

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GERNAT FAMILY IN ENGLAND.

(With special reference to the forbears of Mary How (né Gernat), 1926-1998.)

The first Francois Gernat (already married to Caroline Eloise) came from Belgium to England in about 1850 and settled in Hampton, Middlesex. He originally called himself a butler ("domestique") but soon opened a grocers shop at (151?) High Street, Hampton Hill. He and Caroline had four children : William (became a builder, also of High Street, Hampton Hill and later of 23 Cross Street), Henry (trade unknown), Mary, and Francois (schoolmaster). This Francois lived at 8 Acacia Place, Hampton, but in 1876 took a post at the Grocers' Co's School, Hackney Down, Clapton. He married Charlotte Giboire (also a Belgian) in 1878 at All Saints Church, St Johns Wood. His father, the elder Francois, had died in 1875. His brothers, William and Henry, and sister Mary lived in Hampton (Acacia Road and Tudor Avenue) for many years (until the 1930's ?). Both William and Henry married and raised families, (see charts A and B).

It is the younger Francois who is the main interest to the 'present' Gernats. He and his wife Charlotte had six children (see chart) while he was at the Hackney down school. One of the boys, Frederick ('Fred'), who was Mary How's father, received his early education at his father's school. Francois retired in 1904 and in the same year the family moved to Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. His wife died in 1902 and he died in 1921.

Frank (father of Douglas and Norman) and Fred (father of Mary and Roger) grew up with their four sisters in Leigh. In 1910 Fred took a post as a merchant clerk with W. Coward & Co. of London. He married Marjorie ('Madge') Skinner at All Saints Church, Fulham in 1924. They moved to 10 Beech Walk, Ewell, Surrey where Mary was born in 1926 and Roger (an invalid from birth) in 1931.

The family subsequently (about 1936) moved to St Piran, West Farm Close, Ashted. Mary, who became a successful and prolific artist, married Michael How (engineer) in 1953, but Roger died in the same year. Fred and Madge moved to Rustington (16 Hobbs Way), Sussex in 1958 where Madge died the next year. Fred then moved to 22 Holmes Lane (still in Rustington) and lived there until his death in 1976. He left his house to a close friend, Margaret Allen, who still (2001) lives there.

Mary and Michael lived in Leatherhead, Surrey from 1953 until 1962, and afterwards in Lyminster, Hampshire. They have five children and five grandchildren. Mary died from multiple sclerosis in 1998.

Michael How, May 2001.

(I prepared these notes from various papers (birth certificates etc.)
which were left by Fred Gernat and his sister Nell Wilson)