

CASE STUDY
ROBERT ALLEN 1831 - 1883

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I was living in The Emirates when I was researching my grandmother's line. I knew her mother was Emma Elizabeth ALLEN born in Winchester, Hampshire on 05 Jun 1854. Her father was Robert ALLEN who was a Church Organ Builder who had been apprenticed to Father Henry WILLIS probably the most famous Organ Builder. Robert was sent to Winchester to be in charge of the installation of the new organ in Winchester Cathedral.

I managed to find his baptism at St John's, Hoxton (London) on 14 Aug 1831. He then had a brother John baptised 10 Mar 1833 and a sister, Elizabeth 12 Dec 1836 but how was I going to get his mother. From censuses I knew his father was also Robert - he was a letter carrier and his mother was Elizabeth but how was I going to get his mother's maiden name?

This was an easy one. There was one more child, Mary born 1838 after Registration started. I looked for her birth and sent for her Birth Certificate - born 03 Jul 1838 and baptised 29th July 1838. This gave me everything I wanted. Her father was a letter carrier which I already knew, so I'd got the correct Mary (not easy with a surname of ALLEN) and her mother was Elizabeth COLLINS. As a result of that I was then able to get Robert and Elizabeth's marriage details - 30 Nov 1829 at St Georges, Hanover Square. This proved that she was the Elizabeth who was my Robert's mother. With such a common name, Elizabeth, it would have been easy for Robert Sr to have married twice but as this was just under 2 years before Robert Jr was born I knew I had the right one.

So, by going to the youngest member of the family I was able to skip around. If Mary hadn't been born in 1838 I might still be looking for the maiden name of their mother.

Contributed by Liz Newbery