

CROKER PRIZE FOR BIOGRAPHY 2020

2024 Hiding in Plain Sight

by Fiona Lane

Hiding in Plain Sight

In 1848, William Thomas Hall was baptised as a seven year old in Clerkenwell, a parish within Middlesex, London. The following year he travelled to Australia with his mother and older sisters arriving in Adelaide, South Australia to begin a new life. And then he just disappeared. No school records, no marriage, no listing in electoral rolls, no mentions in newspapers, no burial record, and no death. Nothing. Nothing that was, until his mother died intestate in 1898 and he signed documents stating that he was a draper, living in Ballarat. So where had he been hiding for the preceding fifty years?

In December 1848, William Thomas Hall and his older sister Charlotte Esther Hall were baptised at Clerkenwell, St James, Islington.¹ William was the youngest of five siblings. Ellen, Amelia, Charlotte, Archibald Albert, and William. The children had all been born and raised in Clerkenwell.² Eight year old Amelia died in 1845³ and the children's father, Thomas Hall, died at the end of December 1847, sadly following an attempted suicide, after having been admitted to the Coppice Row workhouse.⁴ Now his mother was taking William and his siblings to the other side of the world, presumably to start over.

They sailed on the Marion, arriving in Adelaide, South Australia in February 1849.⁵ For reasons unknown William's brother, Archibald, did not travel with the rest of the family but did arrive in the colony at roughly the same time.⁶

Only two months after their arrival, William became part of a much larger family when his mother married widower, William Drayton.⁷

¹ Ancestry.com. *London, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1917* for Archibald Albert Hall [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: *p76/js1/019*. Accessed 11 May 2020

² Ancestry.com. *1841 England Census* for Thomas and Charlotte Hall and children Ellen, Amelia, Charlotte, and Archibald [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc, 2010. Class: *HO107*; Piece: *660*; Book: *2*; Civil Parish: *St James Clerkenwell*; County: *Middlesex*; Enumeration District: *3*; Folio: *40*; Page: *26*; Line: *9*; GSU roll: *438777*. Accessed 11 May 2020

³ FreeBMD. *England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915* for Amelia Hall [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006. Accessed 11 May 2020

⁴ Death Certificate for Thomas Hall. Registration District St James Clerkenwell, County of Middlesex. Number (unreadable). Date of death 13 December 1847. Cause of Death – “Congestion of the brain following influenza caused by insanity and an attempt of suicide”.

⁵ https://archives.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/documentstore/passengerlists/1849/GRG35_48_1_49-4_Marion.pdf. Charlotte Hall 34, Ellen 13, Charlotte 9, William Thomas 7.

⁶ Victoria Deaths 1836-1985. Archibald Albert Hall died 25 March 1927. Registration Number 237/1927. Death Certificate number 9997 - “How long in the Australian States, stating which – 76 years in Victoria”.

⁷ South Australia Marriages 1842-1937. Charlotte Hall and William Drayton at the Congregational Chapel Adelaide. 10 April 1849. Registration Number 12/118

William Drayton's wife had passed away five months before and Charlotte became stepmother to the three youngest Drayton children.⁸ The Drayton's and Hall's took up residence in Bowden and lived what seems to have been a marriage of convenience for both parties.⁹

The years passed and William's older siblings married. Ellen to Wootten Lansell¹⁰, brother of "Australia's Quartz King", George Lansell.¹¹ Charlotte married Conrad Bode¹², a German immigrant and Archibald married Eliza Franklin,¹³ the youngest daughter of an English family who had arrived in 1853 and made their home in Geelong, Victoria.¹⁴

Both of William's sisters relocated to Bendigo, as did his Mother and stepfather William Drayton.¹⁵

⁸ South Australia Deaths 1842-1972. Rachel Drayton at Bowden. 2 November 1848. Registration Number 1/134. The National Archives of the UK; Kew, Surrey, England; *General Register Office: Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths surrendered to the Non-parochial Registers Commissions of 1837 and 1857*; Class Number: RG 4; Piece Number: 3268 – Noah Drayton; Piece Number: 1564 Job Drayton; Source Citation Somerset Heritage Service; Taunton, Somerset, England; Reference Number: D\P\st.u.ham/2/1/4 Ancestry.com. Somerset, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1914 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016. *George Drayton*

⁹ 1853 'POLICE COURT.', *Adelaide Times (SA : 1848 - 1858)*, 28 December, p. 3. , viewed 11 May 2020, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article207122180>. "CONNUBIAL BLISS – William Drayton was charged with violently assaulting Charlotte Drayton, his wife. From the statement of the complainant, rather a young woman, (*Charlotte Drayton was 35 years old*) it appeared that her husband, who was considerably on the wrong side of life (*William Drayton was 61*) "The defendant said his wife...withheld the soft endearments of her sex from him, and used him shamefully, but he had no objection to try her again. Complainant said she would shake hands and make it up if he would promise to keep the peace towards her."

¹⁰ South Australia Marriages 1837-1942. Ellen Hall and Wootten Lansell at the Trinity Church, Adelaide. 27 September 1854. Registration Number 21/170

¹¹ Suzanne G. Mellor, 'Lansell, George (1823–1906)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lansell-george-3992/text6313>, published first in hardcopy 1974, accessed online 11 May 2020.

¹² The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; Melbourne, Victoria, Australia; *Victoria, Australia, Marriage Records 1836-1942*. Conrad Bode and Charlotte Esther Hall. 22 May 1858. Registration Number 1559/1858.

¹³ The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; Melbourne, Victoria, Australia; *Victoria, Australia, Marriage Records 1836-1942*. Archibald Albert Hall and Eliza Franklin. 13 July 1868. Registration Number 3262/1868.

¹⁴ Ancestry.com. *Victoria, Australia, Assisted and Unassisted Passenger Lists, 1839-1923* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2009. Series: VPRS 14; Series Title: *Register of Assisted Immigrants from the United Kingdom (refer to microform copy, VPRS 3502)*. "Confiance", arrived Geelong, Victoria, 12 April 1853. Joseph and Caroline Franklin and children Joseph, Caroline, Elizabeth, Emily, Albert, and Eliza.

¹⁵ Victoria Coastal Passenger Lists 1852-1924. Public Record Office of Victoria PROV VPRS 944 Inward Passenger Lists (Australian Ports) on FindmyPast. Accessed 15 May 2020.

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William's brother Archibald followed the extended families to Bendigo, setting himself up as a draper¹⁶ and then following his marriage in 1868, lived in Ararat and Beaufort before eventually moving to Ballarat.¹⁷

William's stepfather died in Bendigo in 1871¹⁸ after which event his mother moved in with his sister Charlotte Bode and her growing family. Charlotte and Conrad Bode registered the birth of thirteen children over a twenty three year period¹⁹, having her mother on hand would have been of enormous assistance.

Ellen and Wootten Lansell had seven children²⁰ and Archibald and Eliza Hall became parents to thirteen²¹, including raising their twin grand-daughters whom they adopted.²²

William's mother, Charlotte Drayton died in 1898.²³ She was eighty four years old. She had outlived both of her husbands, travelled half-way around the world to give her children a better life and was a grandmother to twenty three surviving grandchildren. Charlotte Drayton did not leave a will. Letters of administration were granted to her eldest daughter, Ellen Lansell.²⁴ The law required Ellen to "well and truly collect and administer according to law the estate of the said Charlotte Drayton deceased" and provide a "true and first account of her administration of the said estate within fifteen months".²⁵

¹⁶ Fairfax Media; Pyrmont, New South Wales, Australia. Ancestry.com. *Australia, Newspaper Vital Notices, 1831-2001* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015. "HALL – FRANKLIN – On the 13th inst by special licence...Archibald Albert Hall, draper, Sandhurst (Bendigo) to Eliza Franklin, daughter of Mr Franklin Geelong".

¹⁷ Ancestry.com. *Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Alan Tillidge Hall born in Ararat. Registration Number 12967/1878. William Lansell Hall born in Beaufort. Registration Number 20409/1880. Reuben Archibald Hall born in Ballarat. Registration Number 21277/1883.

¹⁸ The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; Melbourne, Victoria, Australia; *Victoria, Australia, Death Records*. William Drayton Registration Number 7230/1871

¹⁹ Death Certificate of Charlotte Esther Bode 31 December 1920 Registered in the District of Caulfield in the state of Victoria. Registration number 664. "Issue in order of Birth, the Names and Ages – Ellen Bertha 59, Albert Ernest dead, Edwin 55, Albert 51, Ernest dead, Charlotte Tillidge dead, Amelia Baker 45, Esther May dead, Victor Leslie 38, Esther Eva Annie 36". Charlotte also gave birth to three stillborn, unnamed children between 1870 and 1880. They are buried together in Bendigo Cemetery grave number 3683.

²⁰ Death Certificate of Ellen Lansell 11 February 1918 Registered in the District of Bendigo in the state of Victoria. Registration number 4089. "Issue in order of Birth, the Names and Ages – Ellen dead, Charlotte dead, Elizabeth dead, Thomas George William 55, Eva Agnes 52, Edith Ellen 49, Phoebe Jane 44".

²¹ Death Certificate of Eliza Hall (Wife of Archibald Albert Hall) 19 June 1917 Registered in the District of Ballarat in the state of Victoria. "Issue in order of Birth, the Names and Ages – Arthur Franklin 48, Albert Franklin dead, Charles Philip 44, Minnie Drayton 41, Alan Tillidge 38, William Lansell 36, Rueben Archibald 33, Charlotte Ruby 30, Eva Stanley 27, Harold Percy dead, Leonard Wootton 22".

²² Email from Tracey Jane Lambert (Great Granddaughter of one of the twins) 2001. Printed copy in author's possession. "Amy and her twin Kate were brought up by their grandparents Archibald and Eliza and believed them to be their parents until much later in life."

²³ Ancestry.com. *Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Charlotte Drayton. Registration Number 10907/1898.

²⁴ Probate and Administration Files for Charlotte Drayton. Public Record Office Victoria; North Melbourne, Victoria; Victorian Wills, Probate and Administration Records 1841-1925; Series: VPRS 7591. Accessed 27 May 2020

²⁵ Ibid

This account was eventually provided by Ellen in 1906. The delay was due to the purchase of land from Charlotte Drayton prior to her death. The land had been purchased jointly by her children, but at the time of her death, no money had been paid to her. In the account, William Thomas Hall was described as a draper and living at 1 Adair Street Ballarat.²⁶ This is not supported by the electoral rolls of 1903 to 1925 in which William's brother, Archibald Albert Hall, draper, is living with his wife Eliza at 1 Adair Street Ballarat.²⁷

The Letter of Administration stated in part "That the said deceased left her surviving children Charlotte Bode wife of Conrad Bode of Brougham Street Bendigo William Thomas Hall of Adair Street Ballarat Draper and me this deponent who are only surviving next of kin..."²⁸

There was no mention of their brother Archibald Albert Hall. This was unexpected, as Archibald did not die until 1927²⁹ and was not estranged from his family.³⁰



Image 1: Siblings, Ellen Lansell, Archibald Albert Hall and Charlotte Esther Bode. C1910. Collection of Rhonda Lane.

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980, Ancestry.com. Archibald Albert Hall Adair Street Draper. Accessed 27 May 2020.

²⁸ Probate and Administration Files for Charlotte Drayton. Public Record Office Victoria; North Melbourne, Victoria; Victorian Wills, Probate and Administration Records 1841-1925; Series: VPRS 7591. Accessed 27 May 2020

²⁹ Victoria Deaths 1836-1985. Archibald Albert Hall died 25 March 1927. Registration Number 237/1927. Death Certificate number 9997

³⁰ Image 1: Siblings Ellen Lansell, Archibald Albert Hall and Charlotte Esther Bode

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Charlotte Drayton's death certificate states that her children were Ellen, Amelia (dead), Charlotte Esther and Archibald Albert.³¹ The informant was the husband of one of her granddaughters. So, where was William?

William Thomas Hall had not been missing at all. He had been there, hiding in plain sight all along.

There is no birth certificate for William Thomas Hall. Archibald Albert Hall was born 1840. William Thomas was baptised 1848. There is no baptismal record for Archibald Albert. William Thomas is on the passenger list on the Marion. Archibald Albert is not on any passenger list to Australia. There is no marriage record for William. Archibald married Eliza Franklin in Victoria in 1868. William is never mentioned in an electoral roll. Archibald is a draper, living at 1 Adair Street, Ballarat in the 1903 to 1925 rolls. William does not have a death or burial record. Archibald died in 1927 and is buried at the Ballarat New Cemetery with his wife Eliza.

William Thomas is not a random name. I believe that it was selected by Charlotte to name her son after both her father, William and husband, Thomas, who were deceased by the beginning of 1848.

I do not have an elusive ancestor by the name of William Thomas Hall. William Thomas Hall was the baptismal name given to my Great Great Grandfather, Archibald Albert Hall.

³¹ Death certificate of Charlotte Drayton. Registered in the District of Bendigo in the Colony of Victoria. Date of death 12 August 1898. Number 10907 "Signature, description and Residence of Informant – F J Cunningham, authorised agent, Hargreaves St Bendigo"