

## Preface

**A**S NOVICES OUR EARLY (2009) RATHER SUPERFICIAL and naïve research forays tended to be too heavily reliant on data that we had unearthed from the IGI (Mormon/Church of the Latter Day Saints) website then available (now called *FamilySearch*). Some of this information was useful, but by-and-large we had become seriously wrong-footed by some erroneous facts: indeed, we incorrectly placed Albert Baigent (Dot's great grandfather), a key person in our research to find the early Baigent ancestors, into the wrong family tree, totally stymying our efforts. Unfortunately, we also discovered, but did not appreciate that Albert was frequently, but mistakenly called Alfred in some family documents, compounding our confusion even further: it became a brick wall that eventually had to be demolished, and that part of the story is picked up and enlarged upon in Chapters 8 and 9.

A decade later (2019) and things had changed enormously – we were considerably more experienced, knowledgeable and adept, and resumed our Baigent research from scratch: we investigated many more records, particularly those Parish Registers (PRs) which had been transcribed by local family history societies, many of which now appeared on-line through *Ancestry* and *Findmypast*. Additionally, most original PRs are accommodated in central county research offices and tend to be much easier to access and study. As illustrated in Chapter 1, we recovered and exploited the PR data for Hampshire and Surrey from CDs provided by the relevant county family history societies.

With all these new tools at our disposal, we reinvestigated the initial brick wall from 2009, and were soon able to dismantle it. Immediately, it became increasingly easy to trace back in time to Dorothy (Dot) Smither's earliest ancestors, who were found to originate from Crondall in Hampshire, before they migrated to Farnham in Surrey. We soon found that her branch of the Baigent family tree then dispersed to Windlesham in Surrey, before relocating to Chertsey and Addlestone Row Town, also in Surrey, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Originally, it was intended that this book should be divided into two major pieces, covering the family history research conducted on two of Dot's family lines – Baigent and Hollis, and broadly based on our investigations between 2017 and 2022. The first major section was intended to be about the Baigent line: the second portion featuring the Hollis family was planned to open in Chapter 10 of the Baigent segment, when Sarah Jane Baigent (1900-1974) and James (Jim) Frederick Hollis (1892-1971), Dot's maternal grandparents, got together and married in Egham, Surrey, England in 1920. Given that our research has produced significantly more data than anticipated, particularly relating to the Baigents, this volume now

focuses for clarity, solely on the Baigent line, though in Chapter 10, the penultimate chapter, we do produce a concise family tree for Jim, which traces his Hollis lineage through to Thomas Hollis in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The Introduction to the book focuses on the high probability that the 'Baigent' name is of Huguenot origin, with the prospect that it originated in the Low Countries of Europe – Belgium, Holland and also northern France – with similar earlier variants of the name being found on both sides of the Channel. This notion is supported by a brief review of the history of the movements of Walloon, Flemish, Huguenot and other factions within Europe and their emigration to England: they were fleeing from religious persecution during turbulent times in their home countries during the broad period 1300 to 1800. Some modern DNA evidence is included to support the fact that we believe Dot is of Huguenot descent.

If you like analysing data, then Chapter 1 could be for you. It is loaded with statistics and significant investigations of the 'Baigent' name, where well over 100 variant spellings were encountered, many with just a single letter difference, when compared to the current standard form spelling. The earliest variant was the surname 'Bagen', which appeared in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century in various villages in Hampshire, with our research proving that there was internal migration in England from Hampshire to Surrey, and then to counties further north. Our evidence explains how these variants were likely derived, for example: through illiteracy; through misinterpretation by officials of what people had enunciated to them; through the lethargy of church and other officials recording baptismal, marriage and burial information incorrectly; and through poor transcriptions at various times, including the modern day, due to damaged PRs, as well as a lack of knowledge about the origin of families and their locations, etc.

Chapters 2 (Robert Baigent) to 10 (Sarah Jane Baigent) are about the Baigent people on the main line, though clearly, we break from our usual adherence to the male line to accommodate Sarah Jane, the last of the Baigents in this part of the family tree.

There is another exception to our chapter structuring: Chapter 11 is about Edward Baigent and his young family who were brave enough to give up their lives in England to emigrate to New Zealand in 1841-2, being some of the first migrants to enter this exciting new world. They were not on Dot's main family line, but they shared some common ancestors dating back several generations. We felt that their exciting adventures in NZ merited some account of what happened to them, as they were particularly courageous, adventurous and successful in business and politics, subsequently creating a burgeoning legacy of Baigent descendants in that country.

