

## THE PLYMOUTH FAMILY OF A.N. HARRIS

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*Since publishing A.N. Harris's 'Reminiscences of Plymouth Brethren over fifty years ago' in the Brethren Historical Review, vol. 5.2 (2009), some more information has come to light about Harris and the typescript copy of his MS which was used as the basis of the BHR article. The latter was made by Dr David Brady, the former archivist of the Christian Brethren Archive in John Rylands Library. For the former we are indebted to Dr Timothy Stunt's research into A.N. Harris's family. Dr Stunt's discoveries, which are printed below, are largely based on the entries in the British Census for 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881 and 1891. The page references are to the BHR article.*

Alfred Newton Harris [ANH] was born c.1838 and was the son of Thomas and Alice Harris of Clarence Street Plymouth. His father was a painter and glazier and was born c.1811 in Plymouth. His mother was a year younger than her husband and was born in Modbury in the South Hams region of Devon. This would tally with A.N. Harris's reference (p.90) to his mother's Quaker relative, as there was a Friends' meetinghouse at Kingsbridge and Modbury. ANH's mother may well have been Alice Andrews whose parents (Richard and Grace) were members of that meeting.<sup>1</sup> Although it is far from a certainty, ANH's father may have been the Thomas Harris born (1/9/1811) and christened (1/12/1811) at Princes Street, Independent Chapel in Devonport. This is the only Thomas Harris born in the Plymouth area and recorded in the International Genealogical Index for the years 1810-12.

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1. A.D. Selleck, *Plymouth Friends: A Quaker History, Parts I and II* [Reprinted from the Transactions of the Devonshire Association vol. 99 (1970-71)], (Plymouth, n.d), Pt II, p.247.

The three-year-old ANH has no middle initial in the 1841 Census, but by 1851 the thirteen year old ‘errand boy’ has acquired the middle name ‘Newton’, but in subsequent records the name is simply given as Alfred N. Harris. It should be noted that ANH was not yet ten when the crisis of 1845-8 developed among the Brethren in Ebrington Street (p.97). His knowledge of the later chapel at Compton Street (p.99) and his recollection of scholarly details learnt from Samuel Tregelles (p.91), suggest that his parents sided with the supporters of Newton.<sup>2</sup>

By 1861 ANH is described as an unmarried ‘house decorator’ lodging at 7 Lambhay Street, Plymouth, an address, which is elsewhere described eighteen years later as *The Fisherman’s Arms*.<sup>3</sup> This is where he was living twenty years later in 1881 (now aged 43) and where he is described as a ‘licensed victualler’ and appears to have been married for some years. He and his wife Margaret have four children Alice (19), Margaret (15), Ernest (11) and Ida (8).

Meanwhile in the same year (1881), ANH’s widowed father is still living at 16 Clarence Street but he is no longer the head of the Household and is now described as a ‘Retired Cleaner and Fitter (Engine)’. He is living with his daughter Florence and her husband, Richard Hoskin, who is registered as the Head of the Household. Hoskin is described as an ‘Artist and General Dealer,’ which is perhaps of interest because it explains the (only partly legible) entry in the Census for 1861 concerning Harris’s twenty-one-year old daughter, who was still living with her parents but was described as an ‘?assistant to an Artist and Colour Maker [?]’.

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2. To name a child after one of the leading Brethren may seem contrary to the apostolic teaching in 1 Corinthians 1:12 and 3:4, but one of the children of another member of the Plymouth assembly, was Frank Wigram Foley; see T.C.F. Stunt, ‘Elitist leadership and Congregational participation among early Plymouth Brethren’, in K. Cooper, J. Gregory (eds.), *Elite and Popular Religion* [Studies in Church History, vol. 42], (Woodbridge, 2006), p.333 n. 29.

3. In the section, ‘Hotels, Inns and Taverns’, in W. White (ed.), *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Devon: Including the City of Exeter, and comprising a general survey of the County*, (Sheffield, 1879), p.1015

In Brian Moseley's Plymouth Data Website one of the occupants of Ebrington Street is given as 'Richard Hoskin, picture frame maker'.<sup>4</sup> In 1901 when Ernest Radford reviewed an exhibition of West country land and seascapes showing at the St James's Galleries in London, he observed:

'Self-taught' describes a good many Devonshire men, those who paint land and sea-scape especially, and Mr. Richard Hoskin is one. *Keen Appetites* is one of his, a simple study of lambkins, so painted and so disposed that the spectator has only two things to think of—the painter whose work he admires, and the said lambkins, on which the interest centres.<sup>5</sup>

Just as Alfred Harris's approach to the Brethren among whom he grew up seems to have been fairly detached and certainly not a jaundiced one, it is pleasant to find that his younger sister was attracted to an artist in whose home Thomas Harris, one of the earliest of the Brethren, was able to spend his last years.

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4. <http://www.plymouthdata.info/index.htm> [accessed September 2010].

5. E. Radford 'Devonshire Moors and Coast Scenery', in *The Artist: An illustrated monthly record of arts, crafts and industries* (New York, June to Sept 1901), p.100.

