

# Samuel Bromley (1805–1838)

& Amelia Gurr (1815–?)



This Samuel Bromley was the original starting point of my family history. So little is known about his life that his story begins and ends with his death on 4 September 1838 in Cranbrook. His death certificate gives the cause of Samuel's demise as 'Disease caused by improper and excessive use of mercury'. At that time mercury, in its many different forms, was used to treat a wide variety of ailments, including skin complaints and gastrointestinal disorders. The toxic effects were well known and accidental poisoning not uncommon.

The parish records show that Samuel was buried in Staplehurst on 8 September and his age on the gravestone is given as 33, which is correct, although his death certificate shows him as being 28 years old. That aside, he left two sons and a pregnant wife. Despite the land ownership by his father, Samuel may not have any owned land himself but in the absence of a will (his death was unexpected so there was not time to draw one up) this has not been verified.

Samuel married Amelia Gurr on 16 June 1833, but not at either St Dunstan's in Cranbrook or All Saints in Staplehurst. Instead, they were married in Rye, Sussex, a fact that has only recently come to light with the transcription of parish records being made available on the internet. Rye is not an obvious location for either of them to have been married.

They had three children: John (my 2 x great grandfather), Mark and Olive. Emily Langridge's family history mentions only John and Mark, with a third son, Stephen, but this is clearly incorrect (although Samuel's father was called Stephen).

Parish records show that John was baptized on 22 June 1834 and Mark on 26 March 1837 at St Dunstan's. Olive's birth was registered, possibly because by the time of her birth her father was dead and it may have been felt better to do so. Although her birth certificate gives just the one Christian name, she was later baptized Olive Mercer Bromley at St Dunstan's on 12 January 1840, the same day as her cousin, Mary Ann Gurr. The Mercer seems to have come from Amelia's (step) father (see Page 7).

After the death of Samuel, Amelia is shown in the 1841 census as being a widow living with her parents and her three children in a hamlet near Cranbrook called Milkhouse Street (renamed Sissinghurst in the 1850s), which was incorporated into the parish of Staplehurst in 1838, which may explain why many members of the family were baptized, married and buried in the parish church.

What became of Amelia? If Emily's family history is correct in spirit and the children did not get on with their stepfather, then Amelia must have remarried. However, she disappears after 1841 and a thorough search of the marriage and death registers has failed to find her.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in cursive. The top signature is 'Amelia Bromley' and the bottom signature is 'David Gurr'. Both signatures are written in dark ink on a light background.

**Amelia Bromley's signature.** It was common for illiterate people in this period to be able to write their own signatures, but these are usually obvious. Those of Amelia and her brother David are much more flowing, suggesting that both were educated.

Stephen & Winifred		William & Sarah		Samuel Bromley & Amelia Gurr and their children. Oliver gained her middle name at her baptism as it does not appear on her birth certificate.
<b>Samuel Bromley</b> <b>Bap:</b> 18 Jan 1805 Staplehurst, Kent <b>Died:</b> 4 Sep 1838 Cranbrook, Kent		<b>Amelia Gurr</b> <b>Bap:</b> 25 Dec 1815 Cranbrook, Kent <b>Died:</b> Unknown		
<b>Marriage:</b> 16 June 1833 in Rye, Sussex				
Children: 3	Sex	Birth/baptism	Death	
John Thomas Bromley	M	22 Jun 1834 in Cranbrook, Kent	27 Dec 1901 in Dorking, Surrey	→ Chapter 5
Mark Bromley	M	26 Mar 1837 in Cranbrook, Kent	14 Apr 1910 in Gillingham, Kent	→ Chapter 5a
Olive Mercer Bromley	F	17 Mar 1839 in Cranbrook, Kent	16 Dec 1920 in Loose, Kent	→ Chapter 5b

Quite possibly, Amelia was dead by 1851 since she does not appear in the census, but then neither does Olive who was still only 12 years old at the time and would probably still have been living with her mother. Both sons had certainly left home by 1851, with John being a servant at the Castle Inn in Thornton Heath, Surrey, while Mark was a farm hand at Hayland Farm in Smarden. More information on the three children of Samuel and Amelia can be found in Chapters 5, 5a and 5b.

### The Gurr Family

Amelia was the youngest child of William Gurr, a ‘carpenter’, and his wife Sarah (née Dray) who were married in St Dunstan’s Church in Cranbrook on 13 October 1791. The baptism records for the church shows that Amelia, baptised on Christmas Day, 1815, was the youngest of at least 12 children (see tree below). Amelia was likely to have been born in the same year as her baptism, and although there is a slight discrepancy over her age she would have been about 23 years old when Samuel died.

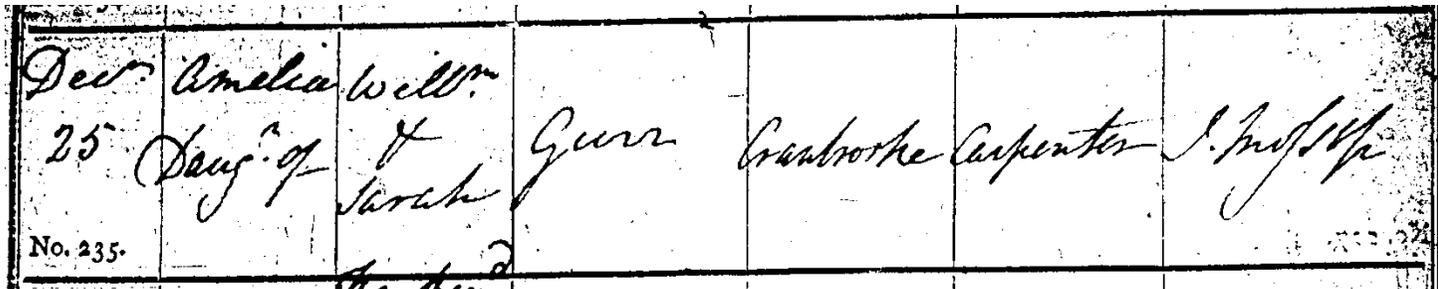
A fair amount of information has been pieced together from the public records, but few of William and Sarah’s children survived to have families of their own. George, Harriet, Mary and Richard all appear to have died by 1831, a fact that can be deduced by comparing the parish burial records (which include the age of the deceased) with baptismal records. George died in 1831 aged 33, Harriet in 1828 aged 24, Mary in 1821 aged 14, and Richard in 1808 at less than a month old. There are no marriage records for George or Harriet in Cranbrook. Of those who lived to marry, this is what is known about them:

Unknown & Unknown		Unknown & Elizabeth	
<b>William Gurr</b> <b>Born:</b> abt. 1770 Biddenden, Kent <b>Died:</b> 31 Dec 1845 Cranbrook, Kent		<b>Sarah Dray</b> <b>Born:</b> abt. 1772  <b>Died:</b> 21Dec 1847 Cranbrook, Kent	
<b>Marriage:</b> 13 Oct 1791 in Cranbrook, Kent			
<b>Children: 12</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Birth/baptism</b>	<b>Death/burial</b>
William Gurr	M	26 Jan 1794 in Cranbrook, Kent	15 Oct 1850 in Frittenden, Kent
Ann Gurr	F	1 Nov 1795 in Cranbrook, Kent	
George Gurr	M	26 Nov 1797 in Cranbrook, Kent	24 Aug 1831 in Cranbrook, Kent
John Gurr	M	5 Jan 1800 in Cranbrook, Kent	
Elisabeth Gurr	F	27 Dec 1801 in Cranbrook, Kent	
Harriett Gurr	F	3 Jun 1804 in Cranbrook, Kent	25 Jul in Cranbrook, Kent
Mary Gurr	F	24 Aug 1806 in Cranbrook, Kent	22 May 1821 in Cranbrook, Kent
Richard Gurr	M	30 Oct 1808 in Cranbrook, Kent	11 Nov 1808 in Cranbrook, Kent
Sarah Gurr	F	19 Nov 1809 in Cranbrook, Kent	
Frances Gurr	F	25 Dec 1811 in Cranbrook, Kent	
David Gurr	M	18 Apr 1813 in Cranbrook, Kent	28 Mar 1848 in Cranbrook, Kent
Amelia Gurr	F	25 Dec 1815 in Cranbrook, Kent	

**William Gurr & Sarah Dray and their children.** Despite the many children, few survived long enough to marry.

### William (b 1794)

William married Hannah Sharp on 9 April 1834 at the age of 40 which, given his age, could have been his second marriage (there are a number of possibilities). Amelia Bromley and David Gurr were the witnesses (see their signatures above). William and Hannah moved to Frittenden and it is there that they had 6 children: Sarah, William, Matilda, Louisa, Mary Ann, and James. The first three appear with their parents in the 1841 census. However, in 1851 William is missing, having died in 1850 and the census shows Hannah, a pauper, living alone with her six children in Frittenden. She remarried in 1852 to Samuel Croucher and went on to have two more children by him.



Dec 25	Amelia Daug' of	Willm & Sarah	Gurr	Cranbrook	Carpenter	J. Mossop
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**Baptism of Amelia Gurr** on Christmas Day in 1815.

### David (b 1813)

David lived long enough to father several children. He appears in the 1841 census as an agricultural labourer, although in the baptism record of 1840 for his third child Mary Ann his profession is given as 'in the police', and on the marriage certificates of two of his children he is shown as a carpenter. In 1841 David was living with his wife, Rebecca (née Cuthbert), and their first three children (James Peter, George and Mary Ann), but he fathered two more before dying in 1848 of tuberculosis. In the 1851 census his wife Rebecca, by now a pauper, was living with the last two children, Louisa and Matilda. This is what is known about David and Rebecca's children:

**James Peter** (bap. 1835) married Mary Pearce in Cranbrook in 1859; the censuses show just the one son, Albert (b 1856). James was a carpenter journeyman (ie, a tradesman working on his own) in Sissinghurst in 1861 and 1871, but by 1881 both he and Mary were in service to Thomas Roberts, a Justice of the Peace in Cranbrook. In 1891 James was a farmer and an employer and had moved back to the Cranbrook area, but he and his wife do not appear in the later censuses but their death certificate have not been identified.

**George** (bap. 1838) did well for himself. He was a solicitor's clerk still living in Cranbrook in 1861 but by 1871 he had moved to London, having married Louisa Lawrence in 1867 in Lewisham (then still part of Kent) and continued his career as a solicitor's clerk. He and Louisa were sufficiently well of to be able to afford a servant. By 1881 George was a collector of parochial rates, a job he was still doing in 1891 when he is shown as a widower in the census (Louisa died in 1887), living with his only child, Louisa Mary, his mother Rebecca and sister Mary. In the 1901 census George was still living in Lewisham with his daughter, Louisa, and a servant, but he died in 1908.

**Mary Ann** (b 1840) was a servant to a barrister and his wife in Bromley, Kent in the 1861 census. She must have married because she is shown in the 1891 census as living with her widowed brother George in Lewisham under an indecipherable married name, possibly Wilson.

**Louisa** (b 1839) appeared in the first two censuses but is missing after 1861, and there is no trace of her marriage or her death.

**Matilda** (b 1847) married George Rose in 1878 in Lewisham at the age of 31. The couple appear in the 1881, 1891 and 1901 censuses as market gardeners living in the Lewisham area, but do not appear to have had any children. They are not in the 1911 census.

Rebecca Gurr never remarried and was living alone in Cranbrook in the 1871 and 1881 censuses, her children all having left some time after 1861 when the family were living in Sissinghurst. She moved to Lewisham where she was living with her son George in the 1891 at 97 Lewisham Road, and she died there in 1898 at the age of 81 of what her death certificate simply calls 'old age'.

With the notable exceptions of William and David, there is no trace of any of the other children of William and Sarah Gurr in the 19th century censuses. There are no other marriages in the Cranbrook parish records, but although those of neighbouring churches have not been searched there are probably relatives in the surrounding area.

Amelia's father, William Gurr, died on 31 December 1845, as reported by his wife, Sarah Gurr. Sarah herself probably died a year later: a Sarah Gurr, aged 75, wife of a lath cleaver, was 'found dead' on 25 December 1846. The coroner recorded the cause of death as 'believed died from the rupture of a vessel about the heart.'

The surname Gurr appears frequently in the parish records and censuses for Cranbrook and other parts of Kent and it is sometimes possible to tie the families together. It was common in those days for family baptisms to be combined and this is seen with Olive Bromley who was baptized at the same time as Mary Ann Gurr, the daughter of her uncle and aunt, David and Rebecca.

A curious finding is that Thomas Brattle, who later married Olive Bromley (see Chapter 5b), was living in the same household as one Richard Gurr (born in Smarden, Kent) in the 1861 census. Perhaps this Gurr was related to Amelia's family and this was how they met.

**The Dray Family**

Amelia Gurr's mother, Sarah Dray, was probably the daughter of Elizabeth Dray. Sarah's birth year of about 1772 is suggested from the census of 1841 and is supported by the baptism of a Sarah Dray on 21 June 1772 in Goudhurst. Her mother was Elizabeth Dray and the absence of a father's name suggests she was illegitimate.

Further confirmation comes from the fact that Elizabeth Dray went on to marry William Mercer on 8 November 1774 and this undoubtedly accounts for the middle name of Sarah's granddaughter, Oliver Mercer Bromley.

William and Sarah may have gone on to have children together. The IGI shows three children baptised in Goudhurst to a William and Elizabeth Mercer: Ann (1775), Elizabeth (1777) and Richard (1779).

Whether Sarah was William's daughter is doubtful but he would no doubt have treated her as such and it seems that the surname was passed down to Sarah's granddaughter as a mark of respect.