

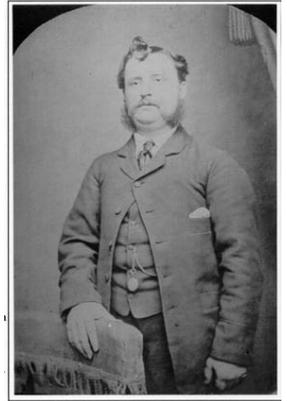
# THE DOWNFALL OF FREDERICK REED EVELEIGH - AND THE RESCUE OF GEORGE EVELEIGH

***Susan Margaret Hammet ( my grandmother - D.C.) was the second daughter of George and Elizabeth Eveleigh. George Frederick Eveleigh was born in Exeter in 1851. At that time his father Frederick Reed Eveleigh was a respectable tradesman with an engraving business. Just 6 years later, Frederick's dissolute habits had ruined him. He deserted his family in 1857, leaving his wife Anna and their four children in destitution. In 1858, Anna died and Frederick was charged with deserting the children, and was imprisoned. George was rescued by two ladies; his aunt, Margaret Williams, and the unrelated benefactor Susan Barker.***

This is the story of George Eveleigh.

The Eveleigh family bible in my possession is inscribed as follows:

*"George F Eveleigh With the best and affectionate wishes  
of his friend Susan Barker January 27th 1874"*



**George Eveleigh**

One year later George's second daughter Susan Margaret Eveleigh was born - named after Susan Barker; and Margaret Williams, with Susan's name first. Eleven years later George Eveleigh received a significant legacy from Susan Barker's estate, and bequests also went to others in his family.

But though Susan Barker's name was long remembered and respected in the family it seems likely that George Eveleigh's grandchildren never knew the full story of his life, or how Susan Barker became involved in his welfare. She was the wealthy and unmarried daughter of a Devon vicar, and was the Godmother of the actress Dame Irene Vanbrugh. This account will tell the remarkable story of George Eveleigh - his family background, how he became destitute, and the parts played by Susan Barker and by Margaret Williams.

George Eveleigh's father was Frederick Reed Eveleigh, an engraver by trade; his grandfather was John Eveleigh, an Innkeeper. Eveleigh families are most common in south-east Devon, but there is also a large contingent across the county boundary, in south-west Dorset. John Eveleigh had a sister, Jane who married George Lewis - see below. John and Jane came from Whitchurch Canonorum, Dorset. Their parents were Michael and Jane Eveleigh who baptised three children at Whitchurch ( including John in 1792), and three at Chideock (including Jane). Michael Eveleigh and Jane Legg had been married at Chideock in 1778. Michael was born in 1753 and died at Chideock in 1832. Jane was born in about 1757 and in 1841 she was still alive, residing with her daughter Elizabeth (Jerrard) in Chideock.

John Eveleigh married Joanna Reed at Dawlish in 1820. (Joanna's father, Richard Reed, was the miller at Dawlish). Frederick Reed Eveleigh was baptised at Sowton, near Exeter in 1822, but by 1832, John and Joanna were in the Sidmouth area.

Frederick's sister, Anna Maria Lewis Eveleigh was baptised at Sidbury, and John Eveleigh was recorded as an Innkeeper.

## JOHN EVELEIGH - INNKEEPER

In 1834 John Eveleigh took over the New Commercial Inn, and published the following notice in the Exeter Flying Post. ( Who could resist it !)

### ***NEW COMMERCIAL INN, SIDMOUTH***

***JOHN EVELEIGH Respectfully informs Families, Commercial Gentlemen and the Public generally that he has TAKEN THE ABOVE INN, and trusts by keeping a well supplied larder, Choice Wines and Spirits, and paying every possible attention to their comfort and convenience, he shall be entitled to their patronage and support, which will be his constant study to deserve.***

***A Choice Assortment of Good Old Wines and Genuine Spirits.***

***May 6th, 1834***

At that time Frederick was 12 years old, and the addiction to drink which was to ruin him probably started with his upbringing at the Inn.

Another notice referred to this inn as '***situated in the best part of the town of Sidmouth***', and '***possessing Extensive Stabling, Skittle alley, and Offices***'.

Joanna Eveleigh died at Sidmouth in 1841, aged 46 and John died there in 1843.

Soon after that, in 1845, Frederick Reed Eveleigh married Anna Dominy of Gittisham.

## THE DOMINY FAMILY

Anna, who was to marry Frederick Reed Eveleigh, was the daughter of Erasmus and Sarah Dominy. Erasmus had come from Seaton & Beer, where his father, also Erasmus Dominy, was a mariner. "Erasmus Dominy" certainly seems an unusual name, suggesting possible Spanish descent - "Dominy" might be an anglicisation of Dominguez or Domingo,. Indeed there is a tradition at Beer that an Armada galleon was wrecked there, and that some sailors scrambled ashore and settled.

Erasmus Dominy and Sarah Richards were married at Branscombe, between Seaton and Sidmouth; Sarah herself had come from Colyton, just to the north of Seaton. Erasmus and Sarah very soon settled in the Honiton area. Their first sons, Robert (b. 1803) and William (b. 1806) were baptised at Colyton. Erasmus (1809) was baptised at Buckerell. The family then moved to Gittisham; John was born in 1816, Anna in 1820 and Margaret in 1830. Erasmus and Sarah, together with their youngest daughter Margaret, were recorded as living at "Coombe House" Gittisham in 1841.

Combe House was a large mansion in a 3,500 acre estate and was the seat of the Lord of the Manor. The Dominy's must have been employed there. Combe House is now a Country House Hotel.

Robert Dominy was Anna's oldest brother and he lived in Gittisham with his wife Ann and their family. Their large family included Harriett and Catherine, George Eveleigh's cousins, who appear later in this story.

The next son was William Dominy, born in 1806, who seems to have achieved a certain notoriety! He remained in Beer when the family moved away. He is said to have been one of the "Rattenbury gang". Jack Rattenbury was a well-known smuggler whose escapes from the excise men were legendary. He had a host of admirers, and actually wrote a book about his exploits

Many modern books on orchids mention John Dominy, who was the youngest of the Dominy boys, uncle of George Eveleigh. The following are two typical extracts:



**"John Dominy 1816-1891 will be forever remembered as the horticulturalist who produced the first artificial hybrid orchid, *Calanthe Dominyi*, in 1856. He was born at Gittisham, Devon, worked at Veitch & Co, Exeter, and later at Chelsea from 1864 to 1880. He is also remembered for *Cypripodium Paphiordilan Dominicanum*." (From "Manual of Cultivated Orchid Species")**



**In 1852 the possibility of hybridisation was suggested to Veitch's orchid grower, John Dominy, by an Exeter surgeon, John Harris, who demonstrated how to carry out the transfer. *Calanthe Dominyi* flowered first in October 1856. Veitch nurseries moved to Chelsea in 1864 and Dominy went too. By the time he had retired in 1880, he had raised 25 orchid hybrids." (From "Orchids"; Joyce Stewart; Kew gardening Guides; Timber press)**

The work of John Dominy was clearly recognised as important at the time. On 21st January 1858 the Exeter Flying Post published an item headed "A TRIUMPH IN HORTICULTURE", referring to an article in the "Gardeners' Chronicle". It writes of "**the indefatigable perseverance and watchful eye of the foreman,**

**Mr John Dominy, whose untiring zeal watched over these infant hybrids as a parent does over his children, for without such zeal and attention no success is to be hoped for". The item ends "the year 1857 has been rendered famous in the annals of horticulture".**

Other members of the Dominy family re-appear in the story of George Eveleigh. Margaret, Catherine and Harriett Dominy were all in service with Susan Barker of Exeter. Margaret Dominy married Thomas Williams and they would play a most important part in the life of the orphaned George Eveleigh.

### **"LEWIS & EVELEIGH", Engravers, Lithographers, Printers**

Frederick Eveleigh was associated in business with his uncle, George Herbert Lewis (who had married Jane Eveleigh). George Lewis had started his engraving business in about 1827. Some of his work was concerned with engraving plates for books, and his work included the frontispiece map for Trewman's "Pocket Journals". In about 1837 he expanded the business by taking over another business - as he advertised in the Exeter Flying Post.

**G.H.Lewis Engraver, Printer, Embosser and Lithographer, having succeeded to the Establishment of Mr T Roper, is giving to the public that intimation - an intimation which usage and his own interests demand, solicits a continuance of that support from the Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, and Commercial Interests of the West of England, it has hitherto been his happiness to enjoy; and trusts that in his new engagement an equal zeal will ensure to him these favours so liberally endowed on his predecessor.**

**Bankers Notes, Cheques, Drafts, Bills of Lading and Exchange, Official and Other Seals, Arms, Crests and Cyphers, House and Office Brass Plates.**

**19 Magdalen St. Exeter Aug 28 1837**

Frederick Eveleigh, then 15 years old, could well have joined his uncle at about that time; in 1841 he was listed as an apprentice there.

George Lewis was a prominent freemason; at the time of his death he was "PGT of the honourable fraternity of masons". ( "PGT" - "Provincial Grand Tyler" , a functionary of the Devon Provincial Grand Lodge, He introduced Frederick Eveleigh to freemasonry, Frederick describing himself as a "Templar".

George Lewis died in 1844, leaving his widow Jane; from 1845 the business was known as ' Jane Lewis, engraver', but soon after it became 'Lewis & Eveleigh'.

## THE EVELEIGH FAMILY

Frederick and Anna's first two children were John Lewis and Henrietta Margaret, born in 1848 and 1850. George Frederick Eveleigh was born in 1851 and a fourth child, Edward Erasmus Eveleigh followed in about 1854.

In 1851 the business, now "Frederick R. Eveleigh" was employing one engraver, one printer, and an apprentice. Frederick, Anna, Henrietta and baby George were all resident at 19½ Magdalen St., together with Jane Lewis, Frederick's sister Anna M. Eveleigh, and his mother-in-law, Sarah Dominy. At the same date, Margaret Dominy, Anna's younger sister, was employed as a servant by Susan Barker at 11 Albert Terrace.

Frederick and Anna were heading for disaster; within a very few years the business would collapse, Anna would be dead, Frederick would be imprisoned, and the family would be destitute!

Frederick was said to have 'an abundance of work' - but was so dissipated that he neglected to execute it. By 1856 the business, now simply 'Frederick Reed Eveleigh', had moved to Little Queen St; the business was certainly in terminal decline and Anna was already ill. In early 1857, Frederick abandoned the business and his family, and ran away to London. The business was sold up in April, perhaps to pay creditors, and this notice of sale was printed in the Exeter Flying Post.

### **To Engravers, Copper-Plate Printers &c**

**Little Queen St., Exeter**

**To be sold by Auction by Mr R.Bowden on Friday the 1st day of May 1857 all the HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE together with the stock-in-trade of Mr Frederick Eveleigh, Engraver &c, consisting of four-post bedstead and bedding, two chairs, large portrait in frame, small frame of seals, culinary utensils; an excellent standing press of great power, complete; one paper cutting press with knife etc; two copperplate presses, lithographic press and stones, trade specimen book, large trunk date 1710, lathe, grindstone, boxes and tools, saw, four-legged stool, copperplate warmer with flue etc; cupboard and drawers, large copperplate (school specimen), a lot of pressing boards, table, a quantity of waste paper and cards, gas fittings and a lot of lumber.**

**Sale to commence at Four o'clock in the Afternoon**

It is notable that the stock-in-trade includes domestic items (bed, bedding, culinary utensils) on which Anna may well have depended. Anna and her destitute family moved to 8 Portland Place, probably accompanied by Jane Lewis and Anna's mother, Sarah Dominy. Anna was said to be '*the object of compassionate sympathy to everybody who saw her*'.

Anna Eveleigh died in January 1858 from 'phthisis 2 years' (TB). Jane Lewis registered the death and Anna was described as 'Wife of Frederick Reed Eveleigh, Engraver'. That left the 61 year old Jane Lewis at Portland Place, with the young Eveleigh children who were almost starved; they became dependent on Poor Relief and three of them were taken to the Workhouse. Poor Relief in Exeter was administered by the "Corporation of the Poor" and they set about tracing the absent Frederick. He was apprehended in July 1858 and brought before the Magistrates who sentenced him to the maximum sentence of 3 months imprisonment. The case was reported in the Exeter Flying Post on July 15th 1858.

The report mentions that three of the children were taken to the Workhouse — which was just across the road from their home at Portland Place. However one of the children was maintained by a lady out of charity; this must have been Susan Barker, and the child was probably young George. We also find that Sarah Dominy, George's grandmother, was visiting Susan Barker in 1861.

By this time, Margaret Dominy, Susan Barker's servant, had married Thomas Williams, a carpenter, who lived very near to Portland Place. They moved to London before 1861.

From the 1861 census we know the whereabouts of the children. John, the eldest, was a Stable Boy at the home of an Exeter solicitor. George, now 10 years old, was being brought up by Thomas and Margaret Williams at 21 Prince's Terrace in Kentish Town in London. Edward, aged seven, remained in Exeter with Jane Lewis, living at 5 Ebenezer Place. The thirteen year old Henrietta Margaret was a pupil in an 'industrial school' at 20 Magdalen street, right next door to Frederick's old premises. These 'industrial schools' were charitable foundations for teaching useful working skills to poor or handicapped children — associated with the Workhouse.

But what about the delinquent father Frederick Eveleigh? After release from Exeter jail it seems likely that he returned to London but died there very soon.

Most of what follows is the story of George. But what happened to the other Exeter children as they grew up? They all lived quite short lives, perhaps as a result of the early deprivation. John Lewis Eveleigh married in about 1865, remained in Exeter as a coachman, and had a large family. He used the old family names for several of his children (William Reed Eveleigh, John Lewis Eveleigh, Edward Erasmus Eveleigh, Frederick Eveleigh, Henrietta Margaret Eveleigh. He died in 1886. His brother Edward and sister Henrietta only survived him by another two years. Edward had married, and left small children, including one "Frederick Reed Lewis Eveleigh". How very surprising that he, too, should want to remember his delinquent father in this way!

## **SUSAN BARKER - AND THE EVELEIGH ORPHANS**

Susan Barker, born in 1808, was the daughter of Rev William Barker, Vicar of Silverton, north of Exeter. Her brother, also Rev William Barker, was Vicar of Broad Clist. The first of these died in 1838, and the second in 1842, both regarded as 'truly worthy men' in their funeral reports in the Exeter Flying Post.

Anna Eveleigh's younger sister, Margaret Dominy, was employed as a servant by Susan Barker, and was working for her in 1851 at 11 Albert Terrace, Mount Radford, Exeter (close to Magdalen Street). Margaret married Thomas Williams, but Margaret Williams and Susan Barker remained life-long friends. In 1861, Susan Barker was still living at 11 Albert Terrace. The census lists her, together with a cook, a housemaid, and two 'visitors'. The housemaid was Catherine Dominy, daughter of Robert Dominy; one 'visitor' was Sarah Dominy, George's grandmother, termed in the census as 'supported by friends'.

By 1871, Susan Barker had moved to 3, Baring Place, Heavitree, where the census records her, together with a lady's maid, a gardener, and a cook. The lady's maid was Harriett Burnett, a younger sister of Catherine Dominy. The gardener was John Burnett, Harriett's husband. There is reason to suspect that the Burnetts were related to the Eveleighs. In 1881 the same servants were with her, but in addition George's sister, Henrietta was recorded as 'parlour and housemaid domestic'.

## GEORGE AND ELIZABETH EVELEIGH AND THEIR FAMILY

Young George Eveleigh was apprenticed in piano manufacture / tuning, He was doubtless guided into this by Margaret and Thomas Williams, since Thomas Williams worked for Collard & Collard, piano manufacturers, as a 'pianoforte case maker'. In 1871, still an apprentice, George was still living with the Williams family at 21 Castle Road, but when he married Elizabeth Mary Wynn in 1872 he was said to be residing in Plymouth. The Wynns, like the Williams, lived in Kentish Town, and George presumably knew Elizabeth Wynn before going to Plymouth . (Thomas Williams was a witness at the wedding) George and Elizabeth seem to have lived for a short while in Hulme, Lancashire (where Florence was born in 1873) before finally settling in London. Elizabeth Mary Wynn, born at Bethnal Green on May 10th 1851, was the daughter of George Wynn and his wife Elizabeth (nee Kirtland). George and Elizabeth Wynn were both the children of canal boatmen.

The newly married Eveleighs do not seem to have settled in London immediately. Their first daughter, Florence Elizabeth was born in Hulme, Lancashire in 1873. Their first home in London was 12 Herbert St., Kentish Town; Susan Margaret was born there in 1875 ("Susan" presumably after Susan Barker; "Margaret" after Margaret Williams). Their third daughter was Edith Maud.

Herbert St. is off Malden Rd., very close to Preston St. where the Wynns lived, and Castle Road where the Williams lived. By 1881 they had moved a short distance to 28 Belmont Street, Chalk Farm. At the same time James and Elizabeth Beesley and their 2-year-old daughter Elizabeth were living in the house the Eveleighs had vacated - 12 Herbert Street. James Beesley was a "cheesemonger". The daughter Elizabeth Beesley was destined to marry Walter Hamment; Elizabeth's younger sister, Eleanor Beesley would marry William Hamment. Their mother was the "Mrs Beesley" in family photographs.

At the same time, back in Heavitree, another young family was growing up. The Rev R.H.Barnes was Vicar of Heavitree and prebendary of Exeter Cathedral (he was a personal friend of General Gordon). He and his wife Frances had five children, and three were to become famous. These were Violet (b. 1867), , Irene (b. 1872), and Kenneth (b. 1878). The two Barnes girls took up a stage career as Violet and Irene (later Dame Irene) Vanbrugh; they were the talk of London and their careers must have been of great interest to the Eveleigh girls in view of their father's connection with Heavitree, and the mutual connection with Miss Susan Barker who was godmother to Irene Barnes/Vanbrugh! Kenneth Barnes followed his sisters to London. He was soon appointed Director of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and was later Knighted



**Dame Irene Vanbrugh**

Susan Barker was quite a wealthy woman. In 1872 she gave a substantial sum to Rev Barnes for the Heavitree church, and the correspondence is preserved in the Devon Record Office. The letters are notable for the repeated emphasis on anonymity. Irene Barnes was born in December that very year, and presumably Susan Barker was invited to be godmother as a gesture of thanks.

Susan Barker died in 1886, leaving an estate valued at £14,983 6s 8d, a very large amount of money at that time. The Rev R.H.Barnes was her Executor and her wishes were clearly set out in a will with codicils, extending to 15 pages in all. Bequests included: George Frederick Eveleigh - £300; Edward Erasmus Eveleigh - £100; Henrietta Eveleigh - £100 and an annuity of £16; Irene Barnes - £300; Margaret Williams - ornaments and furniture, and an annuity of £30. There were bequests to church and local charities and to her servants. The second codicil anticipated the possibility that her estate might not be large enough to fund all the legacies and that some legacies might need to be abated; she stipulated that the legacies to the Eveleigh's should be paid in full, but that the legacy to Irene Barnes might be abated (One wonders why ? Had she fallen out with the Barnes family—or did she feel that they had

plenty of money, and the Eveleigh children were more deserving - sadly Henrietta died in that same year, and Edward only two years later).

Susan Barker directed that she be buried at Silverton, the funeral to be quiet and plain, with bearers selected from her father's labourers or their descendants.

The Eveleighs moved from Herbert St. to 96 Malden Rd. at some time before 1886; they later moved to 16 Chetwynd Rd, still in Kentish Town, but further north.

Susan Margaret Eveleigh married Albert John Hamment in 1900. A year later her younger sister, Edith, married Sidney Paddison Mears, a railway clerk. They had a daughter Edith Florence ('Edie Mears'), born in 1905. In 1908 the eldest of the three Eveleigh girls, Florence, married an 'Uncle Peter' (Peter Edward Gallagher) who was regarded with great suspicion by the family as he was a Roman Catholic !.

George Eveleigh died intestate in 1902, leaving effects to the value of £19-10s. Elizabeth Eveleigh died four years later, leaving a will, and a somewhat more substantial estate, including the various pieces of jewellery which were individually allocated to her daughters.

All the children of Frederick and Anna Eveleigh lived short lives - probably due to the deprivation they experienced in childhood. John Lewis Eveleigh married and had a large family; he died at the age of 41 in 1886. Henrietta Margaret remained single and died aged 37 in 1886. Edward Erasmus married and died aged 35 in 1888. And George was only 51.

Ida Eveleigh Hamment (my mother), daughter of Susan Margaret, was born in 1904, two years after the death of her grandfather George Eveleigh. She was given 'Eveleigh' as her second Christian name - but I do not believe that she ever knew the full story of her grandfather's life. She certainly knew about Susan Barker, whose photograph was kept by her mother; she also knew about the "Dominy orchid". But perhaps the entire shameful story of Frederick Eveleigh was not talked about 'in front of the children'.

David Cawsey