

ALL ABOARD FOR THE DOLPHIN DETOUR!



There's no happy ending sadly, but **Gill Shaw** thinks she may have found a silver lining, and learned a little about the kindness of Joseph Dolphin in helping others

I love a magical mystery trip with someone else's family. There's less pressure and you can end up in some interesting places, so let's see if we can tie our two Dolphin households together.

Starting with the Dolphins of Ribchester

First, back to those 1881 Censuses to jot down the key details.

In the old Roman village of Ribchester, Lancashire, my great-grandfather John Riboldi is apprenticed to wheelwright William Dolphin. On the census, William says he was born in Ribchester around 1849, and lives on Green Side with his wife Mary Ann, and children Thomas and Elizabeth Alice. Thirty-ish miles south in Farnworth, Bolton, Joseph and George Riboldi are described as the adopted sons of domestic gardener Joseph Dolphin, 48, and his wife Hannah, 54. There's also a chap called John Tart, 'brother-in-law', so Tart could be Hannah's maiden name.

And oh, brilliant. At the time, I was so cock-a-hoop about finding a second pod of Dolphins that I totally missed the fact Joseph D was also born in Ribchester. Ha, maybe our missing link won't take very long to find at all...

Census bingo

OK, census search first. I input Joseph Dolphin, born Lancashire c1833, and bingo, a full house of censuses from 1841 to 1891. Scrap that; it's more than a full house because there are Dolphins swimming here, there and everywhere. Clearly the name is not that unusual and the school is bigger than I thought!

Starting with the 1871 (when the Riboldi brothers are in the orphanage in Middlesex), I find Joseph Dolphin, a 39-year-old coachman from Ribchester, living with his wife Hannah, 44, a cotton weaver. We're still in Farnworth, John Tart is still lodging, and there's also a Thomas Tart, 24, 'son'. Ooh, whose son?

Rewind another decade to 1861, and Joseph is a single man of 28, boarding with a couple in Farnworth and working as an agricultural labourer. We're still a long way from the Ribble Valley.

But at last, 1851, and a familiar address – Green Side, Ribchester. Joseph Dolphin, 18, is the eldest child in a big family. His father Robert Dolphin is a farmer, which explains Joseph being an ag lab. Robert is married to Alice and they have seven children, from Joseph

down to... hurrah, William Dolphin, aged two.

So the youngest Dolphin here was born in 1849 – which tallies perfectly with the William Dolphin on the 1881 Census. I think we've cracked it. Joseph and William Dolphin are brothers.

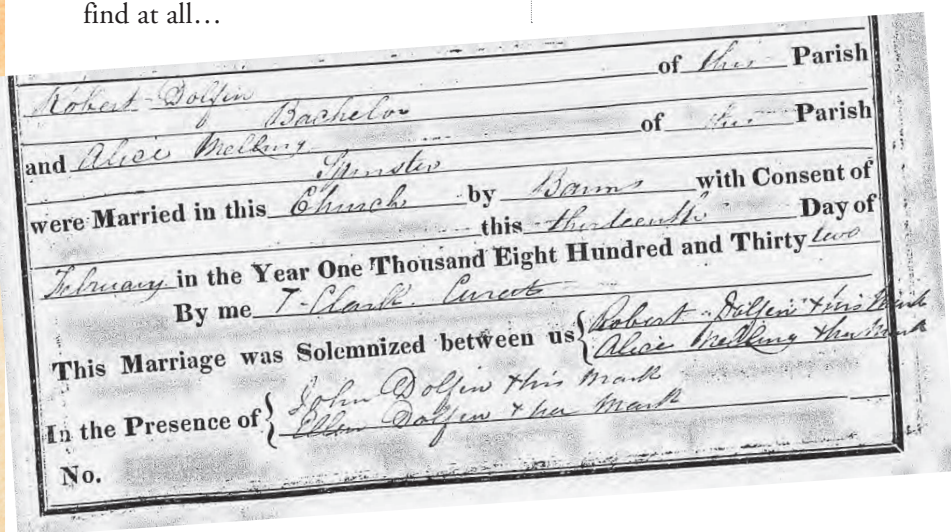
Catholic connections

Let's double check with the parish records, and a chance to revisit my old friend, the Lancashire Online Parish Clerk (LOPC; lan-opc.org.uk). I click on Ribchester, input 'Dolphin' and find records of baptisms in the village from the mid-18th century, and burials going as far back as 1697. And yep, here's baby Joseph's baptism in 1832 and, just above, the marriage of his parents Robert Dolphin and Alice Melling exactly nine months earlier. Perfect!

The church, St Peter & St Paul, is one of the oldest Roman Catholic churches in England. Ah, of course, the Dolphins were a Catholic family too, like the Riboldis.

Church: hidden in plain sight...

It was built in 1789, and the Catholic Relief Act permitting Catholic worship was only passed two years later in 1791, so they were getting a little ahead of the game up here! Called a 'barn church', it was built to match an existing barn alongside, so that it was less obviously a place of worship. Ha, interesting. I know rural Lancashire was always a hotbed of 'papism' and



Left: Robert Dolphin and Alice Melling's marriage in 1832 – register from Findmypast and transcripts from the LOPC project. There look to have been two services, as pre-civil registration, Hardwicke's Marriage Act meant Catholics also had to marry in a CofE church for it to be legal. Any translations of the Latin gratefully received!



Marriage: 13 Feb 1832 St John, Preston, Lancashire, England
 Robert Dolfin - (X), Bachelor, this Parish
 Alice Melling - (X), Spinster, this Parish
 Witness: John Dolfin, (X); Ellen Dolfin, (X)
 Married by Banns by: T. Clark. Curate
 Register: Marriages 1829 - 1833, Page 3, Entry 9
 Source: LDS Film 94014

Marriage: 13 Feb 1832 St Peter and St Paul, Ribchester, Lancashire, England
 Robt. Dolphin -
 Alice Melling -

Notes: Eodem die Robt. Dolphin to Alice Melling apud Stonyht. & die sqnte apud Preston?, ab praevia Promioe. alteri; id se? excusat sub idea? 'Regis Mali'; & junxit se alii? ejusdem Familiae, in qu.evidentius apparent signa Ejusdem 'Mali'; ___?
 Register: Marriages 1811 - 1838, Page 62
 Source: Original register at Lancashire Archives

mass used to be said in secret at many of the big houses roundabout.

Back to the search

Annoyingly, the only baptisms I can see are for the older Dolphin children. Catholic records can be harder to find online, and William's isn't here, but the fact he christened his children Robert (after his father) and Elizabeth Alice (Alice his mum) makes me pretty sure I've got the right family.

About those London orphans

However, I'm still intrigued as to why someone from Lancashire would adopt children from an orphanage in London – and how did they go about it? I even wonder if Joseph Dolphin might have taken on all three Riboldi boys initially, but perhaps my ancestor John wanted to learn a different trade, away from the cotton mills, and that's how he ended up at Dolphin HQ in Ribchester.

It's a long shot, but I've paid a search fee to the Catholic Children's Society (cathchild.org.uk) and asked its researcher to see if any papers from the 1870s that survive in its archives mention the name Riboldi. So, watch this space – but don't hold your breath!

Getting to grips with 19th century adoption

I'm fascinated by the whole subject of adoption in the 19th century, but I've not uncovered a great deal yet. Of course, there are the 'Home Children' sent to Canada, like John and Christian de Neef. And I've

read Peter Higginbottom's excellent *Children's Homes*, which covers orphanages as well as ragged schools, training ships and farm schools. But the first piece of legislation relating to adoption wasn't enacted until 1926, and before that there was no legal status for adoptees (except perhaps for the wards of wealthy families; echoes of *Jane Eyre*...). Otherwise, it looks like adoption was an informal arrangement that spanned all kinds of situations and outcomes.

Who was Thomas Tart?

I'm rather curious about Joseph Dolphin too, and I keep thinking of that young man Thomas Tart, 'son', on Joseph's 1871 Census. Who was he? Tart is another unusual name, so I head back to the LOPC to search for Thomas.

And well, well. Thomas Tart was baptised in 1845 at St John the Evangelist, a CoffE church in Farnworth, and described as the 'child of Hannah Tart, weaver'. Hannah would have been about 18. There's no mention of a father – or a husband.

The only Dolphin-Tart marriage, ever!

Over to FreeBMD to look for Hannah and Joseph's marriage, and here we go, Bolton, 1861. Not surprisingly, it's the only Dolphin-Tart union in the whole of England and Wales, ever!

Thomas Tart would have been 15 or 16 at the time of his mother's marriage. Would eyebrows have been raised at Joseph Dolphin marrying an

older woman, likely a non-Catholic, who had had a child in her teens?

I'm intrigued, so I go back and look at all of Joseph's censuses again, and the people who shared his home over the years. As well as Thomas Tart, Hannah's brother John Tart is living with the family in 1871 and 1881. There are 'adopted sons' Joseph and George Riboldi in 1881, of course. And in 1871, there's also a lodger; a 40-year-old man named Richard Ormrod who can't work because he's blind.

What of Joseph & Hannah's children?

Did Joseph and Hannah have any children of their own, I wonder? At Findmypast, among the Roman Catholic parish records, I spot transcripts of two baptisms at St Gregory the Great, Farnworth – Maria Jane Dolphin in 1865, parents Joseph Dolphin and Anna Dart, and Alicia Anna Dolphin in 1866, parents Joseph Dolphin and Anna Sart. Anna Dart/Sart? That's Hannah Tart, surely!

But there's always a tale to tell behind the records, isn't there, and often there's no happy ending. The little girls are buried at the same church: Maria Jane in 1866, aged one; Alicia Hanna in 1869, aged three.

It makes me think. Joseph Dolphin came from a big family (he had eight siblings altogether) and, just maybe, the adoptions, the step relations, the lodgers and the boarders – all kinds of waifs and strays you could say – were Joseph's way of creating his own family. I'd like to think so. Good on you, Joseph! 🌱

About the author

Gill Shaw is a writer and former assistant editor of 'Practical Family History'. She lives in Cambridgeshire and loves singing, walking and tracking down elusive ancestors.

FOLLOWING THE RIBOLDI BROTHERS



This month, **Gill Shaw** delves into census and orphanage records to discover whether a long-term family legend has any basis in truth

22	12111111	as		10	as				
23	Joseph	Roboldi	do	9	do				London
24	John	do	do	9	do			do	do
25	George	do	do	7	do			do	do
				Total of Males and Females	125				

The three Riboldi brothers, Joseph, John and George, on the 1871 Census at St Mary's Orphanage, Heston, Brentford

The family history records do a grand job of telling us who, where, what, when... but what they can never tell us is why. Why did my 2x great-grandmother Emma leave her children behind when she set out to make a new life in Scotland with her second husband Jan de Neef?

I can hazard a few guesses of course, but to discover what happened to my great-grandfather John and his siblings, we need to backtrack to London, 1869, and the death of their father John Anthony Riboldi, tidewaiter on the Thames.

Now, we're only two years off the 1871 Census, so that seems the most obvious place to start. I key in John Riboldi, no age, no birthplace, but name variant boxes firmly ticked. And hey, we're in business. Here's 'John Roboldo', born 1862, and now living in Heston, Brentford, Middlesex. Well, the age is right, so it's almost certainly him, but Brentford? Central London or even Emma's hometown of Gravesend I might have understood, but Brentford's a new one on me.

I click on the transcript to see the address 'St Mary Orphanage and Certified Poor Law School' and John described as an 'inmate'. Of course, an orphanage. This comes as no great surprise, and it echoes the story of their cousins-cum-stepbrothers last issue, the two young de Neef boys. This time, though, I know we're not going to wind up in Canada...

It also ties in with my one and only snippet of historical hearsay – passed down in the family by the descendants of John's twin brother Joseph – and according to this source, Emma Riboldi originally left the children with family to be cared for (what family? The Welches presumably?), but 'the money ran out'. I'll never know exactly what went on, but that's a likely-sounding scenario, I reckon.

Back to the census image and I spot John immediately – and he's not alone! Lined up like ducks in a row are Joseph Roboldi, aged nine, John Roboldi, nine, and George Roboldi, seven, all born in London. So, it seems the three brothers have at least managed to stay together, but this is clearly an all-boys institution and I'm not going to find their little sisters here. Truth to tell, the heartbreaker is that my great-grandfather and his brothers probably never saw their mother or sisters again...

There's no more detail given, so I go backwards and forwards, past 25 children on each page, to get an idea of how big this place is. Altogether, I turn over 18 or 19 pages – that's more than 450 boys. And they're not all local children either, they're from all over the place – Manchester to Exeter, Ireland to Scotland, even Jersey, Gibraltar, Italy. The youngest boys, like George Riboldi, are seven years old, the eldest 16.

When I reach the opening page, it lists the people in charge of the

orphanage, and ooh, these seem a little unusual. There are 10 officers in total, all male, and all bar two are said to be British subjects born in Belgium. Intriguing.

I've never been the greatest at deciphering handwriting, and to my inexperienced eye, it looks like we have, among others, James Mafart, the director; Modesty Stas, assistant director; Ferdinand de Coster, manager of kitchen department; Lucian Audenaut, the storekeeper; schoolmaster Caliphy Bofart; and Poldecarp Hoores, the rather worryingly described 'task master'. I can't decide if this page is a transcriber's worst nightmare, or the new staff intake at Hogwarts.

Now, I'm keen to know more about this place and via a combination of Wikipedia, The National Archives and childrenshomes.org.uk (a companion site to workhouses.org.uk, which I've found useful in the past), I learn St Mary's, also known as North Hyde Orphanage, took in Roman Catholic boys. It was housed in some former Napoleonic War barracks, and run by the Brothers of Mercy of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, a Catholic order founded in Mechlin, Flanders. Aha, so that explains all the interesting Belgian names.

I also find a link to the Catholic Children's Society (catholicchildrenssociety.org) and I drop them an email to see if any records from St Mary's this far back



137	1	Thomas Wilson	Head	Mar	37	Manager of Bolton Works	
		Edward Wilson	Son		4	Scholar	
		William Do	Son		18	Journer	Chorbury Green
		Elizabeth	Da		15	Housekeeper	Do
138	1	William Dolphun	Head	Mar	32	Wholesale Cotton-merchand	Ribchester
		Mary Ann Do	Wife		30		Banbury
		Thomas	Son		10	Scholar	Ribchester
		Elizabeth Alice	Da		5	Do	Do
		John Rebaldra	Apprentice	Unm	20	Apprentice	William Johnson
139	1	Jane Dolphun	Head	Do	26	Beer-seller	Ribchester
		Ann Cox	Servant		10	Scholar	Do
140	1	Mary Wilson	Head	Unm	62	Housekeeper	Ribchester
		Richard Do	Son		20	Farm-labourer	Do
		Elizabeth	Da		25	Cotton Weaver	Green-say
		Mary Dilworth	Da		25	Do	Ribchester
		Bliss Do	Da		22	Do	Do
		Mary Ann Rowchiff	Servant		24	Do	Blackburn
141	1	Andrew Walton	Head	Mar	28		Do
		Elizabeth Do	Wife		26	Cotton Weaver	Do
		Joseph	Son		5	Do	Do
Total of Houses...		6		Total of Males and Females...		12 12	

The 1881 Census shows John Riboldi (shown as 'Rebaldra') apprenticed to William Dolphun...

Farnworth, Bolton, Lancashire. Bolton is next door to Bury, where I grew up, so we're definitely on home turf now.

might survive. It's likely a long shot, but no harm in asking.

Beyond orphanage life

Well, I know the boys can't have stayed in the orphanage forever, so let's see if we can locate them on the next census, the 1881. Again, I try my great-grandfather John first, but finding him proves trickier this time around. So much trickier, in fact, that there's no sign of him at all. Hmm.

Let's have another bash using wildcards – first Rib*, then Rab*, then Reb* – and hallelujah! Here's a John 'Rebaldra', born in London in 1861 (which is spot on) and now living in Ribchester, Lancashire. That's a long way from home for John, true, but the move perfectly explains how I came to be born a Lancashire lass, not a Londoner!

I open the image to find John Rebaldra, aged 20, is living at

Green Side, Ribchester, where he's apprenticed to a wheelwright who goes by the rather wonderful name of Dolphun. William Dolphun, 32, born in Ribchester, is married to Mary Ann, 30, and they have two little Dolphun calves – 10-year-old Thomas and Elizabeth Alice, nine.

Next door lives another Dolphun, Jane Dolphun, aged 26, who might possibly be William's sister. She's a beer seller, which is always a handy thing to have around.

I'm going to come back to this census return later and check out the location on a map, but first I want to know where John's twin Joseph and younger brother George were in 1881.

The Dolphun family

Joseph first, and he proves far easier to find than my great-grandfather. Here we go: Joseph Riboldi, born London 1861, now living in

Open the image and ha, fabulous – buy one, get one free! Here's 19-year-old Joseph Riboldi, born in London, employed as a cotton operative, and 17-year-old George Riboldi, a tailor, also born in London.

But I don't believe this. Not only have I bumped into another pod of Dolphins – Joseph Dolphun, 48, a gardener, and his wife Hannah – but the relationship of Joseph and George Riboldi to head of household Joseph Dolphun is described as 'adopted son'. You might have heard of the TV series *Raised by Wolves*. Well, here's the sequel, *Adopted by Dolphins...* Seriously, though, how commonplace was adoption from children's homes and orphanages in the 19th century? And despite these two families living 30-odd miles apart, there really has to be some kind of connection between them, doesn't there?

Sorry, I can't resist. I'm going to have to take that tangent and see if I can unite our school of Dolphins...

About the author

Gill Shaw is a writer and former assistant editor of 'Practical Family History'. She lives in Cambridgeshire and loves singing, walking and tracking down elusive ancestors.

187 28	Do	1	Joseph Dolphun	Head	Mar	48	Gardener	Ribchester
			Hannah	Wife		47	Do	Ribchester
			Joseph Riboldi	Son		19	Cotton Operative	Middleton
			George Riboldi	Son		17	Tailor	London
188 1	Southey	1	Joseph Dolphun	Head	Mar	57	Wholesale Cotton-merchand	Ribchester
			Mary Ann	Wife		57	Do	Ribchester
			John	Son		20	Apprentice	William Johnson
			Elizabeth	Da		19	Do	Ribchester
			Joseph	Son		16	Do	Ribchester
			Nancy	Da		14	Do	Farnworth
Total of Houses...		5		Total of Males and Females...		15 15		

...and Joseph and George Riboldi as the adopted sons of Joseph Dolphun. Surely some connection!



Whistle while you work



This month, **Diane Lindsay** ponders on whether our ancestors would have whistled, and why this might have been discouraged for members of the 'fairer sex'

When did you last hear someone whistle? The postman, milkman, paper boy? I ask because during an afternoon bingeing on British 1940s black & white films recently, I couldn't work out what was different. Apart from the over acting, the excruciatingly posh accents, and the cheery subservience of the peasants, that is. Eventually, I realised all the men whistled while they worked. And now almost nobody does. Thinking about it, almost no women ever did.

Naturally, being a keen delver into social history, I wondered why. Despite failed attempts to learn as an urchin who thought herself as good as any boy at climbing trees or building dens, I never could produce more than a soggy phfff. I'm trying now and the cat beside me on the desk is scowling at the reedy hiss from my lips. 'Animals can't whistle either' I tell her.

I wonder if my ancestors whistled, especially the women. My dad, grandad and at least one great uncle whistled, rather well as I recall, but I can't remember any female relative piping away to Colonel Bogey. My mother thought it unladylike. Maybe 'unladylike' reveals a clue. Certainly, in 1944, Lauren Bacall seductively advising Humphrey Bogart on film to 'just put your lips together and blow' would surely have raised puritan eyebrows.

One study of female whistling (please don't laugh at how I spend my spare time,) suggests women pursing their lips might have seemed suggestive, which

made whistling into a gender stereotype dating from days when daughters of Eve were supposed to be seen and not heard. An old English proverb reinforces this idea: A whistling woman and a crowing hen is neither fit for God nor men. Really?

A notable exception was Alice J. Shaw, La Belle Siffleuse (The Beautiful Whistler) who in

Men learned their whistling from biblical times, signalling to other shepherds that wolves were prowling, and so (it's said) the notorious Wolf Whistle came into being

the 1880s took New York and London by storm, and who performed before the then Prince of Wales and friends. You can hear an early recording on YouTube. (She was good, as the cat looked behind the PC for the bird!)

She didn't impress everyone, however; one reviewer commented 'a generation of whistlers is an appalling thing to imagine'. I suspect he meant women whistlers, although a recent survey did suggest numerous folk still can't abide a whistler of any gender. (I'm tempted to quip here that his mother was no oil painting either, but I won't.)

Men learned their whistling from biblical times, signalling to other shepherds that wolves were prowling, and so (it's said) the notorious Wolf Whistle came into being. In the film, Humphrey Bogart does indeed respond with a politically incorrect two-note mark of

appreciation. Personally, wolf whistles never offended me, though I can certainly now see links with predatory harassment.

There may be a much more sinister misogynistic undertone which deterred our foremothers from joining in the jollity of it all. A long-held superstition believed whistling could call up spirits. The most chilling horror story I ever read was *Oh Whistle and I'll Come to Thee My Lad* by M.R. James, where the protagonist blows an old bronze whistle, and is subsequently haunted by a dreadful faceless apparition.

In times where the distinction between wise women whose services as healers, charmers and diviners were welcome and those accused of witchcraft and malice was tragically blurred, most women would have tried hard to be seen and not heard. Over centuries they may have lost the confidence to whistle.

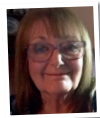
One surprising fact is that in 2009, Bonnie, a female orangutang at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C learned to whistle by mimicking a keeper. Researchers believe it may point to the origins of human speech, especially as a male, named Rocky, added rudimental phonic sounds. To date, ten orangutangs have mastered the art. I am hoping that the cat never tries to whistle.

If an ancestral orangutang could do it, I thought, so can I, so I tried a sibilant La Marseillaise on my husband, which amazingly, he recognised. But guess what: France then dramatically trounced England in the Six Nations. Makes you think, doesn't it? I'll be sure I'm seen and not heard whenever Scotland play Rugby. 🌿

About the author
Diane Lindsay
has been addicted to family and local history for more years than she cares to admit, still teaches it to anyone who will listen, and often slips it cheekily into her creative writing class. She has enough brick walls to keep her going for many years and plans to live long enough to knock down every one. She finds it very hard to take herself too seriously.



NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP...



As **Diane Lindsay** takes delivery of a new bed, she spares a thought for the many nights our ancestors will have spent trying to catch forty winks in less comfortable conditions



Where family history's concerned, it's surprising where an insistent thought can take you. Bed has very much been on my mind this month. Our bedroom has become our favourite 'warm space' in an expensively chilly winter, furnished in five-star style with hot water bottles, kettle, biscuit jar, TV, and the cat. We even have a mini fridge to match the duck-egg decor. It's now more flatlet than boudoir.

After Christmas, we decided to replace our aging mattress with an all singing, all dancing adjustable bed. It arrived (eventually,) was manoeuvred up our dog-leg stairs, and was partly erected by skilled workmen. Then dismantled, dragged downstairs again, being the wrong size. Our spring-pinging old mattress was retrieved from outside and reinstated on the defunct divan, everyone thanking goodness the rain had held off. As I write, we're still waiting.

I wonder what the ancestors would have thought of these shenanigans. Taken rather a dim view, I suspect. Many of mine would think we're lucky to have a bed. To ourselves. And the cat of course.

I have a will and inventory for my 9x great-grandfather William Vesie in which he left two beds, one in true Shakespearean fashion left to his widow, and the other, together with 'all linens, hangings and appurtenances' (sheets and bed curtains) to his 'beloved son'. He

paid Hearth tax on one fireplace so was presumably cosy on cold winter nights. Unlike his direct descendant my great-granddad William Veasey, who in 1891 declared he lived in a hovel.

This set me contemplating other family beds and their stories. Like the Brontë bedroom of my Yorkshire great-grandparents, overlooking the moors near Haworth; black iron bedstead, hand crocheted lace on the sheets, fancy chamber pot

I remember Dad's scratchy Army greatcoat on the bed after the war, when work and money and coal were short

under the bed, washbasin on a side table, stone hot water bottle for the feet and a handmade patchwork quilt to die for. Only lacking a skeletal hand and a voice calling 'Let me in, Let me in' at the window.

I'm now compiling a set of bed-related notes, anecdotes and memories for the family history. Such as bouncing, aged four, on Grandma's heavy mahogany bed, excited to see it downstairs in the front room, where beds weren't supposed to be. Totally unaware it was the last time I'd see her.

Then there was the 19th-century hole-in-the-wall kitchen bed my husband's granny had in Scotland. It looked surprisingly cosy and warm, tucked between pantry and black iron range. I could quite see myself curling up in there with a wee cup o' tea and Rob Roy McGregor.

I remember Dad's scratchy

Army greatcoat on the bed after the war, when work and money and coal were short. And the makeshift 'top to tail' bed in a Kent prefab, where four of us cousins packed in tight kicking and punching and giggling at a glimpse through the door of their coal miner Dad having his bath in the kitchen. There was the childhood Utility prison stripe flock mattress, and the sheer teenage luxury of a blue and gold silk eiderdown. Which slipped off the bed every single night but felt pure Hollywood.

The irony is that I've always been an insomniac, an owl, a reader by torchlight, a poet of the small hours and a very, very reluctant riser. Regular readers will know I do much of my research in the small hours. My best quality sleep is always between about three and eight am.

Recent midnight reading, however, suggests this is the kind of sleep pattern most of our ancestors knew. Until that pesky Edison invented the electric light bulb and the working day happened that is. Studies have shown biphasic sleep was common in previous generations, who retired early, woke up and worked, prayed, or even visited, then slept till morning.

NB: I draw the line at visiting. But since I began this article, the new bed has arrived and been fitted. The cat has validated it, so here I am, at 2am, in the good company of my forebears, done and dusted and about to start my second sleep.

'Night God Bless', as my deeply monophasic sleeper mum would say. 🌿

About the author
Diane Lindsay has been addicted to family and local history for more years than she cares to admit, still teaches it to anyone who will listen, and often slips it cheekily into her creative writing class. She has enough brick walls to keep her going for many years and plans to live long enough to knock down every one. She finds it very hard to take herself too seriously.