

# A LONDON ADVENTURE

*The Snell Family's  
life in the Capital*





By 1860 the industries that had powered Coggeshall's economy through the first half of the 19th Century had begun to decline. Employment prospects for Shadrach and his young family may have seemed bleak. Also, the death of the family's patriarch, Shadrach Lindo, and his elder brother John – both had died within months of each other – would have left a huge hole in the fabric of the family. This may have been the final prompt for Shadrach to take his family to London.



*London in the 1890s: a dynamic city of opportunity.*

It is of no great surprise that the Snells chose to make London their new home. We know that Shadrach's step-mother, Tabitha, had family links to south London; indeed, she returned to live with a nephew soon after the death of Shadrach Lindo. We also know that for nearly 100 years the Snells had had strong ties with the Capital: Shadrach's grandfather married in London and maintained business links there, and his Uncle John also

married a London girl and lived for a large part of his life in Somers Town and Little Britain. And Shadrach's sisters, Sarah, Emily, Elizabeth, and half sister Alice, all lived and worked in service in London for many years.

may have been more obvious than we think. Shadrach was a skilled tradesman – a wheelwright and coachbuilder – and he might reasonably have expected to find ready work for such skills in the city. In the 1880s and 1890s London was booming and so too was the demand for wheeled

So, some time between the summer of 1878 and March 1881, the Snells perhaps booked space with Great Coggeshall's Charles Pudney, whose wagon left the town for the Saracen's Head in London's Aldgate every Tuesday and Friday. Pudney may have been one of Shadrach's regular customers and provided a discount as a favour. Loading the wagon with a few treasured possessions, the family would have set off with a powerful mixture of excitement and apprehension.

The most important element in the decision to move would have been what Shadrach would do for a living when he arrived in London. This



*Frederick Snell*



*Lillian Snell*



*8 Casella Road: London home of the Snells for more than 70 years.*

transport of all kinds. The accounts of Hampshire wheelwright George Sturt<sup>1</sup> show that while the pace of change was quickening within this ancient trade at this time (particularly with the greater use of iron in some construction techniques), its time-worn traditions – the very ones learned by Shadrach working as a teenage apprentice to his father – were still flourishing. We can speculate that there may have been much discussion among Shadrach's

artisan friends in Coggeshall about the benefits an expanding London had to offer for those brave enough to venture south. A glance at some of the trade directories<sup>2</sup> of the day for southeast London and Surrey clearly shows a plethora of wheelwright shops in Deptford, Camberwell and Peckham. There were several operating within a short walk or tram ride of the Snells' first home.

The 1881 Census records the family as living at 138 Albert Road, Peckham. Albert Road ran from Queen's Road, Peckham, to Nunhead Lane near to Peckham Rye Common, and consisted of rows of large terraced houses. Many of these were shared by several families, as was common in London at this time of great expansion. The Snells shared with a young couple: Edward Todd, aged 27, and a Janet Thompson, aged 24, who were unmarried. Janet, however, had a two-year-old son, Edward. Albert Road is known today as Consort Road, having been renamed around the turn of the 19th Century.

By 1881 Kate Ellen had left home and was working as a servant with Samuel Norman and his wife, Laura. Samuel was a 37-year-old commercial clerk and lived at 98 Gordon Road, Peckham.

It is not known when Shadrach and Ann left 138 Albert Road. However, Ann died at a young age (56) of heart disease, on 2 January 1887 when the couple were living at 41 Wivenhoe Road, Peckham. (She was buried on 7 January at Camberwell Old Cemetery in public grave number 10103). This was a difficult time for Shadrach who still needed to work and earn a living.



### 1881 Census: 138 Albert Road, Peckham

**Shadrach Snell**, Head, aged 47, coachbuilder, b. Great Coggeshall, Essex

**Ann**, Wife, aged 49, b. Great Coggeshall, Essex

**Frederick**, Son, aged 18, cheesemonger, b. Great Coggeshall, Essex

**Ellen**, Daughter, aged 11, b. Great Coggeshall, Essex

**Emmie**, Daughter, aged 8, b. Great Coggeshall, Essex

By the spring of 1891 he had moved to 23 Elgin Terrace, Paddington, to live as a boarder with the Bell family and still working as a wheelwright – presumably for a local company. Meanwhile, his children had gone their own ways. Frederick and Lillian Nichols were living together, probably in rooms, at 73 Albert Road, Peckham when they married on 14 December 1890. Their first child, Sydney John, had been born just one

Kate married John (familiarily known as Jack) Youmans, a 25-year-old plumber from Cove in Hampshire on 2 October 1890 at St. John's Church, Cove. At the time of her marriage Kate was living at Upper Teddington in Middlesex. The couple moved to 5 Beaconsfield Villas, Teddington, when they married.

Emily Rosa Snell (known to all as Emmie) did not marry. In 1901, aged 28, she was working as a housemaid with a wealthy family at Hanley House, Cadogan Road, Surbiton in Surrey. In 1891 her sister Ellen was recorded as a "visitor" with the Dodsworth family at 6 Beaconsfield Villas, Teddington, next door to her newly-wed sister, Kate! Ellen married Brighton-born Frederick William Seager, an iron moulder in a foundry, on 25 June 1896 at Basingstoke Parish Church. At the time

she worked as a domestic servant and was living with her sister, brother-in-law and father at 46 May Street, Basingstoke. The Seagers were to have no children. By 1901 the couple were living at 166 Dennett Road, Croydon, and in the early 1930s Emmie had moved in



*From left: Emily and Ellen Snell; Emily (known as "Dolly") Snell; Alice (known as "Daisy") Snell; Sydney Snell and Florence Cotton on their wedding day.*

month earlier (12 November). In the 1891 Census Frederick, Lillian and baby Sydney are recorded as living with Lillian's mother at 96 New Cross Road, New Cross. Frederick and Lillian moved to 8 Casella Road, New Cross, some time before 1900.



with them in a new home at 44 Limes Road, Croydon. Ellen died on 30 April 1933 at the age of 60; Emmie died on 8 November 1936 aged 66.

The year 1901 was one of great change for the British people with the death in January of Queen

Victoria who had reigned for nearly 64 years. There was great change in Shadrach's life too. The Census of 1901 records him living with Kate and his son-in-law Jack at 46 May Street, Basingstoke.

The couple had two children: Edith (aged five) and Frederick (aged one). Some time later the family moved to 27 Alexandra Road, Wimbledon, where Shadrach died – on 11 August 1916 – at the age of 84. Shadrach had gambled on moving his young family from Essex to South London to secure a better standard of

living and greater opportunity; the legacy of this bold decision lives on in the success of the Snells through future generations. Kate and Jack Youmans lived on and later in his life Jack became a railway worker. He was the first to die at the age of 76 in 1941; Kate died, aged 89, on 29 December 1952 at 74 Chadacre Road, Stoneleigh, in Surrey.

By the turn of the century Frederick Snell's young family was taking shape. Sydney was now aged 10 (or nine, as he is incorrectly

recorded in the Census – presumably to save his parents' blushes, as they were not married when he was born!). Emily (familiarily known as Dorothy, or Dolly) was aged six, Gertrude was aged two, and Alice (familiarily known as Daisy) was just six months old. The family was completed in 1903 when Frederick and Lillian's last child, Percy (christened Frederick William Percy), was born. Gertrude (christened Mabel Gertrude Bessie) died tragically at the age of five of gangrenous appendicitis and peritonitis in the Evelina Children's Hospital<sup>3</sup>, Southwark, on 14 May 1904.

Percy went on to become a commercial traveller for a tin box manufacturer – believed to have been the Metal Box Company – in South London. By the 1950s he was living with his wife, Ethel (née Wells) at their home at 25 The Glade, Shirley in Surrey. On 17 June 1958 Percy suffered heart failure and was taken to Guy's Hospital, London Bridge, but he was found to be dead on arrival. Ethel Snell died in 1989 at the age of 83. The couple had no children.

Frederick Snell's career had taken him from cheesemonger at the age of 18 to baker and then, in his later life, bread salesman and deliveryman. Lillian was a machinist, and we can only guess as to how the couple met. They married at St Mary Magdalene Church, Peckham. Sadly, this church was destroyed by German bombing during the Second World War.

Frederick died in a wartime accident at the age of 79, when he fell down some steps in the dark

## BECAUSE HE FORGOT HIS TORCH.

### New Cross Man's Area Fall.

"Always take your torch nowadays, especially with basements about," said the Coroner (Dr. W. H. Whitehouse) at the Lewisham inquest, on Wednesday, of Frederick Snell (79), who was returning from a public shelter to his home at 8, Casella-road, New Cross, when he fell into an area and was fatally injured.

Evidence was given that on December 4th last he was returning home from the shelter at 6.30 a.m. when he fell into the area. He said it was his fault because he had not taken his torch.

Dr. Joel Gable, of St. Alfege Hospital, Greenwich, said that the man was admitted there on December 4th and died on Monday from bronchial pneumonia following a fractured leg.

The verdict was "Accidental causes."

Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 1941 - 94-

*How the local newspaper reported Frederick Snell's accidental death.*



Ronald Snell is pictured on 18 May 2002 at the grave of his grandparents, Frederick and Lillian Snell. It is believed that no family member had visited the grave – which had become overgrown with ivy and brambles and covered with bushes and small trees – for at least 30 years. Nunhead Cemetery was opened in 1840 and became one of the great Victorian London cemeteries. Few burials take place today, and Southwark Council and the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC) care for the cemetery jointly. In January 1998 the Cemetery was awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £1.25 million for much-needed conservation and restoration work. Large parts of the early burial plots are now given over to a nature reserve.



while returning from a public air raid shelter; he died in St. Alfege Hospital, Greenwich, a few weeks later on 7 January 1941. Lillian died in Fulham Hospital on 1 December 1949 at the age of 84. Frederick and Lillian were both buried in a family plot at Nunhead Cemetery (grave no. 40568; square 56). On Lillian's death the plot's ownership was transferred to Sydney and Emily Snell, but was never used again.

and moved to Lancing in Sussex to be close to her sister Alice. Emily died in Worthing at the age of 87 on 8 March 1981, while Alice died at the age of 98 in Worthing Hospital on 22 January 1999.

The Snell family residence of South London lasted from the late 1870s to the mid 1970s, and Casella Road remained the family home until the last resident and remaining direct line descendant, Emily Snell (familiarily known as Dolly), sold up

## References

1 *The Wheelwright's Shop*, George Sturt, 1923

2 1878 Surrey Post Office Directory; 1882 London Post Office Directory

3 The Evelina Hospital for Sick Children was opened in June 1869. Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild founded it in memory of his wife Evelina, who died in childbirth, and their first child who was stillborn. In the early years of the Evelina, the battle was on to combat the fatal diseases that reflected the appalling living conditions of the area. In 1890 there were 675 admissions and 158 deaths. By the end of the 19th Century annual admissions had reached more than 1,000 but the death rate at the hospital was falling significantly. In 1947 the Evelina Hospital was amalgamated with the children's unit at Guy's Hospital and in 1976 the original hospital building closed its doors and children's services were moved to the newly built Guy's Tower. However, on 31 October 2005 the Evelina Children's Hospital was opened in a brand new building in the grounds of St Thomas's Hospital, Lambeth Palace Road.