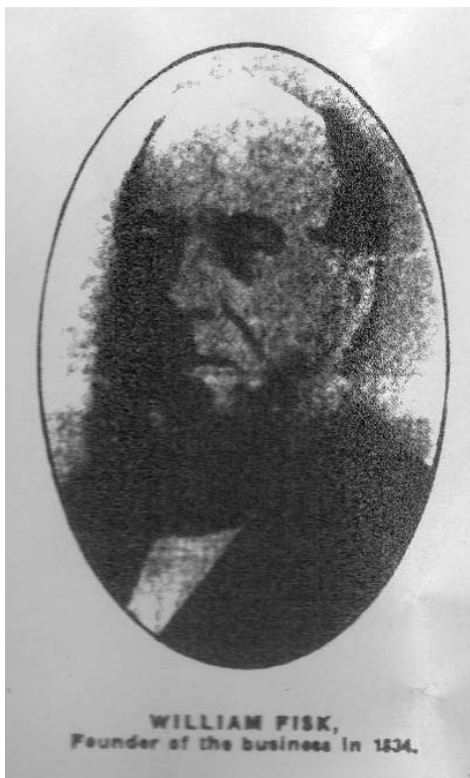


William Fisk (1807-1881) and Louisa Lake (1807 – 1886)



The picture on the left of William Fisk featured in an advert celebrating the 100th anniversary of his shop, which would have been in about 1936.

William Fisk was our own great grandfather's grandfather. He was the youngest of the three children of a farmer from Thorpe-le-Soken called James Fisk, and the Fisks seem to have been a fairly reputable and well-educated lot. Although William was born in St Osyth, it is not clear whether he was brought up there or in Thorpe-le-Soken, which the place most sources give for him, but the two villages are only a few miles apart, so it doesn't matter too much.

There is plenty of information on William – for he would go on to set up a drapers shop in St Albans that operated for over a century and grew into a major department store. In particular, his life is described in several articles that appeared in the St Albans Review and Herts Advertiser, and the religious side of his life is described in a book on Dagnall Street Baptist Church.

When William was 20, his older brother, James, died at sea in Bombay, while his sister Sarah married a local man called Edward Blyth, who was so dear to William that he named one of his sons after him. At the age of 25, in 1834, William married Louisa Lake at St Mary's Church in Colchester. This was not the kind of place any old person could have married, which further suggests the Fisks were of fairly wealthy stock. The church is shown in the picture in 1905, and is now used as an arts centre. Louisa Lake, was born in 1807 (the same year as her husband) in Tiptree Heath, also in Essex, but 27 miles off to the west, nearer to London.

I have not found any record of a Louisa Lake being born anywhere around there, or of what might be origin of the Lake family, but there are one or two clues that could be followed up. The article in the St Albans Review in 1985 explains that "after serving an apprenticeship, William Fisk obtained a situation, as they used to say, with a large business house in Oxford." I think this is a mistake, it was Cambridge, not Oxford. "He was a devout Christian and although he was the chief of the staff at Oxford, he obtained the permission to sleep under the counter for some years so he could pray undisturbed, rather than sharing the staff quarters with 20 or so others."



St Mary's in Colchester, also said to be the origin of the Humpty Dumpty nursery rhyme. In 1648 a large cannon was placed on the roof, nicknamed Humpty Dumpty. Parliamentarian forces damaged the wall beneath Humpty, which fell to the ground and the King's men "couldn't put Humpty together again!"

The method of appointing deacons has varied over the years. In 1833 when two new deacons were required, it was decided that those presently in office should nominate three brethren and that any member of the Church should be at liberty to nominate others. The lady members of the Church were able to nominate men for the diaconate, but it was to be many years before women would be accepted in that role. The final selection of the new deacons would be made at the next Communion Service when every member would come with a paper naming two of those nominated. The papers would be placed in the collection plate with the offering and the two with the highest number of preferences would be elected. In 1840 when the officers of the Church recommended the appointment of a deacon, the members were asked to come to the next Church Meeting with a piece of paper bearing the name of a Brother whom they considered best suited. It was said, however, that 'in the judgement of the Pastor and deacons, the Church would act wisely under existing circumstances, to request Brother Fisk to accept that office' - Brother Fisk was duly elected! This was William Fisk, Draper, who, with his family, was to make a significant impact on the life of the Church and the City.

ORIGIN OF LAKE

This surname is of early English medieval origins. It is to be found chiefly in the West Country, and is either topographical or locational.

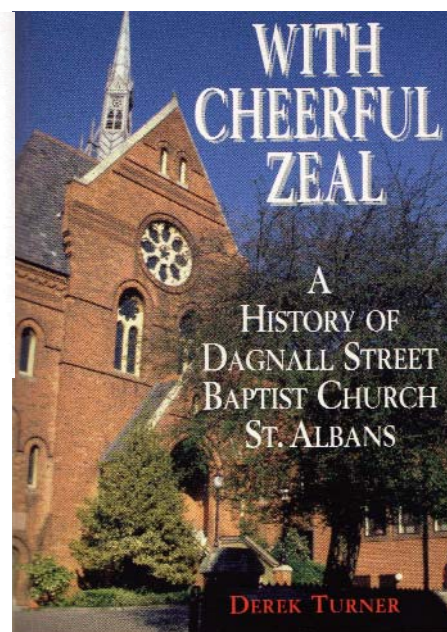
If the former it was a surname for someone who lived by a stream or water course or a bog.

The derivation is either from the Old English pre 7th century word 'lacu' meaning a water course or 'laecc', meaning a bog.

Curiously the word lake meaning a body of open water, is not recorded in England before the 13th century, and it is uncertain as to whether it was the source of surnames at all.

The first recorded spelling of the family name is shown to be that of Richard de la Lake.

This was dated 1200, in the Shropshire Pipe Rolls, during the reign of King John of England, and known by the nickname of 'Lackland', 1199-1216.



(Note that the picture is not of the right William Fisk - it shows William Fisk's grandson of the same name). The store is referred to as James Fisk because that is what it became when William died and his father took it over.

Big changes in store at James Fisk & Son

WILLIAM Fisk, born in 1807 in the village of St Osyth, Essex, after serving an apprenticeship obtained a situation, as they used to say, with a large business house in Oxford.

He was a devout Christian and although he was the chief of the staff at Oxford, he obtained the permission of the owner to sleep under the counter for some years so he could pray undisturbed, rather than sharing the staff quarters with 20 or so others.

William Fisk moved to St Albans in 1834 to set up shop and begin nearly half a century of active involvement with Dagnall Street Baptist Church, where a sermon was to be preached by William Garret Lewis on his death in 1881.

In the early years, from 1834, staff at James Fisk had to live on the premises and conform to strict rules. Men were forbidden from entering departments of the store dealing with women's attire.

Ben le Vay looks at the story of an old-fashioned department store, long lost to St Albans. With acknowledgements to former employee of James Fisk's, Miss Esther Gandy.

Invoices dated from 1834, uncovered when alterations were made to the building a few years before demolition showed handkerchiefs at 5½d a dozen (selling price ½d each), calico at 1d a yard, women's cotton stockings at 3d a pair and pillow cases at 2¼d each. In modern coinage that would be just over 1p per pillow case, had there been no inflation in the meantime!

Sixteenths of a penny were even quoted, although this must have been rounded up or down. Incredibly one document talks of one sixteenth of a penny per 11 yards of trimming, although another refers to material at eleven sixteenths per yard!

● Next week: the department store is taken over.

Alteration of Premises.

W. FISK & SON,

Having taken the house lately occupied by Mr. G. ALLIN, adjoining their premises in the HIGH STREET, have decided upon making EXTENSIVE ALTERATIONS and IMPROVEMENTS, which render it desirable that as large a portion of their Stock as possible should be disposed of, they have determined accordingly to offer the same at such a reduction of price as will ensure a speedy clearance.

In addition to the reduction in price, a discount of 5 per cent. will be allowed to all purchasers.

W. FISK & SON call attention to a few particulars concerning their large and varied stock: but it will be obvious to all that only a few hours can be mentioned, and an inspection is earnestly solicited.

In the Manchester Department

Will be found Calicoes of all the most approved makes, at such quotations as will render it advantageous to families to purchase at this sale.

A lot of Linen Sheetings bought very cheap. A reduction of 3d. and 6d. per yard from the low prices at which they sell these goods will be made.

White Calico Sheetings, Linen Ticks, Furze, Counterpanes, Quilts, Dimities, &c.

THE REMAINDER OF

SUMMER PRINTS

Are offered at very low prices.

A choice stock of LILAC PRINTS at reduced quotations. Useful GINGHAM DRESSES, reduced to 3d. per yard, or 2s. 11½d. the Dress of 10 yards. PRINTED MUSLINS—many of these will be offered at little more than half the usual price.

New Patterns in WHITE TAMBOUR BOOK MUSLINS

FANCY DRESSES,

Really good-wearing Materials reduced to 11d., 9d., 8d., and 6d. per yard. The whole of our large stock of FANCY DRESSES, suitable for summer and autumn wear, greatly reduced: prices ranging from 1s. 11d. to 20s. the full dress.

Very cheap lot of SKIRTINGS, original price 1s. 3d., reduced to 5½d.

BLACK SILKS,

From the most reliable houses in the trade. A few FANCY SILKS to be sold a decided job.

MANTLES & SHAWLS.

Long Lace Shawls from 2s. 11d. to 30s. Lace Mantles from 12s. 11d. to 20s. A number of PAISLEY SHAWLS at a great sacrifice, at 7s. 11d., 8s. 11d., 10s. 9d., to 15s. Reversible titles from 12s. 11d. to 30s.

BORNOUSE MANTLES from 2s. 11d. upwards.

SILK JACKETS.

A large reduction will be made in order to clear.

A LOT OF CHILDREN'S DITTO, VERY CHEAP.

LADIES' BLACK CLOTH JACKETS,

From 1s. 6d. to 25s.

A lot of Women's Black Cloth House Jackets at 1s.

SUNSHADES.

A NUMBER OF SUNSHADES IN NEW SHAPES AND COLOURS AT LESS THAN COST. Striped Lawn Sunshades from 5d. and upwards.

The whole of our stock of Trimmings at a very great reduction. Straps and Corslets at 9d., 10d., 1s., 1s. 3d., 1s. 6d., to 5s. 11d.

MILLINERY BONNETS,

Flowers and Feathers, &c. will be sold at a sacrifice in order to clear. SEVERAL LOTS OF KID GLOVES, at 3d., 6d., 1s., and 1s. 6d.

A very cheap lot of Flannels of superior makes. Scarlet Flannels from 7d.

Purchasers of MOURNING will find great advantage in visiting this Establishment, every article being more or less reduced in price.

Furze, Blankets, Hosiery, Flannel, Cotton, Curran, Fines, Fringes, Handkerchiefs, Muslin and Leno Curtains, Mattings, Damasks, Victoria and Printed Table Linens.

PRINTED SCARLET TABLE COVERS from 3s. 11d.

The whole of the Stock of Drapery and Millinery has been carefully gone through, and wherever practicable, largely marked down in price.

W. FISK & SON,

11, 12, AND 13, HIGH STREET, ST. ALBANS.

E. GIBBS, PRINTER, ST. ALBANS.

● Fancy a shawl at 15p? An old Fisk's sales bill.



● Former St Albans Mayor William Fisk.

HIGH STREET HERITAGE

Last week Review historian Geoff Dunk explored the past of the site now earmarked for the Chequer Street shopping centre. This week he delves back through the years to make more discoveries about the site of another St Albans shop development.

THE Heritage Close area of High Street, St Albans, has an interesting record of change and expansion.

Exploratory excavations began there in June 1972 after the Blundell's department store was demolished to make way for the new Heritage Close precinct.

The results were disappointing as the site had been disturbed through the years by building work. However, there were, under the cellars of the store, traces of two mediaeval flint and mortar walls. At the rear of the site towards the Abbey, there had once been a major mediaeval building.

A study of more modern records reveals much. In 1959 Blundell Ltd. had bought the premises and

business of James Fisk and Son Ltd, known throughout the district as Fisk's. The business occupied 17 to 31 High Street and was a furnishing, drapery, outfitting and shoe store.

William Fisk, the founder of the store, moved to No. 21, next door to the Little Red Lion, in 1846. Previously he had been a linen and woollen draper and haberdasher in George Street.

About this time the lady customers of Fisk's were wearing ground length full skirts with as many as seven petticoats. Later a horse-hair petticoat was worn. When they walked along High Street they wore long wadded cloaks or woolshaws to keep out the cold. Gloves or mittens were always worn whether indoors or out. Elastic sided boots were the

fashion as was a small bonnet decorated with ribbons.

The crinoline was worn for a short while and although the sewing machine was invented in 1846 it took 20 years before the machine was used for the intricate gathering and pleating later used to decorate dresses. Hats by then had a wide brim and were made of straw.



With the many changes in fashion and lavish use of materials—none of them man made—it is not surprising that by 1877 Fisk's was trading from number 21, 23, 25 and 27. In 1871, by the way, August 19 was

the first statutory Bank Holiday. Eight years later it was announced that the drapers and clothiers of St Albans would close at 7pm in the winter, except for Saturdays when early closing at 9pm was introduced instead of the normal 11pm.

Number 33 High Street was occupied by E.S. Wiles & Co, and in 1879 they were summoned for allowing a nuisance to exist at their works caused by the melting of tallow. (Ever smelt tallow? It's foul!)

William Fisk appeared on their behalf. He had lived nearby for 40 years or so, there were 16 or 17 people on his premises and he thought none of them had suffered from the effluvia. The nuisance was proved. Wiles were fined 40 shillings and costs and it was hoped the nuisance would be moved.

In early Victorian times the shop assistants were always men but later on girls worked in the store and lived on the premises. Their bedrooms were on the second floor of Fisk's and the family lived on the middle floor. On Sundays family and staff had midday meal together with William, and later on James, carving at the head of the table.

Demolished in 1894—5 were numbers 25 and 27 High Street which were brick

built, late 18th century, 3-storey premises. The new premises were much more ornate with bay windows on the first and second floors. There was a Dutch style gable with attic windows on either side. Glover and Salt, who had rebuilt the property destroyed in the Market Place fire of 1882, were the architects.

It was about this time that ladies first wore knickers, long and with frills. Everything cost something and three farthings and it was the custom for drapers to have packets of pins and needles beside the till to give for change if there was a shortage of farthings.

The numbers of the buildings in High Street were changed in 1896 to the modern style, with even numbers on one side and odd on the other. The numbers as we now know them are quoted in this article.

Stables were built at the rear of the store in 1899. This was necessary as Fisk's proudly announced that they would now send a representative with samples and patterns to 32 surrounding villages. All goods delivered free.

In 1900 an additional shop was built at the rear and four years later extensions were built for two

Paul Barton, a colleague in the St Albans and Herts Architectural and Archaeological Society, recently drew my attention to the window of the empty shop next to Waxhouse Gate, number 15 High Street.

Now the woodwork has been removed from within the window two stone uprights of what appear to be a wide arch can be seen. It seems very possible that Waxhouse Gate had a narrow arch for pedestrians, which is the one still in use.

which is the one still in use, and a wide arch for transport.

The medieval Waxhouse Gate to the Abbey was a large three-storey building erected around 1425-30. It was reputed to be demolished in the early 18th century but I wonder if only the upper floors were demolished and the large arch allowed to remain and just filled in with brickwork. Experts' opinion required please.

from page 2

floors to be used as a dwelling house and a new dining room. Further extensions were made in 1911 consisting of a ground floor and basement shop with first and upper floor bedrooms.

In addition to these exten-

sions Fisk's also found it necessary to purchase neighbouring shops. In 1908 number 17 (with 1667 on the front) and number 33 were bought. When Wiles left number 33 it was used by

Fisk's for a while and then occupied by Ben Pelly's, the china dealer, until 1928. It

was then taken over by the Wallpaper Stores.

The Little Red Lion (number 19) was acquired from Adey and White in 1911, number 29 in 1914 and number 31 during the Great War. Number 29 was known as the Domestic Bazaar Company before being bought.

At the end of the 19th century number 29 was Dorell's, the milliners, who moved up High Street. They were great rivals to Fisk's and later to W.S. Green Ltd, of Chequer Street. During 1912-13 Dorell's advertisements were much larger than Fisk's or Green's who grew in parallel.

Numbers 29 and 31 were rebuilt, three storeys high, in 1920.

COLOUR TV-MUSIC CENTRES

UK Census entries for William Fisk and Louisa Lake

1841, St Albans High Street



William Fisk	30	Draper	
Louisa Do	30		
William Do	5		
James Do	4		
Thomas Do	2		
Louisa Do	1		

1851, 5, St Albans High Street

5 High Street	William Fisk	Head	Mar	43	Linen Draper	Essex. St. Cuth
	Louisa Do	Wife	Mar	43		Essex. St. Cuth
	William Do	Son	Un	15	Linen Draper's Apprentice	Herts: St. Albans
	Louisa Do	Daughter	Un	11	Scholar	Herts: St. Albans
	Sarah Do	Daughter	Un	9	Scholar	Herts: St. Albans
	Frances Do	Daughter	Un	7	Scholar	Herts: St. Albans
	Ebenezer Do	Son	Un	6	Scholar	Herts: St. Albans

High Street 5	Eleanor Fisk	Daughter	Un	3		Herts: St. Albans
	Alban Fisk	Son	Un	1 month		Herts: St. Albans
	Joseph Lake	Visitor	Un	39	Linen Draper	Essex: Kelvedon
	John Smart	Apprentice	Un	17	Linen Draper's Apprentice	Herts: Welwyn
	Mary Smith	Servant	Un	24	General Serv.	Herts: Thirsk
	Jane Barfoot	Nurse	Un	47	Nurse	Herts: St. Albans

1861, St Albans High Street

William Fisk	Head	Mar	54	House Serv.	Essex. Northam
Louisa Do	Wife	Mar	54	Draper & Clothier	Essex. St. Cuth
Frances Do	Daughter	Un	17		Essex. Tiptree
Ebenezer E Do	Son	Un	16	Cabinet Maker	Herts. St. Albans
Eleanor Do	Daughter	Un	13	Scholar	Do Do
Augustus E Edwards	Assistant	Un	21	Assistant Draper	Essex. Barton
Joseph L. Clark	Do	Un	17	Do	Cambridgeshire. Tiptree
Susannah Winkfield	Serv	Un	20	House Serv.	Herts. Hunting Bridge

1871, St Albans High Street

William Fisk	Head	Mar	63	Master draper employing 10 assistants and 1 boy	Essex. St. Cuth
Louisa Fisk	Wife	Mar	64	Draper's wife	Essex. Tiptree
Sarah Fisk	Daughter	Mar	29	Draper's daughter	Herts. St. Albans
Ebenezer E. Fisk	Son	Mar	26	Baptist Minister of Truro Chapel	Herts. St. Albans
Stephen Fisk	Daughter	Mar	22	Teacher	Herts. St. Albans
Ann Constable	Servant	Mar	28	General Servant	Herts. Aldenham

1881, 14, St Albans High Street

William Fisk	Head	Mar	73	Retired Draper	St. Cuth. Essex
Louisa Do	Wife	Mar	74		Tiptree Herts
Sarah Do	Daughter	Mar	39		St. Albans Herts
Eleanor Fisk	Daughter	Mar	33		St. Albans Herts
Reginald W. Fisk	Scholar	Un	10	Scholar	Chippingfield Essex
Sarah Child	Servant	Mar	26	Domestic Servant	Waltham Essex

THE BAPTIST MAGAZINE, 1846

It will be seen from the contribution list, that donations to the Relief Fund have come from all parts of the kingdom, and to a useful amount. The Subcommittee of distribution, remembering the winter is only begun, are sending supplies to the missionaries as carefully as possible. Had we room, we might fill a page with letters gratefully acknowledging this timely and efficient aid, and which show, from the dreadful distress prevailing in most parts of Ireland, that but for such succour, many who have been assisted must have perished. While we entreat our friends not to withhold their hand, we must remind them, that these contributions ought not to diminish our usual supplies for the general purposes of the Mission. These have not been to the same amount as during the same period of the past year. We hope this statement will have its proper consideration.

CONTRIBUTIONS SINCE OUR LAST.

RELIEF FUND.		£	s.	d.
London—				
Providence Chapel, Shoreditch, by Mr.				
Cubitt	4	0	0	
Jones, Mr. J. M.	1	0	0	
Cox, Mr.	5	0	0	
Colson, Mr.	5	0	0	
Rye—Lord's table, by Mr. Smith		1	6	4
St. Alban's—				
Fisk, Mr.		5	0	0
Wiles, Mr. E.		1	0	0
Bootle Chapel—by Rev. J. J. Davies			6	0
			7	6

Chris Reynolds, who runs the Genealogy in Hertfordshire website, told me the following.

"With William Fisk's connection with the Baptists he would have known my Gibbs relatives (who published the local newspaper). I had a look in the index of the little known book by the Rev William Urwick *"Bible Truths and Church Errors"* which unexpectedly includes a large section on *"Day School Education in St Albans"*.

"This reveals that on 2nd March 1846 a meeting was held in the Baptist Chapel to consider the opening of a British School. One of the trustees was William Fisk, who subscribed £20 to the building fund. "My relative Richard Gibbs subscribed £10 to a total collection of just over £261. The school opened on 7th January 1847 and the first teacher was James Townend.

"In 1884 James Fisk [William's son, who became mayor of St Albans] signed a letter protesting against the closing of this non-conformist school by the Anglican dominated St Albans School Board, but without success.

Fisk Family Papers explains that William "came from Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex to St Albans in 1834 and united with the local Baptist Church in February 1835. The whole family subsequently lived at Cambridge for about twelve months (1835)." This text was provided by William's own son Thomas, which is why I am more willing to believe the Cambridge version than the Oxford one that was written almost two centuries later. His connection to the church seems to have been his reason for moving to St Albans, because he was involved in the Baptist Church before he had even moved to live in the city. The St Albans Review says that "William Fisk moved to St Albans in 1834 to set up shop and begin nearly half a century of involvement with Dagnall Street Baptist Church." He must have had a fairly major impact on the Baptist church when he arrived, because he was made a deacon in 1840, just five years after arriving. The paragraph from the book on the church by Derek Turner describes how the elections happened. For the first few years, he ran a drapers and haberdashers in George Street, and it was in the late 1830s that he moved to the High Street – the Hertfordshire Archive still has the deeds, titles "Executors papers: Wm Fisk, shopkeeper, St Albans 1838-1839." He had picked a prime

BIBLE TRUTHS & CHURCH ERRORS WILLIAM URWICK 1888

Although the primary design of Mr. Durant in 1834 of founding a British School was thus postponed, the purpose was still firmly rooted in the minds of several St. Albans Non-conformists; and on March 2, 1846, a meeting was held in the Baptist Chapel for the purpose of considering the propriety of attempting the establishment of a British School. The Revs. W. Upton, John Harris, T. Collins, J. Champion; also Messrs. Gibbs, Peppercorn, Bennett, Whitbread, Parsons, E. Wiles, Joseph Wiles, Ironmonger, Fisk, McCaw, and others were present, and it was unanimously resolved "That in the "opinion of this meeting it is much to be regretted that in "the town of St. Albans there should not exist a school for "children conducted on the British system, and that it is highly "desirable to attempt the establishment of one, with the "greatest promptitude and energy." These words are added evidently in recollection of the hindrances and delays which defeated the previous movement of 1834. Ground was secured in Spencer Street, near to Cross Street, and the building erected at the cost of £261 13s. 9d., all of which was raised by voluntary contributions. Mr. Joseph Wiles was chosen Secretary, and the following were elected TRUSTEES:— Revs. JOHN HARRIS and WILLIAM UPTON; Messrs. JESSE CHERRY, SAMUEL CHERRY, WILLIAM FISK, JOSEPH IRONMONGER, CHARLES MANLOVE, JOHN WINGRAVE, JOSIAH DICKENS WINGRAVE, MATTHEW HENRY WINGRAVE, HENRY WHITBREAD, JOSEPH WILES. The following is a list of the first subscribers:—

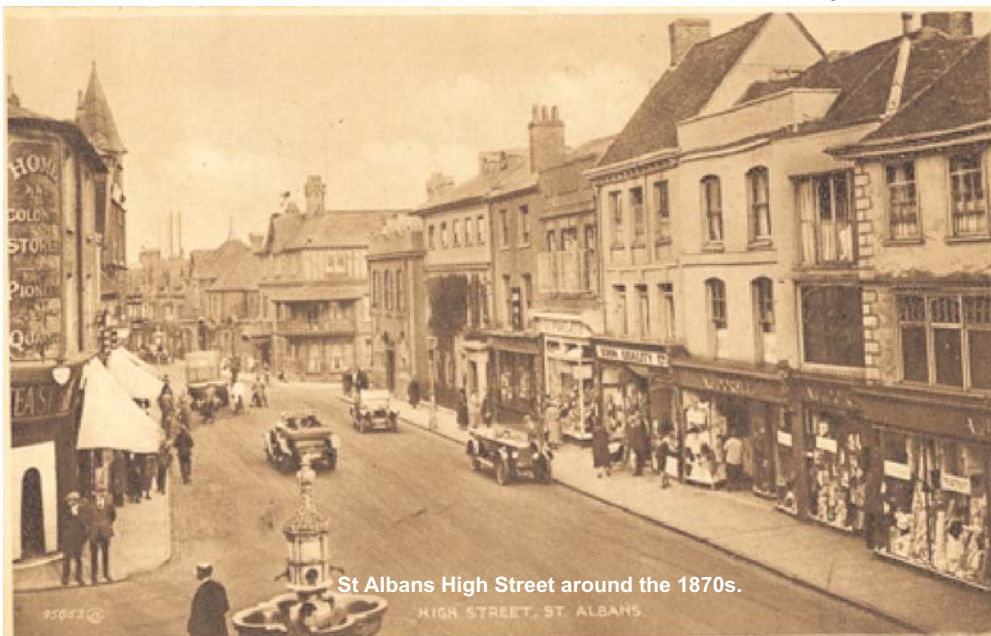
260 DAY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN ST. ALBANS.

LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS TO THE BUILDING OF SPENCER STREET BRITISH SCHOOL.

£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.		
E. A. Fordham, Esq.	25	0	0	Miss Ann Parkins	0	10	0
Friends by Rev. W. Upton ..	20	0	0	Miss Wood	0	10	0
Mr. W. Fisk	10	0	0	Mr. Osborne	0	5	0
Mr. Henry Whitbread	10	0	0	A Friend	0	5	0
Mr. Richard Gibbs *	10	0	0	Mr. Jarman	10	0	0
Mr. Henry Parsons	10	0	0	Mr. Thomas Stracey	1	0	0
Mr. James Peppercorn	10	0	0	Mr. S. Fletcher	0	10	0
Mr. Joseph Bennett	10	0	0	Mr. Puget, of Totteridge	10	0	0
Mr. John Gomme	10	0	0	Rev. T. Collins	2	2	0
Mrs. Wiles	10	0	0	Mr. Shrubb	0	10	0

spot, right next to the clock tower and the Abbey, which would later become a cathedral in 1877, an event William was still around to witness. However, William Fisk's main religious interests lay with the Dagnall Street Baptist Church, which was also only a couple of streets away. An article that appeared in the Herts. Advertiser in January 1911 provides some information on the background of the building, saying that it was a 17th century house that once belonged to Edward Strong the Elder, citizen and mason of London, and in his will bearing the date July 30th, 1723, he bequeathed it to his daughter Elizabeth New, and on her death it passed to his grandson John New. Edward Strong, to whose memory stands a monument at in St Peter's Church resided at New Barnes and acted under Sir Christopher Wren as master mason for the building of St Paul's cathedral.

The family appears a year after that in the 1841 census, when William and Louisa are both 30 and have moved from Essex and are living in the High Street in St Albans in Hertfordshire. William gave his profession as 'draper'. It was still a small business at the time, but it would grow over the years from one to eight addresses in the High Street, and become one of the most emblematic departmental stores in the county, run by three generations of Fisks. The High Street Heritage article includes a description of the kind of clothes the ladies would have worn and purchased at the time, including up to seven petticoats, straw hats and gloves at all times (even indoors).



In 1841, they had already started work on what would eventually be an enormous family of ten children. In keeping with the family tradition, the first son was called William Fisk, who was born a year after they were married, and was 5 by now, and James Fisk (4), Thomas Fisk (2) and Louisa Fisk (1) were all there too. All the children were born in St Albans, so their first child was born the year they moved to the city for good, 1836.

The St Albans Review article continues that "in the early years, from 1834, staff at James Fisk [that's a mistake, it was called W Fisk at that time] had to live on the premises and conform to strict rules. Men were forbidden from entering departments of the store dealing with women's attire." It is true that some staff did live on the premises, though I am not sure that was necessarily an obligation.

In 1846, the Baptist Magazine makes a reference to William Fisk making a generous donation to famine relief in Ireland.

There were three other people living in the house. The squiggles next to their names don't tell us much about the reason they were there, but it looks like Robert Vawser (30) was helping with the business in some way, young Ebenezer Valance (15) was an apprentice and Sarah Cook (15) was an 'FS', the abbreviation used on censuses for female servant. This young Ebenezer may have been of particular importance to the family, because one of their later sons, our own great great grandfather, would be called Ebenezer Edward (but known familiarly as Edward), and the Ebenezer bit may have been given in honour of this Valance child.

Ten years later, the time of the 1851 census, and all of the other children had been born, Sarah Fisk, Frances Fisk and Ebenezer Edward Fisk (the aforementioned great great grandfather of ours)



W. FISK & SON, HIRE COUNTY MUSEUM.

LONDON GAZETTE 18 JUNE 1878

NOTICE is hereby given, that the Partnership which has for some time past been carried on by William Fisk and James Fisk, under the firm of W. Fisk and Son, at Saint Albans, in the county of Hertford, in the trade or business of a Draper and Clothier, has been dissolved, by mutual consent, and will henceforth be carried on by the said James Fisk alone. And all debts contracted with the said firm since the 1st day of February, 1878, are to be paid to the said James Fisk. And all debts contracted by the said firm since the 1st day of February, 1878, will be paid by the said James Fisk.—As witness our hands this 7th day of June, 1878.

William Fisk.
James Fisk.

A HISTORY OF DAGNALL STREET BAPTIST CHURCH (DEREK TURNER)

and the Communion table which, tradition has it, once belonged to John Bunyan. To the left of the chancel, as one faces the main body of the church, is the Bevington organ, installed when the church was built at a cost of, then, £245-17s-5d - some ten years later it was to be enlarged at almost the same cost by the grandson of William Fisk, in memory of his grandmother. Continuing down the church through a wider and loftier arch, similarly marble columned, the pulpit is to the right and a lectern to left of another short flight of steps. The pulpit is reputedly constructed from wood from the old chapel. Down in the main body of the church the eyes turn upwards to the high, vaulted roof which may well have had symbolic significance for the architects of the Gothic revival but which has since given many a

Eleanor Fisk and Alban Fisk were all now with them. There had also been a son called Edward Blyth Fisk, who was born in 1844, and was named after Edward Blyth, the man who had married William's sister Sarah and died earlier that same year. Sadly, Edward Blyth Fisk only lived for two years, and was buried in Dagnall Street Baptist Church in 1847, aged 16 months.

Mother Louisa seems to have spent a good part of this period of her life pregnant and rearing children (that was rate of a child a year for seven years in a row). The drapery was going well, William was now 15 and old enough to help as a shopman, they had a different apprentice called John Smart. The family was certainly doing well for themselves. They had a 29 year old servant called Mary Smith, and a 47 year old nurse called Jane Barnfeather, who must have helped with all those kids.

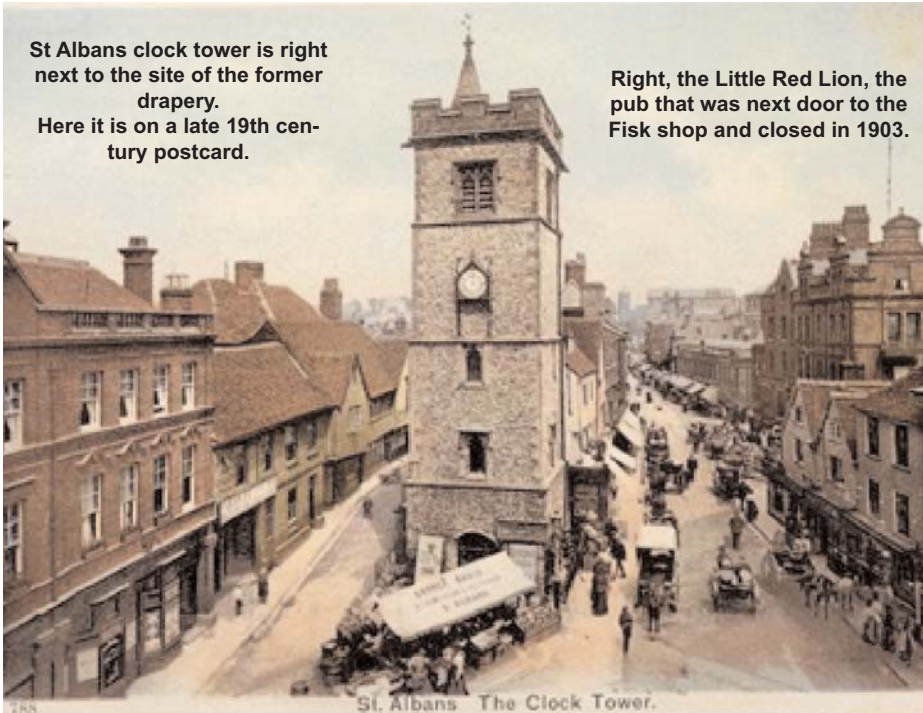
Handily, they lived next door to a pub, the Little Red Lion - although as there are links between the Fisks and the late 19th century temperance movement, that might not have been a good thing in their minds - in fact, it is likely that the Little Red Lion was an unwanted neighbour, and many years later (long after William was dead) would be bought by the Fisks and became part of the shop. But there was an interesting guest in the house in 1851 - 39 year old Joseph Lake. He was a linen draper born in Kelvedon in Essex, a village just three miles up the road from Tiptree, where Louisa was born. He is not described as William Fisk's brother-in-law but as a 'visitor', yet it does look like he was Louisa Lake's younger brother. If he is, then this is the same guy who in 1871 was living with his widowed sister-in-law Elizabeth Lake. This would mean that Louisa Lake had at least one other brother, who died early, and his widowed wife then moved in with her dead husband's brother Joseph! That Elizabeth Lake was born in Messing, a village in between Tiptree and Kelvedon, so everything fits, and she had been widowed for at least ten years before she moved in with Joseph Lake. She appears in the 1861 census as 'house proprietor' and was living with an elderly widowed aunt called Sarah Belchem. All these Lakes give us some clues to be working with as to Louisa Lake's past, and with more research something more definite can probably be found, but it is my guess that Louisa Lake's parents were either the John P Lake (born in Kelvedon in 1785 but a 76 year old widower in 1861) or otherwise Thomas P Lake (Kelvedon, 1785) and his wife Elizabeth Lake (1776 in Ratten, Suffolk). The Fisk family was still living in the High Street ten years later, the time of the 1861 census. By this time, several of the children had left home. William had married Sarah Short and was a Baptist minister nearby in King's Langley, Louisa had married a Baptist minister called John Wright Moore and was living in Folkstone, Thomas was a Baptist minister in Kidderminster and James had married Anne Alice Trollope, but was living in another part of the expanding shop in the High Street and helping his father to manage the shop, while also forging a life as prominent member of the local religious, commercial and political community - he'd become one of the most important people in 19th century St Albans.

The parents were now 54, and Frances was 17, Edward was 16 and Eleanor was 13. Sarah was recorded as working elsewhere as a teacher in St Albans, but she was probably still living at home and just temporarily absent at the time of the census. However, this was also a sad time for the Fisk family, because the youngest son, Alban, had died aged nine, and was buried in Dagnall Street along with his late older brother Edward.

They were all still drapers, and the older daughter Frances was now helping with the business, along with two assistants, 21 year old Augustus Edwards and 17 year old Joseph Clark. They had a new servant working for them, 20 year old Susannah Wakefield. But our great great grandfather Ebenezer Edward does not seem have been drafted into working for the family. Instead, he was working as a cabinet maker.

But as the various adverts show, the shop was expanding into all kinds of different areas of business, not just clothing, and eventually came to be described as a departmental store, so perhaps Ebenezer Edward's cabinet making was connected somehow to the shop. The family was still at the same house in 1871.

St Albans clock tower is right next to the site of the former drapery. Here it is on a late 19th century postcard.



Right, the Little Red Lion, the pub that was next door to the Fisk shop and closed in 1903.



William and Louisa were in their sixties by this time. Sarah Fisk was back living there, now aged 29, and Ebenezer Edward, now 27, was also recorded as being there, although he had married by this time and like two of his brothers had become a Baptist minister, so he was probably just on a visit. Eleanor, aged 23 was the third child still living with them. Frances, however, had left. She too had married a Baptist minister called Isaac Watts and had gone to live in Godmanchester. The Fisk family also still had a house servant, this time 28 year old Ann Constable. The draping business was going well. William, the father, was considered a 'master draper' and was now employing ten assistants, and one 'boy'. Sarah seems to have been one of those assistants, but Eleanor was working as a teacher. But the company was now called William Fisk & Son, Wholesale & retail linen and woollen drapers, hosiers and milliners, and was trading from the buildings at numbers 21, 23, 25 and 27 (that is using the current numbering system, which was changed in 1896 with odd numbers on one side of the road and even numbers on the other). The building was getting bigger and bigger. The High Street heritage article also explains the opening hours. Until early closing was introduced in the 1870s, they would stay open as late as 11.00 pm on a Saturday. William was also still active in the church, and Derek Turner's book mentions how he helped to set up the first Baptist meetings in nearby Sandridge in 1875.

By 'Fisk and Son' we are referring to their second oldest, James, who was now living next door with his wife, his two children, and eight drapers' assistants, presumably employees of the company. According to the newspaper report of James Fisk's life, and also an announcement in the London

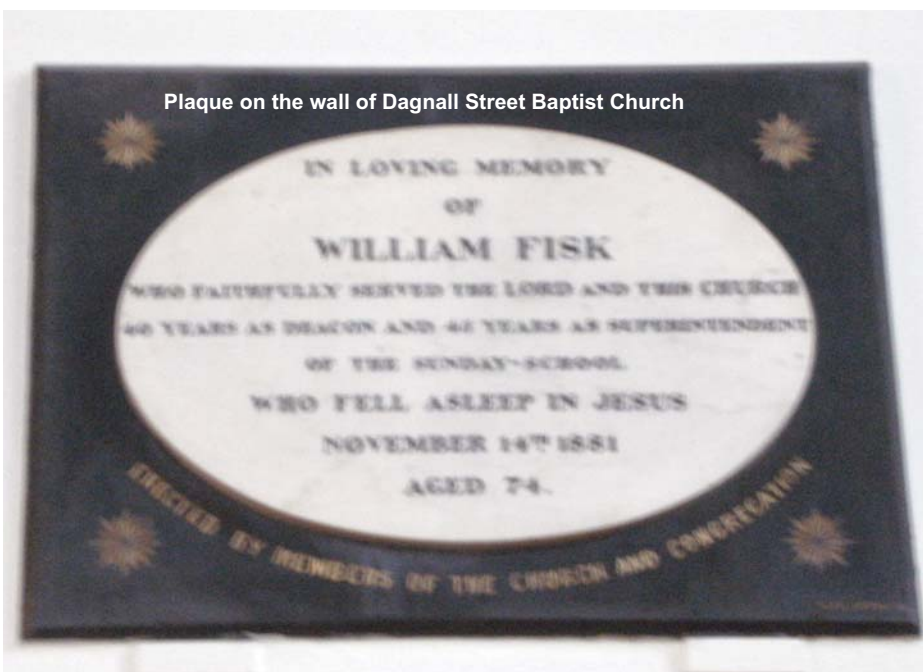
Gazette, he took over his father's business in 1878. In 1879, William became involved in a dispute with ES Wiles at Number 33, who was melting tallow and causing an unbearable stench that William believed was the reason one of his employees had gone down with effluvia. It seems he won his case and Wiles was fined 40 shillings. The article also explains how the staff would gather with the family for Sunday roast, with William doing the carving, and later his son James, the new manager of the shop.

By 1881, father William Fisk was registered as a 'retired draper', and so it was his son James, now 44, was now running the show, himself classed in the census that year as a 'master draper and clothier', and employing 6 men and 9 women. Not only were they involved in drapery and clothing, but had also progressed to boot manufacturing, and James' own son, yet another William, was also working for the company. This son James, as we shall see, was also on the way to becoming one of the most important men in the town, and his own son William would very much follow in his father's footsteps.

The address they give is 15, High Street, but as shown in the adverts and pictures of the Fisk and Son shop, it actually took up several different buildings and eventually grew into a department store. William Fisk senior was 73 by now, and 1881 would be the year that he died, and a report on his death was published in the Herts Advertiser (reproduced here), where it is made clear that he was a highly respected man and very much mourned. A plaque was hung on the wall in his memory of a man who 'faithfully served the lord and this church', and is still hangs there today. His will was proved by his sons the Rev. William Fisk of Arnsby (dissenting minister & son),

James Fisk of St. Albans (draper & son) and a Joseph Wiles of St. Albans (corn merchant). Strangely, despite dedicating so many years of service to the Baptist church in Dagnall Street, William Fisk was not buried there but at St Peters Church, which is not Baptist, which is where I found his grave when I visited St Albans in March 2010. Dagnall Street's church was reconstructed a few years after William Fisk's death, and the cemetery was built over. It is my suspicion that William knew that was going to happen, and that's why he decided it would be a wiser move to be buried somewhere a bit more permanent. An inscription reads 'shall he live again' and includes two quotes from the Bible associated to resurrection. His wife Louisa lived on for a further five years, and died at the age of 79 in 1886, her will being proved by the same three men. She is buried in the same grave as her husband, along with two of their daughters, Eleanor and Sarah. The organ at the Baptist Church, according to Derek Turner's book, was enlarged by her grandson, William Fisk, in her memory.

Plaque on the wall of Dagnall Street Baptist Church



I the *William Fisk* of Saint Alban
 late linen glass maker and all other my household offe
 - paid on their attaining the age of twenty one years I
 do residue of my personal estate and effects to my sou
 administrators and assigns respectively upon trust to con
 and or name of the Trustees or Trustee for the time be
 abroad securities in England or Wales with liberty for
 to said and upon further trust to permit and empower m
 t invested during her life and after her death upon tr
 and share alike as tenants in common and I give and be
 f her natural life and after her decease I give and be
 Giles their heirs executors administrators and assigns &
 parts by Public Auction or Private Contract with por
 Public Sale and to receive either on terms or gratuitou
 respectively so sold to the Purchaser or Purchasers their
 which shall arise from such sale unto and amongst al
 common and the respective shares of such Children to be
 f by them as their separate estate without the control or
 discharge for the same But no Child of mine in favour
 and Son or Daughter or his wife or husband into tr
 of this my Will and I hereby authorize them to reta
 the receipt and receipts of my said Trustees or Trustee fo
 sufficient discharges to any person or persons paying to
 and I hereby declare and direct that when and so far
 abroad of any Trustee for the time being it shall
 lawful for the executors or administrators of the last be
 Writing to nominate and appoint a new Trustee or Tru
 invested with and have all the powers and authorit
 Mortgage or Trustee to my said Trustees their heirs a
 any time hereofore made I declare this only to be my
 day of May One thousand eight hundred and eighty
 at the same time 1881

William Fisk's will written on a huge document, which is only partially reproduced here, and most of it legal speak and doesn't say much more than the fact he left his estate to his sons James and William and also to a corn merchant called Joseph Wiles. That's curious, because he had had a bit of a run-in once with the Wiles, but I assume this Mr Wiles was using the High Street property for his corn business – if ever the building was sold, the value was to be shared between all eight of the children, who also got a thousand pounds each. Meanwhile, everything the house contained went to his wife Louisa, who was to be given her rightful share of the profits of the business and William's other investments.

There is also a codicil, which I have not managed to get hold of, but which seems to be the part that concerned William's sister Sarah, and a dispute that James Fisk was involved in arbitrating.

The text reads "Of me William Fisk, of Saint Albans in the County of Hertford, draper and clothier, I give and bequeath to my dear wife Louisa all of my household furniture, plates, linen, glass, china and all of other household assets for her own absolute use and benefit. I give and bequeath to each of my eight children the sum of one thousand pounds to be paid on their attaining the age of twenty one years. I give and bequeath to my executor Joseph Wiles the sum of thirteen pounds nineteen shillings. I give and bequeath all the residue of my private estate and efforts to my sons William Fisk and James Fisk and my friend Joseph Wiles of Saint Albans aforesaid corn dealer. Their executors, administrators and assignees respectively on trust to reinvest and get in my other xxx personal estate and invest the monies to arise from such xxx personal estate in the leasehold securities in England and Wales with liberty for the said trustees or trustee to vary and transport the investments from time to time to any other investment of the description aforesaid and upon further trust to permit and empower my said wife to receive the annual income of the said amounts of the stocks, funds and securities whereon the same shall be invested during her life and after her death upon trust for all my said eight children to be divided equally among them their respective executors, administrators

SNIPPETS FROM THE HISTORY OF DAGNALL STREET BAPTIST CHURCH (DEREK TURNER)

held subsequently. A rough note by the then Secretary of Dagnall Street, Mr Josiah Avery, in September 1913, states that 'About the year 1875, Mr William Fisk came over to Sandridge, saw Mrs Lilley and arranged with her to have the Cottage Meetings at her house'. Mrs Lilley was the youngest daughter of William and Susannah Ad-

The whole minute reads as though the idea of weekly offerings was a new one and that it would replace pew rents as the source of giving to the Minister's Fund (Stipend) and the incidental expenses of the worship. All who wished to participate in the scheme were asked to commit themselves for whatever weekly sum they could afford, which would be placed in envelopes to be deposited in the boxes provided. Two deacons, Messrs Fisk and Wiles, were deputed to procure the envelopes and keep the records of each individual's giving; those falling into arrears to be reminded. Anyone could nominate where his or her money should be spent by placing a note in the envelope. In October 1891 it was decided that the offerings of the

To conclude this account of how those who have been largely responsible for the management of the church's affairs have come to be appointed over the years, it is interesting to reflect on the personalities of some of them. Take, for example, those who are named as trustees in the Deed of 1859: John Lewis, chemist; Samuel Fletcher, manufacturer; Edward Sutton Wiles, grocer; Joseph Wiles, corndealer; Joseph Bowers, carpenter; William Fisk, draper; James Fisk, draper; George Newman, ironfounder; Henry Harris, gentleman [in fact a local bank manager]; Eustace James Upton, chemist; Henry Oakley, shoemaker, all of St Albans, and Robert Inwood, wheelwright of Park Street near St Albans. The list rather confirms that by the middle of the 19th century, Dagnall Street was firmly established as the tradesmen's church in the tradesmen's town. With its minister,

and signees share and share alike as tenants in common and I give and bequest all my real and leasehold estate to which I shall be entitled at the time of my death unto my said wife for the term of her natural life and after her death I give and bequest all my real and leasehold estate to which I shall be entitled at the time of my death to my said sons, the said William

Fisk and James Fisk and the said Joseph Wiles their said executors, administrators and signees on trust as soon as conveniently may be after the death of my said wife to sell and dispose of the same either together or in parts by public auction or private contract with the power to make any special conditions as to title or evidence of title or otherwise and with a power to buy in the premises." After that, most of what he says is legal speak, but the basic gist is that if ever his estate was sold by William, James or Joseph, then its value should be shared equally between each of the eight children – and no wife or husband of their could interfere.

The will also includes numerous stamps of companies that must have been the investments and securities William Fisk was referring to – these include the Punjab and Delhi Railway Company, the Brazilian Submarine Telegraph Company, the bank of British North America (we call that Canada these days), the London and North Western Railway Company, the madras railway Company and others.

DEATH OF WILLIAM FISK (HERTS ADVERTISER, 26TH NOV 1881)

THE LATE MR. WILLIAM FISK. — On Sunday evening last a funeral sermon for the late Mr. W. Fisk was preached in the Baptist Chapel, to a very large congregation, by the Rev. W. G. Lewis, who chose as his text, part of the 21st verse of the Epistle of Jude, "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." At the close of the sermon, the preacher gave some particulars of the life of the deceased gentleman. The respect in which Mr. Fisk was held was shown by the fact that a considerable number of the congregation were clothed in mourning. During the service the choir sang the anthem, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."



William Fisk and Louisa lake's grave at St Peter's in St Albans. The inscription reads: **IN LOVING MEMORY OF WILLIAM FISK** who died November 14, 1881 aged 74 years. **Shall he live again. He shall rise again in the resurrection on the last day. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds"**

Also of LOUISA the beloved wife of the above who fell asleep in Jesus October 20, 1886, aged 79 years. Forever with the lord.



The other children of James Fisk and Sarah Lucking

William Fisk's father, James Fisk, mentioned in his will of 1834 that as well as William, he had a daughter, **Sarah Fisk**, who was born in St Osyth in 1805, and who had married Edward Blyth of Thorpe le Soken. He did indeed. The couple appears in the 1841 census, and was living in Tendring, which is just three miles up the road from Thorpe – just two doors up the road from Sarah's now widowed mother, Sarah Fisk (nee Lucking).

Edward Blyth was a farmer, the second youngest of a massive family of twelve children born to a local man called William Blyth (1757 - 1812) and his wife, the former Mary Wilson (1765 - 1816), both of whom would have been dead by the time of the wedding.

Somebody's Blyth history on the Internet explains how, as Sarah was just 20 at the time, Sarah's father, James, gave consent to to the marriage as she was a minor. The marriage was due to take place in St Osyth.

But Sarah Fisk's wedded bliss didn't last long. Edward Blyth died only a few years after they would have been married, in Tendring in 1844, and they had no children together.

The aforementioned Blyth history says that Edward Blyth signed a will on April 15, 1841, when living in Thorpe le Soken. He was buried on December 5, 1844 in Kirby le Soken, Essex. Sarah was executor of the will, and inherited all of his estate including the lease of farms in Thorpe le Soken and at Folly Gate, St Osyth. She was to have all the farm stock, implements, personal goods and money that Edward had at the time of his death.

Edward Blyth must have been very dear to the whole Fisk family, because Sarah's brother William, named one of his own sons Edward Blyth later that same year in honour of his late brother-in-law.

In 1847, she married again, once again in Tendring, this time to somebody called Thomas Miller, who was four years older than she was. Thomas was, like her late first husband, a farmer, from Boyton in Suffolk, and with her second husband, Sarah went to a live in a village close to Thomas' hometown, Tunstall.

Their address was in Woodbridge Road. The 1851 census tells us that they had 130 acres, and were employing nine workers, one of which, 32 year old Thomas Lawyer, was living with them. They also had two female servants, Ann and Betsy Smith.

It must have been a dairy farm, because in 1861, one of their two servants, Charlotte Aldred, is described as a 'dairy servant', while the other Jane Pettitt, was a 'house servant, and Ann Howard was their 'charwoman'.

They were still employing nine agricultural workers, as well as five 'boys'. In 1871, Thomas was now a 66 year old retired farmer, and he and Sarah were living in Woodbridge, having sold the farm, it seems. They had a 56 year old servant called Phoebe Webb.

Fisk Family Papers never mentions this second husband, and neither does it mention any childre, and I have found no evidence that Sarah had children by either of her two men.

As the Blyth family site says, and verified by other sources, Sarah died on April 9, 1886 in Thorpe le Soken. She was buried in Kirby le Soken. The curious thing is that although she had lived with her second husband for forty years, she was buried with her first husband, Edward Blyth, which must have been a little uncomfortable for her second husband of so many years.!

The inscription on the tombstone reads:

Sacred / to the memory of
EDWARD BLYTH
 late of Thorpe-le-Soken
 youngest son of
WILLm and MARY BLYTH
 late of Sneating Hall in this Parish
 who died Nov 28 1844 aged 47 Years
 Dear to the rich man by the poor one blest thy cherished name
 on memory's page shall rest
 Affection weeps tho' thou to bliss removed and mourns thy loss
 regretted and beloved
 also of
SARAH MILLER
 the beloved wife of **THOMAS MILLER**
 of Thorpe-le-Soken
 and widow of the above **EDWARD BLYTH**
 who peacefully departed this life
 April 9 1886 aged 81 years
 Nothing in my hand I bring
 Simply to Thy cross I cling

Thomas outlived her, he was 'living on his own means' next door to Thorpe-le Soken police station in the 1891 census, an 85 year old widower in the company of his 60 year old cook, Eliza Mills.

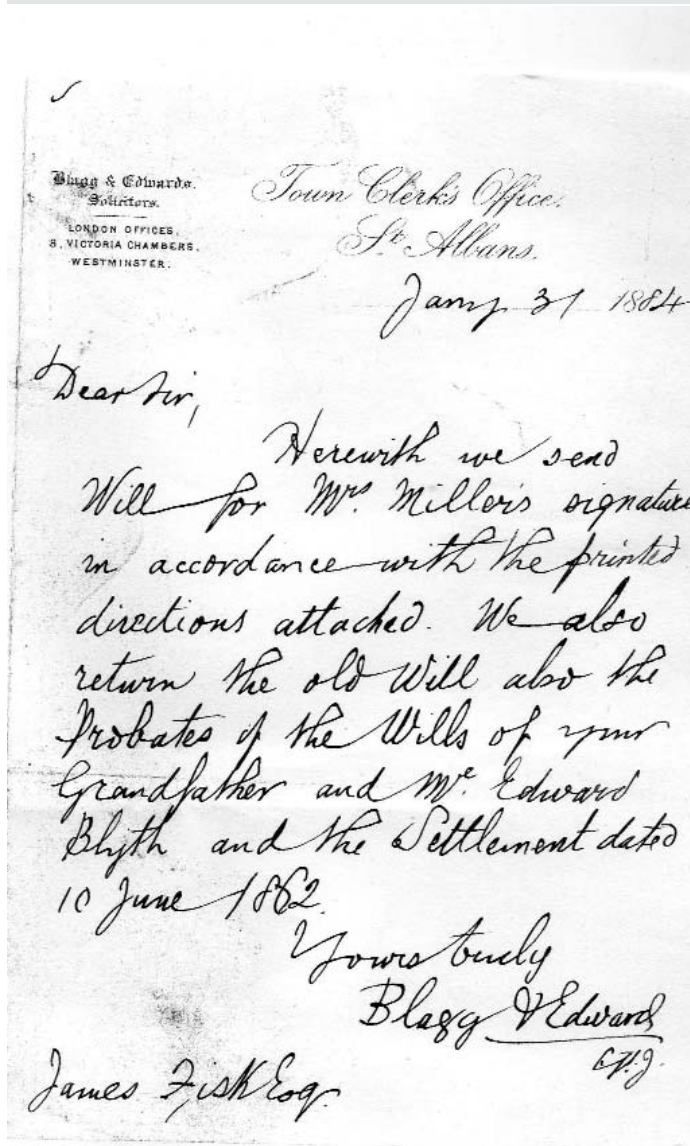
James Fisk's Letter

This letter was attached to William Fisk's will and was sent in 1884 by a St Albans solicitor, but was also signed by James Fisk, William's son and Sarah Fisk's niece. It must have something to do with Sarah Fisk, who in this letter is referred to as Mrs Miller, which was her name after her second marriage.

She was being asked to sign an attached document, and this operation also involved the wills of her late first husband, Edward Blyth, and that of 'your' grandfather. I am nor sure who this was referring to, but it is curious that because of all this, Edward and Sarah's wills ended up in the Hertfordshire Archives, even though they never lived in the county. The archives also include the will of Henry Lake of Great Berkhamsted, 1837. Could that have been William Fisk's wife Louisa lake's father, and therefore the 'your' grandfather mentioned in this letter?

Just what Sarah needed these wills for is not clear. She was not mentioned in her brother William Fisk's will – perhaps that was the source of the controversy?

JAMES FISK'S LETTER 1884



The older of the three children was **James Fisk**, who Fisk Family Papers says died at sea and was buried in Bombay, India in 1827, when he was just 23.

I can find nothing to provide any background to the exact circumstances of how this happened, but it was probably not a military death, as any large scale fighting in Bombay ended in 1817.

It is probably more likely that James was there in some kind of business or trading capacity and died of illness or a sea accident.

As one website says on the history of Bombay, "*with increasing prospe-*

riety and growing political power following the 1817 victory over the Marathas, the British embarked upon reclamations and large scale engineering works in Bombay. The sixty years between the completion of the vellard at Breach Candy (1784) and the construction of the Mahim Causeway (1845) are the heroic period in which the seven islands were merged into one landmass.

"These immense works, in turn, attracted construction workers, like the Kamathis from Andhra, who began to come to Bombay from 1757 on. A regular civil administration was put in place during this period."