UNDERWOOD and Mary his Wife. Late Mary GOODY Spinster, born December the 15 (25) 1796 privately baptised January the 8: 1797*
5. *Baptism: Aug 1801, Norwich, St John the Baptist Timberhill, Mary Ann daughter of William UNDERWOOD and Mary Ann DITCHFIELD*
6. *Burial: 04 May 1799, St Margaret, Kings Lynn, John UNDERWOOD*
7. *Marriage: 23 Jan 1800, St Margaret, Kings Lynn, Christopher BERRY, Batchelor and Elisabeth SALMON, Spinster in the presence of Samuel SALMON and Elisabeth PONDE.*

The only firm conclusion to be derived from the above is that there were indeed connections between UNDERWOOD and BERRY families, particularly the revelation that Christopher Christmas UNDERWOOD and BERRY are one and the same, with the strong possibility that he was adopted from the UNDERWOOD into the related BERRY family.

The next matter for research is the migration of Christopher Christmas BERRY to Australia, circa 1837, following which we find him in Port Phillip (now Melbourne), Victoria, but at that time in the State of New South Wales, Australia.

Perhaps there is a clue in the Seamans Register 1836 which places CCB with the Orissa Shipping Company, Clyde, Scotland and Extracts from the British Parliamentary Papers of 1839 and a return of Immigrants who arrived in New South Wales from the 1st January 1837 to 30th June 1838 which records the Ship Orissa arriving from London on 16 July 1837 and the disembarkation of 5 persons (2 males, 2 females and 1 child above 12 years of age) not receiving assistance from Government. This could be assumed to be 2 families and thus not including Christopher BERRY which leaves the sinking (not a pun) thought that he may have deserted, an act that in many cases carries with it no records other than if he was convicted for this offence. This requires further research.

Another area for research is the life of remaining members of Christopher's family in England consequent to his departure for the Southern Hemisphere. Answers to this question of course have a bearing on the formalities of his relationship with Harriet Elisa FERGUSON nee FELSTED.

Records I have been able to access show that in 1837 two of his children, James-Newdick and Elizabeth-Newdick could have still been alive, together with Wife, Elis(z)abeth nee NEWDICK.

Following the thought that if CCB was in Scotland in 1836 with the Orissa Shipping Company at Grangemouth it was possible that Elisabeth and surviving children had accompanied him in the move north. This conjecture is strongly supported by the 1841 Census in Scotland which records two with the name Elizabeth BERRY, ages 46 and 11, not born in Scotland, resident at East Craigies Cottages in the Parish of Cramond, with the occupation of the elder given as Agricultural Labourer.

Grangemouth is only 34.6 km distant from Cramond, and bearing in mind that CCB was resident in New Zealand at the time of the Census, 3 June 1841, it is highly possible that further research will verify that these two with the name Elizabeth BERRY were CCB's wife and daughter.

The fact that wife Elisabeth was still alive in 1841 would explain why I cannot find any record of Christopher and Harriet having married. Their marriage would have been bigamous on the account of both of them. It is interesting though that many of the family have claimed that they were

married; the reason for this being that Society in those days was much more intolerant of children born out of wedlock.

[Click here](#) for:

Part 2: “The Three Lives of Christopher Christmas UNDERWOOD/BERRY – Port Phillip, Australia - c1837 – 1840, and

Part 3: “The Three Lives of Christopher Christmas UNDERWOOD/BERRY - New Zealand - 1840 – 1851

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