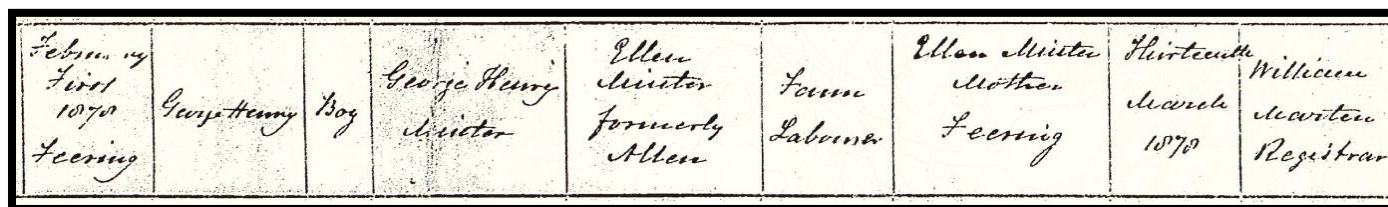


George Henry Minter and Rebecca Steed

If there is any such thing as the “family villain” in our family ancestry, then maternal great grandfather George Henry Minter comes close to being its epitome. For my own mother, her grandfather is the “bad man” whose involvement in illegal gambling at his village pub the Compasses in Dedham, Essex where he was landlord had cost him not only his tenancy but was to force himself, his wife and young family, to move to London in abject disgrace. He was, furthermore the bad man who subjected his long suffering wife to a “hard life” and was the bad man who had attempted to bribe her mother against marrying her own father. For other family members he was the man who had alienated a disapproving family circle with his controversial second marriage in later life to an actress. However, as far as can be ascertained no living family member has ever met the errant publican with the passage of over sixty years since his death and, with a large proportion of this information coming down through the family orally, the man is furthermore unable to defend himself.



Birth Certificate of George Henry Minter

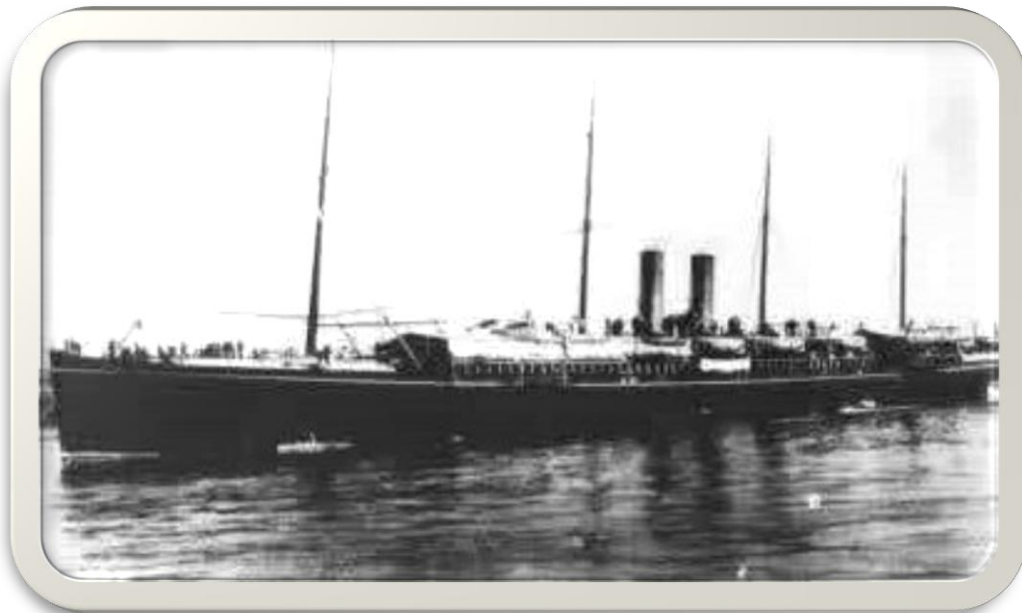
The first task for the family historian is one essentially of an evaluation of his life through the medium of investigation of contemporary records to see to just what extent the claims the family have of his notoriety are justified and it is no simple task. What is certain, however, is that almost a hundred years after the doors of the Compasses were closed for the last time George Henry Minter still strikes a sense of revulsion into the hearts of a number of his descendants: are his misdeeds merely family myths or does more than a grain of truth lie present in their claims?



Carte de visite photograph of George Henry Minter c 1900

The first concrete fact that can be gleaned about this controversial man is that he was born in the small Essex village of Feering, near Coggeshall, Essex on February 1st, 1878, the eldest legitimate offspring of George Henry Minter and Ellen Allen. At the time of his birth his father was employed as an agricultural labourer who had served time in the army and was still listed on the military reserve. As has been seen, the third quarter of the nineteenth century was certainly not a fortunate time to be one due to the agricultural depression which took hold: as such the young George is to be found moving house with his family on a regular basis as his father sought the meagre work as it became available. From Feering the Minters soon moved to Great Tey, a village four miles distant then migrated to London for a time before moving back to rural Essex to Langham, which must have caused some disruption in the young George’s life. He began employment here at the tender age of just 13 when he followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather before him as an agricultural labourer and six years later the family moved to Dedham when his father set up business as a general dealer. However, by the turn of the new century George had himself obtained employment with the Peninsular and Oriental (P&O) steamship service as a steward on passenger steamships conveying emigrants to a new life in Australia. He is found on the lists of five voyages to Sydney which took on average around three months. He is first enumerated on board the *Australia* which reached Sydney on 22 March 1901, and is back there on 19 September that year on the *China* which accounts for his absence on the 1901 census in England.

In February 1903 George is again at Sydney aboard the *Oceana*, considered one of the more luxurious vessels of its time, measuring 141 metres in length with a capacity of 400 passengers; it was aboard this ship that the Indian nationalist leader Mahatma Gandhi sailed upon to his homeland from London in 1891. Yet the *Oceana* was destined to end its life in dire circumstances indeed: on 16 March 1912 whilst sailing off the coast of Eastbourne it was accidentally ran into by a German boat and sunk; one of the lifeboats capsized killing nine passengers and this tragedy took place a month to the day before the most famous shipwreck of all time, that of the *HMS Titanic*. Another of George’s ships, the *Australia* also met an ignominious end, running aground off Port Philip near Melbourne, demonstrating that shipping at this time was far from being the relatively safe venture it is considered today.



Oceana

George's final two known voyages were aboard the *China*, arriving in Sydney on November 11 1904 and arriving back in England on March 16 1905. What exactly his role on these steamships was is, as ever, elusive: As a general rule stewards on steamships were involved in a large number of tasks over a long working day; their primary mission would have been to wait upon those passengers destined for the antipodes. Whilst the surviving archives listing George's voyages show him as being employed in the pursers' department it is possible part of his job involved working in the saloon serving drinks. A substantial proportion of his wage would have depended upon gratuities by passengers.

1890s. Marriage solemnized at <i>St Patrick Church</i> in the Parish of <i>Dedham</i> in the County of <i>Suffolk</i>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
110	<i>North</i> <i>Dedham</i>	<i>George Henry Minter</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Steward</i>	<i>Dedham</i>	<i>George Henry Minter</i>	<i>Dedham</i>
	<i>1890s</i>	<i>Rebecca Steed</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>Spinster</i>		<i>Langham</i>	<i>William Steed</i>	<i>Labourer</i>

Married in the *Parish of St Patrick* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by *Thomas Tolman* or after *Henry* by me,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *George Henry Minter* and *Rebecca Steed* in the Presence of us, *Thomas Tolman* and *Florence Annie Jones*

Marriage certificate of George Henry Minter and Rebecca Steed

Upon his return from his final voyage as a steward he soon after married local girl Rebecca Steed on October 5 at St Mary's church, Dedham and opted for a change of profession. Whilst his marriage certificate shows he was still nominally working as a steward it was an occupation not suited to married life, involving spending months away from home at a time.

Born in the Suffolk village of Aldham on May 27, 1880 Rebecca Steed was the eldest child of agricultural labourer William Steed and his second wife Gertrude Mary Rolfe; in common with George her formative years had been spent relocating on a regular basis, again due in all probability to the agricultural depression: before settling in Dedham in the late 1880s the family had made both Aldham, Hadleigh and Layham their home. By her marriage in 1905 Rebecca's family had moved yet again to the village of Langham; with wages of the typical agricultural labourer being pitiful in this age - typically £1 per week (around £60 in today's terms) - Rebecca's mother ran a laundry business from home in order to supplement the family's income, with both Rebecca and step sister Laura assisting in this enterprise.

<i>Twenty seventh</i> <i>May</i> <i>1880</i> <i>Aldham</i>	<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>girl</i>	<i>William Steed</i>	<i>Gertrude Mary Steed formerly Rolfe</i>	<i>Farm labourer</i>	<i>G. M. Steed</i> <i>Mother</i> <i>Aldham</i>	<i>Sixth</i> <i>July</i> <i>1880</i>	<i>Amos</i> <i>Matthew</i> <i>Registrary</i>
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Birth Certificate of Rebecca Steed

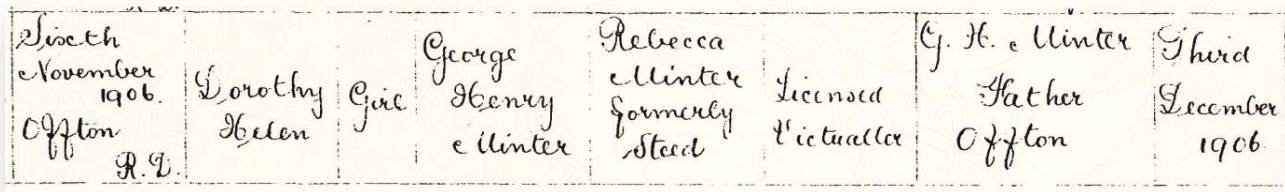


Rebecca Steed

In common with George, Rebecca was part of a large family – her parents produced another seven children, many of whom died young, and her two brothers William and Arthur were army men stationed at barracks by the turn of the century, the former having obtained the rank of bombardier by the age of 20. Fate was to dictate Rebecca was destined to play the role of publican's wife through thick and thin lacking any insight into the challenges which awaited her new family as the country moved into the modern age.

It was in his new occupation as a publican that George opted to trade for the rest of his life, and one which had eluded his father. When the jingle of wedding bells had faded into the mists of time the couple subsequently moved to Offton, just over the Suffolk border where he set about the business of both becoming the landlord of The Greyhound and beginning to raise a family: the newly married couple's first child Dorothy Helen, subsequently known in family circles as "Dolly" duly arrived on November 6, 1906 followed by a son, George William, born on 21 June 1908. Why George subsequently left the Greyhound within a few years is unknown. A vacancy in Dedham where several members of his family lived or the pub's closure are two possibilities although rate books survive for the Greyhound for the year 1909 providing evidence it still served as a public house up until this time. Whatever the reason

behind the move George became landlord of the Compasses for the following two years. The Compasses, a Cobbold pub, was the oldest in Dedham, dating from the 16th century and in 1965 attained the status of a grade II listed building by National Heritage and had been trading as a pub since at least the eighteenth century and had been privy to a somewhat chequered past: during the early years of the nineteenth century this had been a venue on occasion for vestry meetings, the forerunner to today's village council, and it was here that in the 1830s a Mr Tollis, a baker, unsuccessfully attempted to commit suicide. In 1855 two London forgers were discovered hiding out here by the authorities with "loaded pistols by their side." When the Compasses final landlord commenced his tenancy the building itself was no stranger to notoriety. Within a year of arriving at Dedham George's second daughter, Ella Mildred – my grandmother – was born there on May 11 1910.



Birth Certificate of Dorothy Helen Minter

Dedham was a substantial village with a population of around 2500 at this time and it can be immediately ascertained George was faced with some degree of competition for business: the Anchor (where his father had faced a drunk and disorderly charge by local magistrates in 1900), The Gun, The Lamb, The Marlborough Head, the Prince of Wales, Sun and Rose and Crown all traded in the village during George's tenure. It is somewhat fortuitous that today a sale catalogue survives for when the Compasses was sold at the end of George's two year tenancy. It lists the cellar, the location of his alleged gambling, along with a ground floor consisting of "front room, 16ft by 19ft, the old bar 16ft by 16ft, passage with pantry, scullery (fitted with range and sink) and large room 17ft 6in by 15 ft 6in". On the first floor, access was provided by two staircases with a landing and five rooms, with a further two attic bedrooms on the second floor. In addition, outside was a "yard, with folding doors to road, in which a two stall stable, with loft over, partitioned off from which is a small shop, with window to the street: a pantile roof cart shed, with partitioned off harness shed; a timber and iron roof lean to shed, with folding doors and cement floor; two W.C.s and urinal. There is also a timber and pantile slaughter house, fitted with boiling copper and furnace, refuse bin & c".



The compasses, Dedham as it appears today

Yet for all the apparent success of George in raising a young family and bettering himself from the drudgery and toil on the land on November 19 1910 his father died of bronchopneumonia and heart failure in Dedham leaving his widow and unmarried children to effectively fend for themselves in an age where self sufficiency was essential to avoid the degradation and stigma of the dreaded workhouse although, for a time at least they appear to have thrived with George's mother and brother taking over both their small farm and dealing business. George himself, for his part, it would appear at this time decided to immerse himself into the seedy world of illegal gambling in the cellar of his own pub if family sources can be taken at face value and the family anecdote relates he was soon to fall foul of the local authorities, raided and caught red handed and suffered the ignominy of surrendering his licence. Yet first the question must be posed: does any documentary evidence exist for this assertion?

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family.	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX.		PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE.					PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards.			BIRTHPLACE of every person.	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country.	INFIRMITY.
		Males.	Females.	State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of—	Completed years of the present Marriage	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.	Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on Own Account.	Whether Working at Home.				
1	Head	33		Married 5 th	2	3	0	Publican	943	own	at Home	Coggeshall town	British	
2	Wife	30		Married 5 th	2	3	0			account		Dedham	British	
3	Daughter	4										Mixed	British	
4	Son	2										Mixed	British	
5	Daughter	1										Dedham town	British	
6	Servant	14										Dedham town	British	
7														
8														
9														
10														
11														
12														
13														
14														
15														

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that—

(1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper sex columns.

(2) I have counted the males and females in Columns 3 and 4 separately, and have compared their sum with the total number of persons.

(3) After making the necessary enquiries I have completed all entries on the Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.

Initials of Enumerator: M.E.R.

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (House, Tenement, or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.

Total: 3

Males: 2 Females: 4 Persons: 6

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: George H. Minter

Postal Address: High St Dedham Essex

1911 Census entry for the Minter family

LADY (young), for housework and assist in bar; age about 20; some experience necessary; photo. Minter, Compasses, Dedham. cl28

advertisement for young female domestic and barmaid from the Chelmsford Chronicle, 24 March 1911

Preliminary research on the gambling story discovered sources relating to the closure of the Compasses in 1911 although none name the reason or mentioned George by name: both the *Victoria County History of Essex* and *Dedham, Flatford and East Bergholt: A pictorial history* (Yearsley, Ian Phillmore, 1996) note the Compasses was "closed down" and "lost its license" in 1911 or 1912 respectively with a footnote to the former publication giving its source as a publication entitled *Dedham Described*. This local book, alas, was originally published by a local clergyman in 1934 and is now out of print. What only added to this mystery, however, is the very real knowledge that gambling was seen as a real problem by the local police at this time: in the same year a pub in nearby Colchester was raided and closed for "unlicensed gambling" and another, this time in Dedham itself, mysteriously had its "license surrendered" to the authorities at the same time as the Compasses. However, recently a number of documents have come to light which sheds a new light on events, some proving numerous pubs were closed at this time, others of which relate to George during his



Dedham football team, 1911. George is standing, far left. To his right are the reverend Jutt and Cris Evans

tenancy of the compasses in Dedham: what is made abundantly clear from Dedham's parish magazine in the years 1910-11 is that George played an active role in community life. In 1911 he was elected to and served on the committee set up to organise local celebrations for the coronation of King George V and donated 2s 6d towards the fund; in particular his contribution came through local sport and in 1910 he had played in 14 matches for Dedham cricket club, with a further 13 in the following year and was also involved in the Dedham Old Quoits club. Again elected to the committee as an organiser of matches when Dedham football club was reformed in 1910, it can be

seen from a contemporary photograph from the team's archives he also played for the team. Indeed, by the time of his departure to London Dedham Parish magazine relates that when the annual committee's annual meeting was held on August 17th, the secretary Cris Evans related that the club "owed their thanks to Mr G. Minter for his services, and it was a matter for regret that he was shortly leaving them, as he had always shown himself an enthusiastic promoter of any form of sport".

COMPASSES, DEDHAM.

The last licence to be considered was that of the Compasses, Dedham, the tenant of which is Mr. G. H. Minter, and the owners, Messrs. Cobbold and Co., Ipswich.—Mr. H. W. Jones, in behalf of the Lexden and Winstree Justices, said that within 80 yards of the house was another fully licensed house, also owned by Messrs. Cobbold, and a second fully-licensed house 200 yards away. —The licence was refused.

Licensing Review for the Compasses, 1911

The temperance movement was gaining ground during the early years of the twentieth century and the licensing acts of 1904 and 1910 did for the village pub what Dr Beechings reforms did for the railways half a century later. Magistrates considered the renewal of licences for particular public houses on an annual basis and increasingly closed them down when it was felt there were adequate alternatives in the locality. When, in 1911, George went to the licensing magistrates to renew his licence it was refused on the grounds that "within 80 yards of the house was another fully licensed house, also owned by Messrs Cobbold, and a second fully licensed house 200 yards away". On 13th October the Chelmsford Chronicle reported that "a supplemental meeting of the county committee under the licensing (Consolidation) Act of 1910 was held at the shire hall, Chelmsford on Friday morning" which dealt with the compensation for licenses and revealed George received £150 compensation for the loss of the Compasses. Whether or not gambling at the premises played a part in the magistrate's decision goes unrecorded. As such, the

DEDHAM FOOTBALL CLUB.

The annual meeting of the Football Club was held on Thursday evening, August 17th, at the Memorial Hall, when Mr. F. H. Collier presided over a large and representative gathering. The Secretary, Mr. Cris Evans, presented his report for the past season. Considering, he said, that they were a newly formed club they had made a very good show, having a membership of about 70. A rather big fixture list had been arranged, which they managed to get through with the following result. Out of 18 matches played, 5 were won, 9 lost, and 4 drawn. He was glad to say that little difficulty had been experienced in raising teams; if there was any, it was for matches away; but most clubs, he felt, suffered in that direction. The thanks of the club were due to the President and officers. All would agree that the President had looked well after the finance of the club, and without him they would not be in so good a position as they were, having a balance in hand to begin the new season with of £1 0s. 10d. The club also owed their thanks to Mr. G. Minter for his services, and it was a matter for regret that he was shortly leaving

them, as he had always shown himself an enthusiastic promoter of any form of sport. The President

Article from Dedham Parish Magazine relating to the football club

jury must remain out.

The Compasses never again opened its doors to the drinking public again and was to trade as a bookshop under its former name before being converted to a residential property but what now for the beleaguered George? He was to opt for a new start and the place he decided best to accomplish this was in the capital, London and it was to his benefit that both he and wife Rebecca had family there. It was not a split second decision he had to make, however, he being given several months notice of the pub's impending closure albeit it most likely would have proved a traumatic time with his future appearing uncertain, having lost the tenancy of two pubs in as many years.

PARTICULARS.

A WELL-SITUATED

PREMISES,

Until recently known as "The Compasses," situated in the Street at Dedham, and occupying a prominent position at the junction with Princes Lane, close to the Church and Post Office.

It consists of a

DWELLING HOUSE,

Containing:—*In the Basement*—CELLARAGE.

On the Ground Floor—FRONT ROOM, 16 ft. by 9 ft.; THE OLD BAR (extreme length and width, 16 ft. by 16 ft.); PASSAGE, with PANTRY; SCULLERY, fitted with range and sink; and LARGE ROOM, 17 ft. 6 in. by 15 ft. 6 in.

On the First Floor—Approached by Two Staircases, LANDING, and FIVE ROOMS.

On the Top Floor—TWO ATTIC BEDROOMS.

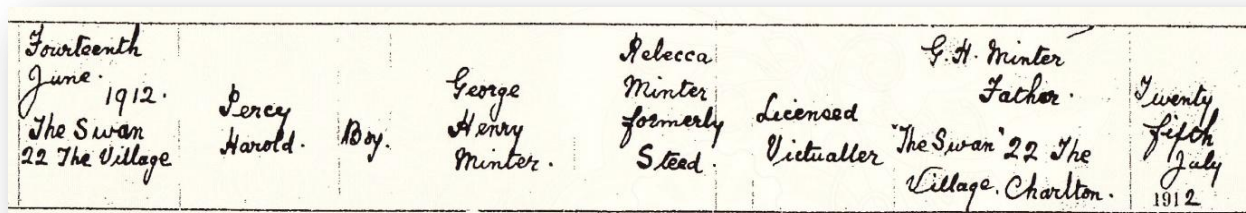
Outside is a YARD, with folding doors to Road, in which is a **TWO-STALL STABLE**, with Loft over, partitioned off from which is a **SMALL SHOP**, with Window to the Street; a pantile roof **CART SHED**, with partitioned-off **HARNESS SHED**; a timber and iron-roof lean-to **SHED**, with folding doors and cement floor; TWO W.C.'s. and URINAL. There is also a timber and pantile **SLAUGHTER HOUSE**, fitted with boiling copper and furnace, refuse bin, &c.

The Property has a Frontage to the Street of about 48 ft., to Princes Lane of 80 ft., and an Area of about

13 RODS, or thereabouts.

Sale catalogue for the Compasses, 1912

The exact date George left Dedham is unclear but the family first reappear in London at the Swan public house located at 22 The Village, Charlton when the Minter's fourth child, Percy Harold (known as Peter) was born there on June 12, 1912 and George retained the tenancy of the Swan for over 35 years. Charlton Village, the road on which the pub stands was, and indeed still is, the equivalent of Charlton's high street; the road is known as "the village" due to the fact the area remained, as in some respects it does today, the aura of the timelessness of a village long after its incorporation into the metropolis that is London. The Swan itself is known today as a locals drinking establishment along with the other local public houses in its immediate vicinity; it was built in 1887 and trades to this very day. When up for sale in 2006 the brewery's description informs the reader that it comprises of "two large trading areas with a centre servery" with "many original features including stained glass windows". There are large living rooms and kitchen, a large garden under a "huge willow tree", an outbuilding/store off the garden, a large bedroom upstairs and "ex clubroom", a managers flat comprising of a living room, bedroom, office, store room, bathroom and other room. Later in life George's daughter Ella described the building comprising of three floors and is known to have been trading as a hotel from at least the time of the Second World War. George, by hook or by crook had clearly moved up in the world.



Birth Certificate for Percy Harold Minter. By June 1912 the Minters are living at the Swan

Within three years of the Minters move from Dedham the First World War broke out. Whether George himself participated in the war to end all wars is unknown yet in all probability unlikely as any military files relating to him, if they exist at all, lay as yet undiscovered. Suffice to say that throughout the course of the war he and Rebecca produced three more children – Leslie, born in 1914, Cyril Stanley on March 29 1915, and, finally, their youngest Ronald Arthur, on August 22 1918. The war would have caused great disruption into the family's lives: Lloyd George's government introduced stringent new licensing legislation in the name of promoting the war effort restricting trading hours whilst, alarmingly, while the bombing of London is primarily associated with the second world war, it did take place to a lesser extent during the first: German zeppelin raids came unnervingly close for the Minters when the nearby Woolwich arsenal was bombed; whilst with hindsight it can be ascertained such raids were primarily aimed at military targets, the sounds of nearby explosions would have done little to reassure contemporary Londoners - such as George and Rebecca - of this fact.

Yet the Minters were here this time to stay: it was at the Swan that grandmother and her siblings spent their childhoods. It was at the Swan where George witnessed when the time came his children fly one by one out of the family nest. And it was at the Swan where George was ultimately to die. This was, as yet, however many years off and it was Rebecca who was the first to depart this life. Her

death took place on August 3rd, 1933 at the premature age of 53 as a result of degeneration of the heart at Greenwich hospital. Her death was, it has been said, due partly to the “hard life” she had endured although her immediate family had a history of heart complaints with both her brother Arthur and mother having suffered from the same malady. Rebecca was buried on 8 August at Charlton cemetery.

3 rd August 1933 48 Vanbough Minter Will	Rebecca	53 female years	of 22 The Village Charlton Wife of George Henry Minter Licensed Vicars	Myocardial Degeneration of the Heart certified by M.B. Walker M.B.	of 14 Minter Widower of deceased The Village St 7	3 rd August 1933 P.C. August Minter Registrar
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Death certificate of Rebecca Steed

The widower George was to find himself increasingly isolated in the following years. His daughter Dolly - now a librarian in Blackheath - was now living with her civil servant husband Edward “Ted” Jesty, whom she had married in 1930; eldest son George had entered the navy at the tender age of fifteen and had taken an accelerated advancement course and was to become chief petty officer serving on several destroyers in the second world war - he was married to Amy Vine in 1933. Peter married Vera Jarrett the following year whilst Leslie eventually emigrated to Australia. George found himself practically alone, an ageing widower in his London pub. Family tradition relates that when his younger daughter Ella came to announce her own intention to marry local man James Joseph Dunn Powell in 1934 George, by now a comparatively wealthy man, attempted to bribe her to break off her engagement to assist him at the Swan which she indignantly refused.



The White Swan, Charlton, as it appears today

Again courting controversy shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War George announced his own second marriage to actress Betty Sutherland Mackie. Whilst on paper his children could have had no objection to his second marriage it was his choice of bride they objected to and, according to his granddaughter Diane, the family “did not take to her from the start”. It is not altogether difficult to explain the objections to this marriage: born in Barrow in Furness, Cumbria in 1920 the daughter of a master mariner, she was but twenty years old, with George now sixty two.

Family reservations aside the couple were married on August 10th 1940 at Greenwich registry office yet despite the controversial marriage George and his young wife were faced with more immediate fears than that of family disapproval. A mere six days after their marriage had taken place George and Betty’s very own metaphysical bombshell to their respective families was replaced by the real thing when the first major German Luftwaffe air raid on London took place on September 7th and subsequently almost nightly bombing raids, known popularly as the blitz began to blight the Minters’ lives as people began evacuating from the capital in fear of

their safety and, indeed, their very lives. The nightly wail of the air raid siren very soon became a feature of the couple's lives for the next five years.

1940. Marriage solemnized at		The Register Office		in the		METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF GREENWICH		in the	
District of		GREENWICH							
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.	
1442	22nd August 1940	George Henry Minter	62 years	Widower	Licensed Victualler	The Village Charlton	George Minter (deceased)	Sealer	
		Betty Sutherland Mackie	20 years	Spinster		126 St. George's Hill Road Blackheath	James Mackie	Macker	
Married in the Register Office according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the						by Licence before		1940.	
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		G H Minter B Mackie		in the Presence of us,		J B Mackie A H Mackie J A Mackie		P. Kates Registrar G A Ball Super Reg	

Marriage Certificate of George Henry Minter and Betty Sutherland Mackie

Yet in the face of adversity the popularity of the London pub was not to be undermined during the war years; the conflict was to take a hefty toll in the vicinity of the Swan with as much as 10% of the housing in the boroughs of Greenwich and Woolwich being destroyed by enemy bombing. By 1944, as a contemporary directory shows, the Swan was by now trading not only as a public house but as a hotel. Whatever the faults of the maligned hotelier, to have stayed in London during the war, with nightly bombing raids would have required courage and resolution. It was this downright grit and determination on the part of the Londoners as a whole that played a not insignificant role in helping to ensure that their victory finally came in 1945.



George Henry Minter in later life

When George celebrated his seventieth birthday in 1948 he was already an ill man: suffering from bronchitis and high blood pressure his kidneys eventually failed, which was followed by a fatal brain haemorrhage. He died on December 1st, perhaps fittingly at the White Swan. George's will, where he left an estate worth £8621 18s 2d (as a guide to today's worth the average three bedroomed house cost £1000 in 1950) was proved the following year: with the exception of leaving £500 to son Leslie, he left all to Betty, his young widowed wife, with the provision she did not go over an average annual allowance. She was soon to marry the hotel's barman, Arthur George Wilson in the summer of the following year in Sussex after which the couple moved to 82 Herbert Road in Plumstead. The marriage lasted just two years: Betty Sutherland Wilson as she now was died on 23 October 1951 aged just 31.

George Henry Minter takes many questions with him to the grave: it is highly unlikely now that they will ever be answered. Whether or not his reputation had indeed been ruined by late night forays to his cellar with a pack of cards he had, nevertheless, at least succeeded in commanding the respect of his local community and was able to provide his children the decent education that eluded many of their peers.

The rain poured down relentlessly when I visited the White Swan in 2006 but this detracted little from the day, showing its sale catalogue had been correct in every respect down to the elderly "resigned looking locals" described by the website *Beer in the evening* whom one cannot help but feel some of whom could have been drinking here as long as George's tenancy. And how these resigned looking locals must have seen Charlton change in the intervening years yet, perhaps, Charlton has not changed that much at all: almost, just almost, whilst trying to capture the aura of a bygone age and imagining the noise of horse and carts trundling past the property in their daily pursuits the presence of George and Rebecca serving behind that bar could still be sensed.

Just December 1948 22	GEORGE HENRY MINTER	male 62 years	a Licensed Victualler	No. Central Haemorrhage Hypertension Chronic Anaemia Chronic Bronchitis Leptis by P. Livingston M.B.	Arthur G. Wilson Cause of the body to be buried 22 The Village A.F.Y.	Second December 1948	P. Lovatt deputy Registrar
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Death certificate of George Henry Minter

Children of George Henry Minter and Rebecca Steed

NAME	BORN	OCCUPATION	MARRIED	DIED
Dorothy "Dolly" Helen Minter	6 Nov 1906 Offton, Suffolk	Librarian	<u>Edward George Jesty</u> Q2 1930 Greenwich Registration District, London	21 Nov 2002 Worthing Registration District, West Sussex
George William Minter	21 Jun 1908 Offton, Suffolk	Chief Petty Officer, Royal Navy	<u>Amy Lillian M Vine</u> Q4 1933 Greenwich Registration District, London	Jan 1989 Bracknell Registration District, Berkshire
Ella Mildred Minter	11 May 1910 Dedham, Essex	Shorthand Typist	<u>James Joseph Dunn Powell</u> 6 Oct 1934 Charlton Methodist Chapel, London	3 Feb 1977 Brighton Registration District, Sussex
Percy "Peter" Harold Minter	14 Jun 1912 The White Swan, Charlton, London		<u>i Vera L Jarrett</u> Q1 1934 Woolwich Registration District London <u>ii Catherine "Kit" M Rollison</u> Q4 1946 Dartford, Kent	Q3 1980 Chichester Registration District, West Sussex
Leslie Henry Minter	Q1 1914 Charlton, London		<u>Marjorie Gray</u> Q4 1942 Dartford Registration District, Kent	10 March 1984 Melbourne, Australia
Cyril Stanley Minter	29 Mar 1915 Charlton, London		<u>Doris E M Baldwin</u> Q1 1942 Dartford Registration District, Kent	Apr 1993 Bexley Registration District, Kent
Ronald Arthur Minter	22 Aug 1916 Charlton, London	Merchant Navy	<u>June Doreen Stringer</u> Q1 1951 Woolwich Registration District, London	Oct 2002 Worthing Registration District, West Sussex

PHOTO GALLERY



Dorothy Helen Minter



George William Minter



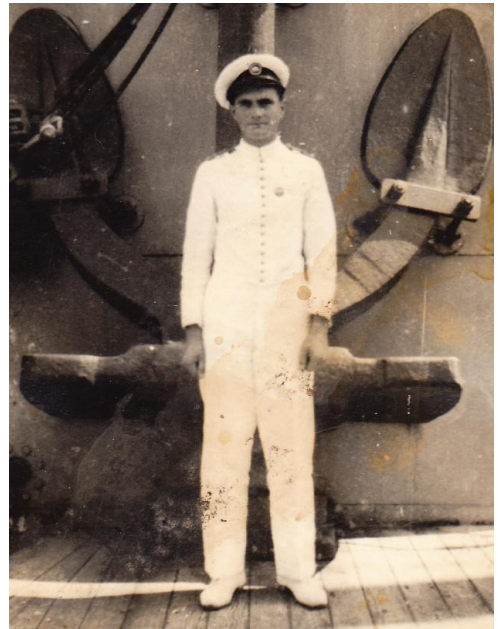
Ella Mildred Minter



Percy Harold Minter



Leslie Henry Minter



Ronald Arthur Minter