

Days in the Lives of our Ancestors

I wanted to expand on the bare facts of our ancestors lives by creating a page for each event. To make it more fun (for me if nobody else) I decided to use two books as images for the text backgrounds: for the Annetts the notebook my Dad used while he was studying for his engineering qualification, and for the Ealeys my Mum's autograph book. The fundamental properties of matter should never be ignored, and an autograph book seems the erstwhile equivalent of Facebook where, in place of grammatically alarming queries and pronouncements, you'll find a neatly penned ditty, acrostic, or sketch.

It's interesting to wonder what the family researchers of the future will make of their ancestors' blogs and tweets. Well, this is my version of a blog for our ancestors.

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To go to the Ealey section [click here](#).



*Days in the Lives
of Our Annett Ancestors*



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Thursday 11 November 1751



THE first known event for our branch of the Annetts occurs when, after the requisite three weeks of banns have been called, [Daniel Annitts](#) marries Mary Voller at the [Church of the Holy Cross](#), Binsted, Hampshire. Both are aged about 29. That might seem a bit old for a first marriage, but there's no evidence to date of any prior spouses. It could simply be the result of Daniel only now having reached the position where he can support a wife.

What is he doing for a living? Later, we find him employed by Lord Stawell as one of the keepers of Woolmer Forest, which is about seven miles from Binsted on foot. It's a fair bet that he's already working on the land, along with most of the 7,250,000 inhabitants of Britain. [This 1751 map](#) of Hampshire (Binsted can be found in the Alton Hundred, top right corner of the map) paints a picture of bucolic plenty: "The Air is temperate, and the Soil fertile in all sorts of Grain ... There is not a more inviting County in Great Britain, as well for Profit as Pleasure." The map shows that Mary and Daniel's nearest market is the Saturday market at Alton, an ancient gathering predating Domesday.

T. Kitchin, Geographer, might declare that the "air is temperate" but this year has seen the wettest summer since records began in 1697, the first in a ten-year sequence of summer deluges. The harvest has been late and scant. In February a harsh gale blasted most of southern England, destroying ships on the Thames. As Daniel and Mary begin their life together they might well be hoping for a 'temperate' season in the coming year.

Nov: Daniel Annitts and Mary Voller by Banns Married Nov: 11

On the national scene this is the year that numbered regiments are introduced; a duty is slapped on gin to put an end to the excesses depicted in Hogarth's '[Gin Lane](#)'; and the [Calendar Act](#) decrees that henceforth the year is to begin on 1st January instead of 25th March, making 1751 three months short. It's not hard to imagine the elder Annetts and Vollers huddling together on this November day, muttering darkly about the folly of tinkering with time.





Friday 24 November 1752



A year after their wedding, Daniel and Mary are in church for another special event, the christening of their first child, a daughter, who is to be given her mother's name.

According to the [Book of Common Prayer](#), infants should be baptised on a Sunday (so they can be welcomed by the largest possible congregation) no later than the second Sunday after birth. Today is an unholy Friday — strike one against little Mary. But she is probably not much older than the couple of weeks stipulated by the Church: at a time of high infant mortality, it seems unlikely that Daniel and Mary would delay the ceremony. There could be a charge of as much as [one shilling and sixpence](#) for the registering of the baptism, but this might be waived in a case of hardship.

At least one godmother (preferably two) and one godfather are required, one of

Nov: 24 Mary the daughter of Daniel and Mary Annitts bapt

whom must be somebody other than the parent. We know nothing of Daniel and Mary's extended family at this time, and can only wonder who they've chosen to perform these roles. Whoever they are, they should exercise their right to save the baby from being dipped "discreetly and warily" into the cold font. It's November, on an exposed [hilltop](#). The last thing a small baby needs is to be steeped before being offered back to the winter air.

Where are the family living? and how far must they travel home? They are probably unaware of the publication '[The Gentleman's Diary](#)', whose Almanac in this month's issue tells that today's sun rose just before eight in the morning and will set just after four in the afternoon. Interwoven with the calendar data, like a secret message in a coded letter, are the following lines:



*Now, or in a few Weeks
we may reasonably expect
to have Winter upon us in
good earnest. Wind, Rain,
Sleets, Snow, Frosts, Cold,
to make good fires agreeable.*

If they're lucky, Daniel, Mary and the baby have just such a good hearth to welcome them at the end of the day.



Monday 10 March 1755



THE Binsted Annetts are off to the Holy Cross font again to baptise a second daughter, baby Jenny, during an especially cold March. We must hope that the party are all well wrapped up against the chill, the temperature registering -1.3°C below the average ...

March 10 Jenny the daughter of Daniel and Mary Annett bapt

... So I find that these "blog" things raise more questions than they answer. For example, how do I know that the baptism really takes place in the church and the vicar doesn't sally forth into the community to baptise the baby in situ? How many people are there in the baptism party? Would toddler Mary be allowed to watch her sister being welcomed into the world? And why, once again, is the ceremony on a week day? How often is the recommendation of baptising on a Sunday really followed? Is this the norm for Binsted? What do other Binsted families do?

Well, after consulting the Binsted parish register for 1755, I see that of the thirty baptisms performed this year, only two take place on a Sunday. The most common day in 1755 is a Friday, with twelve out of the thirty baptisms being carried out on that day. Jenny's day—Monday—is one third as common, with three other baptisms held on a Monday this year. Tuesdays have five, Wednesdays and Saturdays three each, and one baptism takes place on a Thursday.

So much for Sunday baptisms. Finding answers for the other questions is somewhat trickier, so today I'm filling the cosmic vacuum of my ignorance by adding a thumbnail (it links to a larger image) of Gainsborough's 'Drover with Calves in a Country Cart'. It was sketched about 1755 and probably represents a scene with which our Annetts were familiar. The rutted muddy track, the preponderance of wood over metal, the coarse, serviceable fabrics of the drover's clothing, the distant meadows and hills, more open than today, and a soundtrack of not much more than the clapping of hooves, clonking of wheels, snorting of muzzles, chinking of harness, blurring of calves, and perhaps the odd trill of birdsong. Is the drover nodding off?



Gainsborough's 'Drover with Calves in a Country Cart'



*Days in the Lives
of Our Caley Ancestors*



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Friday 3 August 1894



Daniel Ealey as a Boy Soldier with the King's Own Royal Lancasters

signs up for Long Service—twelve years with the Colours—an enormous span of time to a fourteen-year-old.

Eyesight, heart, lungs and limbs all present and correct, Surgeon Stanley Hayman declares Daniel fit, Recruiting Officer M. Colley certifies him fit, and District Commander Colonel W. Kerr approves him as fit to join the Kings Own Royal Lancaster Regiment. A **Boy Soldier** can serve as an artificer, a clerk, a drummer, a musician, a shoemaker, or a tailor. Daniel opts for Musician. Where's the fun in running away to become a clerk?

FIVE days after his fourteenth birthday, **Daniel Ealey** is in Canterbury, swearing allegiance to his Monarch in the presence of Sergeant W. Hobson of the 3rd East Kent Regiment, the Buffs, possibly at the **Regimental Depot** on Sturry Road.

Daniel is small even for a Boy Soldier: a Hobbyty four feet six-and-a-half inches, weighing five stone six pounds. His right forearm bears an interesting scar, and tattoo'd dots punctuate his left forearm and the third and fourth fingers of his left hand. He has brown hair, brown eyes, and a "fresh" complexion.

Tattoo parlours being an unlikely resource in the 1890s, Daniel's inked dots are probably his own creations, or the handiwork of a friend. There are accounts of young convicts—to the annoyance of their gaolers—using pins to scrape patterns into their skin, smearing the cuts with soot or ink to leave a permanent trace. This could be a trick they'd learned in their pre-incarceration lives. Maybe, back in Notting Hill, Daniel and his friends wore such marks as a badge of belonging.

Notting Hill—Number 40, **Walmer Road**, to be exact—is where father James, next-of-kin, resides with step-mother Charlotte, and younger sister Mary. Elder brothers James and George are also mentioned, apparently based at Gordon Boys' Home. According to family lore, Daniel is a runaway, and the fact that he has only just turned fourteen, the minimum age for a Boy Soldier, suggests he could hardly wait to get away. He

Daniel's signature on his Attestation Papers. You can see how his pen-nib is full of ink at the beginning, but thinning out towards the end.

« Saturday 4 August 1894 »

THE day after signing his Attestation Papers in Canterbury, **Daniel Ealey**, Boy Soldier Number 4523, is at **Fort Widley** on Portsdown Hill, officially joining the First Battalion of The Kings Own Royal Lancaster Regiment.

Why the **Royal Lancasters**? It is one of the oldest regiments, raised in 1680 under the Colonelship of Charles II's son, the Earl of Plymouth, to defend Tangier during its siege by the Moroccan Emperor. The ten companies of that early regiment came, like Daniel, mainly from the London area, though he probably doesn't know that. Is he impressed by the "King's Own" part of the name, perhaps having heard tales of his grandfather and great-grandfather's service in the Royal Household? Or is it the badge, thought to have been granted by William III for the regiment's early support of his claim to the throne: The Lion of England, those words in themselves, perhaps, enough to capture the imagination of an adventurous fourteen-year-old.



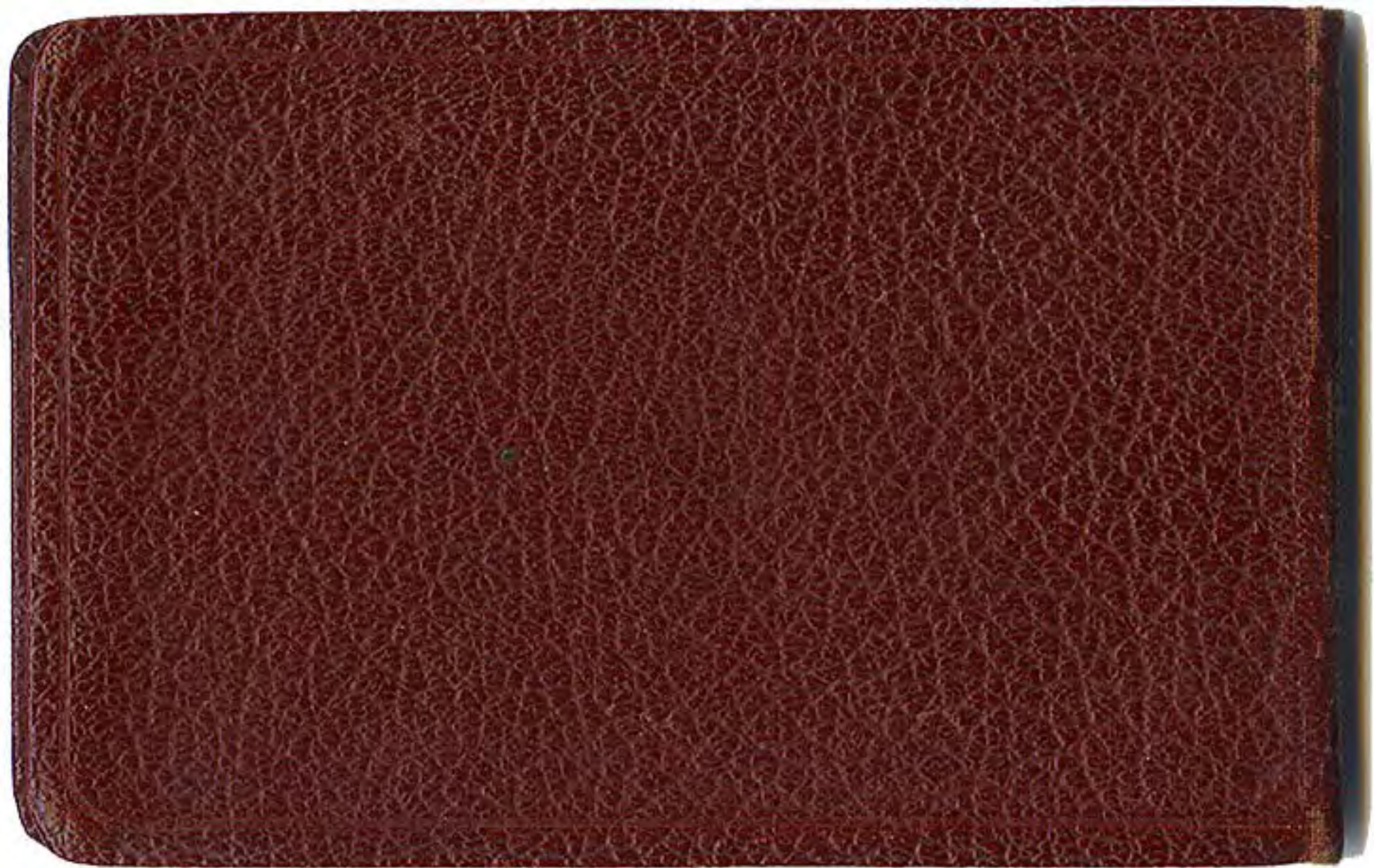
King's Own Royal Lancaster Cap Badge, illustrated on a John Player cigarette card



Fort Widley, about 1900

Fort Widley, as Daniel approaches, must seem like a vast castle, built out of brick instead of stone. What is he thinking as he approaches the towering crenellated walls, and passes under the arch of the Norman-style gateway? And, once inside, what does he make of his new "family"? Is there still talk of last year's murder, when nineteen-year-old **Private George Mason** of the East Surrey Regiment took umbrage at being disciplined and, during target practice, turned his rifle to the small of his Sergeant's back, shooting him stone dead? Mason was hanged last December. No doubt officers and especially sergeants would prefer to keep this tale away from the ears of new recruits, but it's just the sort of gory reminiscence that other ranks would delight in passing on.

It seems that Daniel's stay in Fort Widley is, in any case, short-lived, perhaps no longer than his initial training, as his **paybook** shows him spending most of August—and the rest of 1894—in Fort Southwick, almost two miles to the west, along the ridge.



SO that's as far as I've got for now.

How the historical novelist does their job is beyond me - ferreting out all the little details of daily life, getting the WhatWhereWhenWhoWhyHow down pat, never mind the drafting, writing, and revising of a complete book in the space of a year or two. I seem to average one solitary page a year, with very thin fare to show for it. Ah well.

On the other hand, oftentimes when I'm reading a historical yarn I'll think, "I bet they didn't really say that," or, "Did that actually happen? How much is fact and how much is made up?" and sometimes, "Well that is just ridiculous, even I know..." and some nugget of knowledge in my head will trump the assumptions of a published author. Suspension of disbelief not my strong suit.

Thank you, anyway, for staying with me this far. If you visit the site in a month or so there just might be a new page waiting.

(Page decoration courtesy of Mum's autograph book)

