

ROSETTA MAUD WHITBOURN(e)

Rosetta was born in late 1896 in West Ham, Essex. She was the third of nine children born to Elizabeth and James STACK. The 1901 Census shows the family living at Custom House. The 1911 Census does not show her residing with the family. She was fourteen and possibly in domestic service which was her occupation when she married Henry GILBERT in West Ham in 1917.

Rosetta and Henry had two children, a son, Henry Arthur Frederick Libertious born on 4 July, 1918 (USA Independence Day) and a daughter, Ethel Dora, born on 28 January, 1921. In 1923 Henry (Jnr) died having survived diphtheria but succumbed to complications of appendicitis.

Sadly, Henry (Snr) seems to have left Rosetta and Ethel about this time. Henry had been in the Merchant Marine during WW1. There is an understanding within the family that he sort employment on board a ship headed for New Zealand. Also, that on this voyage, or upon arrival in New Zealand, he began a relationship with another woman and appears not to have returned to London.

Searches of records in England and New Zealand have failed to provide definitive proof of his whereabouts after 1921 or subsequent death.

In a number of her domestic positions Rosetta was able to have Ethel with her. One such position was located near the Blackwall Tunnel. Ethel remembered looking through their basement window and watching men in trucks and on foot all making lots of noise on their way to a meeting during the General Strike of 1926. This live in arrangement was not always possible and, when Ethel was of school age, Rosetta placed her in the care of her parents.

Rosetta also worked as a barmaid, taking positions at Margate during the summer holidays, which allowed Ethel to live with her. She also took Ethel with her when they went to Kent for the hop picking.

In 1934 Rosetta, also known as Pat or Patricia, married Thomas John WHITBOURN. Thomas, was a widower with five grown children, a daughter and four boys. Following the marriage Rosetta brought Ethel to live with them. In the following few years the children moved onto employment. During World War II the boys and Ethel served in the RAF. The children, including Ethel, married and went their separate ways.

In 1948 Thomas died and Rosetta, at 52, had to start again with limited resources.

In 1950 due to a lack of accommodation and employment opportunities in England Rosetta's surviving child Ethel, her husband Ted and their 2 daughters immigrated to Australia. Communication was expensive and spasmodic and the family lost contact. There were two more children (grandchildren) born in Australia.

Family history was not often discussed and the Grandchildren now wish that they had shown more curiosity and asked more questions. They would have liked to have known/communicated with Rosetta and feel the poorer for not having had this opportunity.

We believe, that our Grandmother was a strong woman who made the most of the circumstances life placed before her. Ethel commented that her mother was resourceful and during the war was able to find most commodities. She also had her ear to the bar and knew what was going on in the local community. We would have loved Rosetta to know her four Grandchildren. There have since been many descendants added to the family in Australia.

It is not known if or when Ethel was told of Rosetta's passing although it was assumed.

Ethel died in 2017 aged 96.

These details provided by the Grandchildren,
Carol, Sherry, Leonie and Grant.

We are still curious and searching for information regarding Rosetta's life between 1950 and 1967. Particularly how she came to be on the Isle of Wight at the time of death.